Embodying Music:

The Visuality of Three Iconic Conductors in London, 1840-1940

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Abstract

This dissertation analyses the visuality of three iconic conductors who worked in London between 1840 and 1940; Louis Jullien, Hans Richter and Sir Henry Wood. It investigates the ways in which the public saw, discussed and understood how they moved, dressed, behaved and conceptualised their role, both on and off stage. The primary source material includes portraits and written descriptions of the conductors’ posture, gesture, rehearsal and performance technique and behaviour, and elements of the conductors’ off-stage personas. The texts and images are analysed using reception, historical and iconographical methods to establish their place within the greater corpus of music criticism and portraiture, and to ascertain whether the observations and images were unique or typical of conductors of the period. The results are then contextualised by relating them to the wider socio-cultural environment in which they were created.

The importance which contemporaries attached to the visualities of Jullien, Richter and Wood was closely related to the increased prominence of conductors in concert life generally. Differences in gesture size and style between the three conductors, and indications of shifts in what audiences and critics considered to constitute “good” conducting, suggest that expectations of what a conductor did and how it was effective changed in this period. Contemporary conducting theory was likely to have had an influence on modes of depiction and the reception of images and gesture. Different visual aspects dominated the reception and portraiture of each conductor, although musical and non-musical factors could also influence the results. For example, issues of gender and national stereotypes influenced Jullien’s public persona; perceived Germanic qualities and a personal connection with Wagner framed much of Richter’s reception; and the influence of wars and national attitudes towards native musicians underpinned much of Wood’s image. The metaphors applied to the three conductors and their roles in the music-making process were profoundly influenced by contemporary ideals of creativity, power,
masculinity and leadership. Observers compared Jullien to a mesmerist, magician or military hero; Richter’s role as a Wagnerian conductor was intellectualised, and his musical knowledge viewed as an intuitive, internal process; and, at the end of his life, Wood was celebrated as a craftsman, his hard work, punctuality and good nature cited as integral factors in the process by which he successfully translated the written score into sound. It is clear that the subjects’ visualities were self-consciously fashioned, where possible. While the findings of this study are specific to its particular subject matter, the broader implication of the research is that visuality is likely to have been a pervasive and ongoing factor in the reception of conductors since the beginning of the profession.
Preface

Although much effort went into tracing primary sources, there were some secondary quotations which proved unverifiable in the time frame. Given the reliability of the authors in attributing all other quotations, I trust their veracity in these few instances, and will continue to pursue exact primary citations should extracts from the thesis be published elsewhere.

I am grateful to the portrait collections and libraries whose knowledge and generosity allowed this project to proceed. In particular, Dr Paul Banks and Paul Collen at the Royal College of Music’s Centre for Performance History and Dr Raymond Holden and Janet Snowman at London’s Royal Academy of Music were all wonderfully welcoming and open with their resources, knowledge and advice. I also greatly enjoyed my time in the National Portrait Gallery, the British Library and other smaller collections in and around London.

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1. Introduction: The Conductor’s Image

The modern conductor presents a conundrum: the figure ultimately responsible for the sounds produced in performance is mute. He has no instrument (in the organological sense of the word) and does not produce intentional, scored sound from his human instrument (although he may breathe loudly or hum unconsciously). He does not even have his own line in the score. Yet the quality of sound, unanimity of interpretation and precision of ensemble are ostensibly in his hands. The tools he uses to exert his influence over an orchestra in a musical performance are solely visual objects: his physical movements, his baton which magnifies the movements of his beating arm, his eye contact and facial expressions.¹

The usefulness and value of a conductor’s contribution is not only reliant on the visual, but is also influenced by it, as the inherently visual relationship between conductor and orchestra is in turn watched by an audience. With regards to conducting, therefore, the significance of the body multiplies. Not only is the conductor a sight for the musicians’ eyes (indeed, this is ostensibly his main purpose), he is also a sight for the audience’s eyes. Additionally, he relies to a large extent on the powers of his own sight to communicate with the orchestra non-verbally through eye-contact. His entire purpose relies on meaningful visual communication.

A conductor’s conceptual image contributes to his overall visuality, and refers to the idea of that person which the public carries in their imaginations and which is both articulated through, and fed by, portraits and publications. Such physical manifestations of a conductor’s image also relate to the conceptual image a public may generate or receive of a generalised ‘conductor’, that is, the varying perceptions people have of the conductor’s role and how it is achieved. The two conceptualised images, the generic and the specific, are mutually referential and influential.

¹ Conductors, of course, may use spoken communication in rehearsal to elucidate a point, but usually only to explain or elaborate on that which the gesture aims to communicate.
A conductor’s visuality, therefore, includes not only how the conductor looks from the sometimes contrasting views of player and audience, but also the conductor’s sightlines, the conductor’s awareness of his visibility, any related iconographic material and the conceptual image of the conductor as a celebrity. This visuality develops in the public sphere and is ultimately fed by the visual culture and critical reception of the conductor in question.

While the visual nature of a conductor’s role may seem like a self-evident and straightforward concept, it creates a phenomenological problem. A cross-sensual, conceptual leap exists between a conductor’s visible gesture and the sound that the orchestra produces, a gap which some seek to bridge with analogies to other, less ephemeral examples of leadership, power, influence and productivity. The metaphorical canvas on which these analogies are painted is the conductor’s body. The ways in which people articulate what they see and the effect it has on what they hear or how they play vary in form and content, but ultimately, all possible rationalisations of a conductor’s ability to influence a musical performance hinge on aspects of his or her visuality. This visuality can be manifest in a manner of forms, ranging from the subtle nuances of a photographer’s choice of props and pose in a conductor’s portrait, to an orchestral player’s retrospective musings on a conductor’s method and effectiveness; from a critic’s likening of a conductor to popular military leaders, to an audience member’s claim that watching the conductor’s movements aided their understanding of the music played.

This dissertation investigates the reception of orchestral conductors in London from the point of solidification of the profession in the mid-nineteenth century, until the point at which it undertook another great change with the advent of the recording and television industry, a period spanning roughly 100 years. London (and, more broadly, England) was an attractive geographic target for this study due to its complex relationship with professional music-making, the issues raised by and leading to the apparent scarcity of native conductors, and the subsequent questions that this raises regarding the status of conducting in London. Moreover, an abundance of primary source material is stored, catalogued, in English, and is often accessible online. The choice of period was self-evident, as the modern orchestral conductor did not exist before the mid-nineteenth
century, at which point England enjoyed a proliferation of publicly disseminated portraits and musical criticism.

Orchestral conductors of the nineteenth century were a more attractive focus than choral or brass band conductors, due to the growing commercialism of orchestral music-making, and the importance it was to assume by the mid-twentieth century. More pragmatically, orchestral conductors attracted far greater attention from the public and therefore the vast majority of material, literary and pictorial, relates to them. The decision to focus on conductors’ visualities, in particular, lay primarily in the abundance of available material and the marginal attention it had received to date. Of particular interest are aspects of the conductors’ visualities which reflected or related to changes in conducting theory and practice, and the information that elements of their visuality might impart relating to national identity, social status and musical ideology, all of which were crucial elements in aiding or hindering a conductor’s career in England during the period in question.

Having set those basic boundaries, the task of choosing the conductors required a broad survey of all conductors of the time, their critical reviews, and an assessment of extant portraits. Given the immense range of material presented in this general investigation, I chose to carry out in-depth case studies of a small number of conductors, rather than a broad survey of all conductors working in this time and locale. Those chosen needed to be sufficiently successful to generate a large quantity of primary source material. It was also important that demonstrably significant elements of the conductors’ visualities permeated or dominated their receptions in various ways. In particular, they were in the public eye, they were representative of visual and conceptual themes typical of their times, and they were the subject of speculation and attention, particularly with regards to their physical selves, gestures or conceptual image. This final condition eliminated those conductors who were merely famous.

Within these parameters, my investigation led to three conductors whose careers spanned the full century (more or less) without significant overlap, a large portion of whose criticism and commentary featured an aspect, or aspects, of their visuality and who were among the most successful conductors of their generations. Louis Jullien (1812-1860), Hans Richter (1843-1916) and Sir Henry J. Wood (1869-1944) were active in London
consecutively between 1840 and 1940, and their individual receptions are rich with visual significance, usually pertaining to one or a few particularly prominent visual elements. They were also, not unexpectedly, all men. For consistency, therefore, masculine pronouns will be used throughout when discussing conductors in general.

Iconography is a main branch of study under which much of this dissertation falls. Its purpose is the identification, description, and interpretation of the content of images. Erwin Panofsky’s seminal theory made a distinction between iconography (the identification of visual content) and iconology (the meaning of the visual content). However, despite ongoing ontological discussion, the latter has generally been subsumed by the former, so that iconographic method is now inclusive of both. The field of music iconography includes any item of visual media which illustrates musicians, instruments or the act of music-making or consumption. This study limits the visual source material to portraits of conductors, both serious and satirical. This is taken to mean any image (oil portrait, statue, caricature, sketch, photograph) which intentionally depicts the conductor. An additional limitation on the material is that it must be imagery produced for the public sphere, be it for publication in a newspaper, to hang on the wall of an institution, or as a

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2 The primary source material ranges from concert reviews, newspaper articles, biographies and autobiographies, to portraits (both serious and satirical), press photographs, and written descriptions of the conductors’ appearances.

3 This study does not include a discussion of gender and conducting per se. This is not to diminish the significance of gender to the profession, in particular the imbalance which persists in the twenty-first century. Instead, gender is discussed as an aspect of identity construction in relation to the three conductors to be studied.

4 ‘Iconography’ comes from the Greek ἐκόνος (image) and γράφειν (to write). The founders of iconography as a discipline within art history are Aby Warburg (1866–1929) and his followers Fritz Saxl (1890–1948) and Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968).


6 As opposed to incidental photographs in which the conductor happens to appear, though not by design.
component of the conductor’s promotional material. Written descriptions of the conductors are also included, particularly descriptions which give weight to an aspect or aspects of the subject’s visuality.

The material enables us to make interpretive deductions as to the way in which the public saw, discussed and understood how these conductors moved, dressed, behaved and conceptualised their role, both on and off stage. It facilitates greater understanding of the technique and critical reception of these particular conductors, and acts as a point of reference from which we can assess the wider spectrum of conducting and conductors in London between 1840 and 1940. The analysed images and texts suggest a relationship between aspects of a conductor’s visuality and their reception, the promotion of concerts, the cultivation of public musical taste and the formation of the canon. Each chapter investigates not only specific details of its subject’s visuality, conducting style and popular image, but, due to the chronological arrangement of the chapters, also places the trajectory of the visuality of conductors, over the period as a whole, in context.

As a reception study of three performers, the dissertation focuses on the importance that contemporaries attributed to aspects of their visualities. It therefore tells us as much about the portraitists, caricaturists, critics and audience members whose contributions are to be analysed, and the cultures of which they were a part, as it does about the three conductors. The primary intention of this approach is to recognise the largely unacknowledged contribution of the ‘visual self’ to the practice and reception of modern conducting. Additionally, the study is a vehicle to understand the rapid and unprecedented emergence of the conductor – over a relatively short space of time – as a central part of orchestral concert life. This study is not a cultural history of conducting in England, although it will undoubtedly touch on many cultural issues. It is limited to the application of iconographic and cultural theory to contemporary texts and images of three iconic conductors of three successive generations. The results, while hopefully enlightening in themselves, may also be used as instruments of intra- and inter-generational comparison. One of the most significant outcomes of the study is the plotting of trends in the visuality of the three men, which relate to concurrent issues in music, culture, society, and portraiture. This leads to the conclusion that the visuality of conductors is ever-changing and culturally embedded,
and provides a unique view of certain transient aspects of musical and non-musical culture specific to the period under investigation.

It is clear from the preceding comments that in performance, the modern conductor’s principal communicative link to his fellow musicians (and audience) in performance is visual, and while the semiotic links between the visual self and language may be easy to discern, the leap from physical gesture to acoustic quality is less direct. At the core of the problem are the parameters of the conductor’s communication: What and to whom is he communicating? What information is being passed on? And crucially, is he speaking on his own behalf or as an intermediary for another agent (e.g. the composer)? An understanding of the total visuality of the conductor hinges on the answers to these questions.

Most obviously, the information contained within the conductor’s movements in rehearsal and performance is directed in the first instance toward the musicians. Leading conducting researcher Raymond Holden confirms this understanding of the conductor’s role, stating that despite the variety of gestures used, all conductors act upon the same motivation, “to act as a kind of conduit through which their ideas are transmitted to the musicians.” He notes that in addition to bodily movements, they also communicate verbally in rehearsal, and make use of eye contact. This is not an entirely modern definition. Robert Schumann’s explanation well over a century earlier, regarding the inherent difficulty of conducting, utilised similar language in describing the means of communication that a conductor employs:

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The job on the podium is a difficult one because the conductor of an orchestra is not a foreman who directs the machines or determines its movement, but is actually the embodiment of the composition.\(^8\)

Elliott Galkin, whose *History of Conducting* comprises the most thorough and comprehensive literature on the profession to date, also sees an integral connection between the conveying of musical information and the conductor’s body, stating that the “conductor serves semiotically as a mediator inspired and inspirational – spiritually uniting composer, performer, and public.”\(^9\)

At one level, the conductor’s gesture can be dissected into separate items of basic information about musical parameters: tempo, dynamics, phrasing, and the signalling of difficult entries, for example. How the conductor’s awareness of the audience behind him affects his gestures, if at all, is difficult to ascertain, except in the rare case that an individual conductor might state that it is so. What is clear, however, is that many audience members articulate a belief that the conductor’s gestures contain information for them, either intentionally or otherwise. Therefore, how a conductor intends for his gesture to be read by the audience (or not), he often becomes a point of visual focus for the audience, and his gestures are sometimes seen as communicative tools, containing information which can contribute to an observer’s enjoyment or understanding of the music. As to whether he was considered to have communicated information on his own behalf or another’s, the answer to this question changed during the period in question, as the balance of creative power became a negotiable or contentious point between the composer and the conductor.

An appointed time-keeper is known to have existed for many ensembles since the fifteenth century. However, Warren Bebbington argues that it was not until the last two thirds of the nineteenth century that conductors emerged as dominant forces in musical life. He notes

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that the increase in the conductor’s importance was visible in concert promotion material, stating that in “the 1830s, the conductor’s name was sometimes absent from concert handbills, but by the 1890s it was invariably present, often in larger type than the titles of the musical works.”

This increase in the stature of musical leaders was gradual, beginning with the demise of the patronage system. Church- and court-employed kapellmeisters and ensemble leaders were charged with writing and performing music to satisfy their patron and his peers, and led a more or less consistent group of musicians from the violin or keyboard. Moreover, it was first and foremost a kapellmeister’s own compositions that he directed. This was a clearly delineated musical conversation: a composer-musician produced a performance at his employer’s request and expense, probably for a private audience, with a small group of musicians familiar with his compositional and leadership style and needing little stylistic or metronomic guidance. It was unnecessary for the kapellmeister to administer his direction from a centrally visual focal point, and his gestures, including his movements as a keyboardist or violinist, had little need to carry complex information, other than tempi indications.

While patronage was potentially creatively restrictive, it provided a secure income. At its demise, the performer became an artisan engaged in self-employment. Musical leaders (who were still at this point usually composers, first and foremost, and directed from the violin or keyboard) had a new set of parameters. At worst, they were providing music with broad popular appeal to any audience they could muster, perhaps at the expense of their own taste. The quality of performance was potentially lowered with poorly paid, low-

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calibre instrumentalists requiring technical instruction and leadership and few rehearsal opportunities due to funding restraints. At the other end of the scale, pre-existing financial security or connections with impresarios and theatre managers could result in opportunities to write for discerning audiences who might be open to new or unfamiliar music, and to lead ensembles with sufficient finances to hire experienced players and provide more rehearsal time. The change to a comparatively free market and the proliferation of cheap printed music also had implications for the process of writing music. Scores needed to be far more detailed, as the composer prepared it for future performers with whom he had no other link and over whom he had no control. This resulted in an increasing reliance on the text for the conductor, affecting both his preparative workload and his methods for choosing gestures.

Denis Stevens notes that “London provided a significantly growing market for numerous composers, conductors, soloists, and orchestral players” due to the growing urban population, higher wages in the middle income brackets, and more time for enjoying leisure pursuits after the adoption of regularised working hours. With an influx of potential consumers came a proliferation of professional offerings of varying style, taste and quality. Therefore, the distinction between high and low music in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had a commercial basis in a growing market. But, this is not to say that wealthy audience members were never partial to more populist fare, or vice versa. The demographics of concert life were strung along a continuum, rather than completely polarised. However, certain aspects of musical life developed a monetary value in the nineteenth century, which would prove to be of great importance to working musicians, including conductors.


Subscribers, sponsors and audience members wanted their money’s worth: a more expensively priced concert should provide better quality playing and more desirable repertoire. For example, Stauffer reports when advertising Haydn’s London concerts in the eighteenth century, that Salomon “assured potential subscribers that the performers would be ‘of the first rate’ and backed up his claim by publishing a list of the most outstanding members of the orchestra”.¹⁶ This concert environment placed pressure on musicians to improve musical standards. A better player could command a higher fee or gain entry into a more proficient ensemble. A better trained ensemble could charge higher ticket prices and attempt more difficult music with greater success.¹⁷ In addition, the consumption of music in the middle and upper classes was, like most other commodities, a status-builder. Thus, attending performances had not only personal benefits (pleasure, relaxation, entertainment, education) but also social ones.

It is during this early period of the nineteenth century that the modern conductor emerged in response to the need for supervision of better playing, the cohesion required for the larger forces being employed and to help players navigate the demands of increasingly difficult scores. As a result, the communication between conductor and professional musician in England changed its focus from time-keeping and administrative matters, to interpretative, managerial and, ultimately, power issues around the middle of the nineteenth century. Equally important, and closely related to this, was the change in dialogue between conductor and audience, whereby once his position as an indispensable element of a performance was established, the conductor could choose repertoire to educate, challenge or appeal to the common taste of his audience. Moreover, audiences’ expectations of the conductor’s duty to entertain and educate them changed, as will be shown in the following chapters. As the principal communicative link between conductor and players, and conductor and audience, is visual, these changes can be assumed to have been accompanied by concurrent changes in the conductor’s gesture, public presentation and conceptual image, as well as in the public’s understanding and reception of them.


To be able to exercise such power a conductor required a high market value. That is to say, he needed to be sufficiently valued by agents, impresarios, managers and audience that his ongoing profitability would not be jeopardised by risky programming. For the most part, this value was calculated on his ability to produce favourable musical results. However, the pulling power of the conductors’ names could also be maximised by a reputation for a colourful or idiosyncratic personality (either innate or cultivated) off the podium, as is seen in the career of Louis Jullien, the subject of the third chapter.18 This is the point at which the conductor became not only the centralised point of responsibility for musical accuracy, style and quality and, subsequently, a figure of authority and stature, but also a highly marketable draw-card for concert promoters. As the nineteenth century was a period of increased visual awareness and witnessed an escalation in the production and purchasing of portraits, this form of imagery may have played an important role in establishing and perpetuating such idiosyncratic public personalities. If this proves to be the case, it will support the theory that the production of portraits influenced, or was influenced by, the propagation of a conductor’s conceptual image.

Elliott W. Galkin argues for a link between the rise of the virtuoso conductor and the shift from private to public concertising as being more than coincidental, as competition forced conductors to market themselves more aggressively.19 Moreover, he notes, “[t]he new, ever-growing public sought in art a quality of uniqueness and heroism; it viewed performers in Napoleonic terms.”20 The physical presence of the conductor shifted also, his placement within the sightlines of the musicians becoming more important as their need for his regulatory beat increased. Conductors physically enacted and reinforced their increased importance through various means including altering their position on the stage in relation to the players and audience. The first conductors to stand at the front and centre of the orchestra, a visibly authoritative placement not yet uniform in London, streamlined

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the musical results, focusing and economising rehearsal time. This would have ensured a clearer line of sight from the players to the conductor, and a greater degree of peripheral vision of his gesture. Additionally, the visual spectacle of the concert from the audience’s perspective would have changed considerably. The conductor’s role as an intermediary between orchestra and audience was explicitly represented by his position at the nexus point between them. Since then, the site and sight of the conductor as a pivotal point of mediation between composer, orchestra and audience has become central to modern orchestral concert life.

Louis Spohr (1784-1859) claimed to be one of the first conductors in England to stand at the centre of the stage and conduct with a baton. He recalled the effect produced when he drew out his baton and stood at a separate podium in front of the London Philharmonic Society Orchestra in 1820. A new aspect of direction came to fruition, one which involved personal opinion and coaching:

I took my place, with the score before me, at a desk especially set up in front of the orchestra, drew my baton from my pocket and gave the signal to begin…. [I] could not only set the tempo with authority, but also signal the entrances to the woodwinds and brass … I also took the liberty of interrupting when things were not satisfactory, and politely but firmly making my wishes known, with Ries acting as interpreter … Surprised and delighted by this success, the orchestra expressed its approval immediately after the first movement of the symphony, and there was no further opposition from the directors.


Spohr’s words reveal that he set the initial tempo, indicated entries to resting instruments and maintained convictions as to the style he wished the players to perform (the manner of execution), all essential elements of the modern conductor’s duties. The last sentence indicates that this method of direction had met with opposition from players and management in the past. However, José Antonio Bowen points out that Spohr’s three separate accounts of this rehearsal are slightly contradictory; the actual date of the rehearsal is disputable and he may only have used the baton in rehearsal, not in performance. Felix Mendelssohn’s account of his own experience of introducing the baton to the same orchestra nine years later suggests that the effect of Spohr’s direction was not as lasting as the earlier conductor imagined. It would also not have been completely unprecedented. The professionalisation of the music world was guaranteed to impact upon the role of the conductor, and although many of London’s conductors remained unpaid throughout the nineteenth century, at the very least the prevailing attitude was one of professionalism. The result was the increased prominence of the conductor in both a practical and physical sense. He took greater responsibility for the musical results, moved to a central focal point at the front of the stage and became a prominent feature in the promotion and reporting of concert life.


The practicalities of negotiating difficult scores on minimal rehearsal time played an important role in the development of the conductor’s role, but it was not the only contributing factor. Mary Hunter states that “in early- and proto-Romantic admonitions to follow the intentions of the composer were the language about The Master” and an “increasing prevalence of a hectoring tone about fidelity to the score”. She also notes the variability of musicians’ and theorists’ approaches to the issue of fidelity and interpretation. While some advocated complete fidelity to the letter, others encouraged the genius of the performer to co-create during the performance in order to bring the music to life. As orchestras began to include more historical music in the standard repertoire, rediscovering Baroque and Classical music and continuing to play Beethoven and Mendelssohn even after their deaths, the public fascination that used to accompany the composer now transferred to the closest incarnation of their genius, the written score. The Wagnerian conducting style, which favoured an interpretive and idealistic approach to music, was therefore well timed to produce an intermediary between audience and score. Wagner felt that the role of the interpreter was to discover the poetic intent, or meaning, of the music and be able to transmit an understanding of this to the layman. Conductors of this tradition were revered because of their comprehension of a creative process beyond the average concert-goer, and judged on the proximity of their performances to the composer’s intentions. Their reputation as interpreters afforded them a status closer to the original composer than their time-beating predecessors and this increase in stature and public attention instigated an interest in conductors as unique and admired individuals, positing them within the boundaries of (co-) creative genius, rather than the more lowly ranks of time-beater or pedagogue.


27 Hunter, “‘To Play as If from the Soul of the Composer’: The Idea of the Performer in Early Romantic Aesthetics,” 361.


29 Warren Bebbington considers this increase in status to be a corollary of the greater importance attributed to instrumental music. Bebbington, “The Orchestral Conducting Practice of Richard Wagner,” 3.
There were some delays and exceptions in the progression of the conductor’s interpretative development in England, mainly stemming from the haphazard way in which interpretation became a part of the conductor’s role. The concept of the conductor as an interpreter was not to develop until closer to the end of the nineteenth century, and the extent to which a conductor truly interpreted, and the ways that this came out in a performance, varied. This hinged on whether the conductor considered ‘interpretation’ to be his responsibility to follow the composer’s wishes exactly or his right to modify them to his own or his audience’s tastes. Furthermore, it depended upon the skill of the conductor to communicate his ‘interpretation’, if he had one, to his players. The reality (anywhere other than the great opera houses of Europe), was that increasingly complex music, limited rehearsal time and varying levels of skill in orchestras meant that interpretation was predated by a role based upon improving technical standards and overseeing the discipline and working conditions of musicians.  

Alan Houtchens argues that creative activity in any period is “greatly influenced by social and political developments, by general cultural and aesthetic trends, and by economic demands on artists and on the consumers of their art.” In this light, the development of the conductor in England from a keyboard or violin-bound time-keeper to a figure of conceptual and interpretive authority is broadly speaking a product of Romantic ideals. But in England it also paralleled certain characteristics of the industrial society in which it existed, a point which will be explored in chapters three and four. Furthermore, the ascent of the modern conductor was part of a larger shift in respect for virtuosity, most commonly associated with instrumentalists, especially pianists and violinists such as Franz Liszt, Frédéric Chopin and Niccolò Paganini.

Virtuosity in conducting revolved around the concept of the performer as a co-creator of the musical score, and was in opposition to the late eighteenth-century value for absolute

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fidelity and servitude to the composer’s intentions. Although, according to Houtchens, the elevated status conductors enjoyed within the cult of virtuosity was especially celebrated for composer-conductors:

Concert societies gave top billing to those singers and instrumentalists who were known primarily for their technical prowess, and their programs mainly included bravura arias, concertos, paraphrases, fantasias, quadrilles, potpourris, and other vehicles of virtuosity. Conductors who could lead a gargantuan orchestra and chorus without using a score were admired above virtuoso soloists. But perhaps the loftiest position of all was accorded to those conductors who were also composers. They were idolized as priests of a sacred muse.

The composer-conductor, in Houtchen’s estimation, is considered by audiences to have intimate knowledge of something beyond the comprehension of the audience or lesser performers due to his status first and foremost as a creator. The two disciplines were also complimentary, each relying on unique, but mutually beneficial, pools of knowledge. By the end of the nineteenth century, the conductor would merit such esteem, without the conjunct skill of composition. Richard Leppert notes, however, that the virtuoso’s popularity was “a troublesome paradox”:

[H]e was the literal embodiment of extreme individuality, but one that ran risk of exceeding the demands of bourgeois decorum, reserve, and respectability … [T]he virtuoso’s performance at once realized art while staging personal identity as a spectacle.

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32 See: Hunter, “‘To Play as If from the Soul of the Composer’: The Idea of the Performer in Early Romantic Aesthetics,” 357-98.

33 Houtchens, “Romantic Composers Respond to Challenge and Demand,” 175.

The professional conductor emerged during a time of aesthetic debate. The merits of idealism versus naturalism, and the late eighteenth-century issue of ‘fidelity’ to the score versus the more Romantic view of the performer as a co-creator of the musical score were common points of contemplation. The development of the conductor as a figure of interpretive authority and superior musical knowledge during this time offers a unique insight into the various philosophical and critical arguments. The entrepreneurial duties that conductors adopted through concert planning and promotion played a significant role in the development of public concert life and repertoire, in particular the establishment of the musical canon. This dissertation argues that the three subjects under discussion were not isolated examples of highly visible, or visual, conductors. They are case studies within a more general shift in the role and visuality of conductors, but are of particular interest to this dissertation due to their importance within the field of conducting and the resulting quantity of material relating to their visuality, or the prevalence of one or several elements of their visuality in portraiture and literature.

The visuality of conductors also had its roots in a prevailing increase in visual culture. The London in which English conductors lived and worked in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century was in transition. Financially, the city was enjoying the benefits of industrialization and a booming commercial sector, but poverty was also increasing, as artisans and craftspeople lost their trade to mass production. The ways in which people earned an income were changing and traditional gender roles were under threat as women gained greater access to education, political influence and employment opportunities. Most critically, London’s population was growing exponentially. Francis Sheppard details the extent of the urban growth in England, and its precipitating factors:

In 1801 only about one-fifth of Britain lived in cities or towns with 10,000 or more inhabitants, but by 1901 over three-quarters of them did so. This urbanization of the greater part of an entire nation – the first of its kind in modern times…was made

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35 Mary Hunter discusses this comprehensively with regards to performers in general. Hunter, “‘To Play as If from the Soul of the Composer’: The Idea of the Performer in Early Romantic Aesthetics,” 357-98.

36 Jeremy Black and Donald M. MacRaild, Nineteenth-Century Britain (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2003), 101.
possible by internal migration, by the high level of the urban marriage rate and hence the urban birth rate, and at the end of the nineteenth century by the rapid fall in the death rate there.\textsuperscript{37}

In London, the population rose from 960,000 in 1801 to 4,500,000 in 1901.\textsuperscript{38} With the influx of new citizens hoping to become successful urbanites, and no doubt experiencing to some degree a sense of disorientation, the traditional class system (of upper or lower class) was no longer sufficient to cater for the myriad people seeking definition.\textsuperscript{39} Life in London was, in almost every aspect, unstable.\textsuperscript{40}

The result was a society in which citizens had greater access to, and greater need for, the tools of social mobility.\textsuperscript{41} The industrial businessmen who had made sizeable fortunes in the early part of the century now had the opportunity to marry into the upper classes, purchase land and, by virtue of the capitalist system, increase their profitability. London was a city of opportunity for the motivated citizen.\textsuperscript{42} Losing status was also more likely than before, as the prescribed rules of etiquette with which one could improve oneself, if


\textsuperscript{38} “These figures relate to the Registrar-General’s London Census Division, the area of which, with modifications, became the Administrative County of London in 1888.” Sheppard, \textit{London: A History}, 290.

\textsuperscript{39} Chris Cook notes that, London’s population “doubled in the eighteenth century to reach almost one million people. During the nineteenth century, it expanded rapidly to become the largest city in the world, with a population of 4.5 million by 1901.” Chris Cook, ed., \textit{Britain in the Nineteenth Century 1815-1914}, The Longman Companions to History (London: Longman, 1999), 111.


\textsuperscript{41} “There was little in our period that so clearly defined manners, customs and social attitudes as the desire of a petit-bourgeois (lower middle class) shop owner or clerk retain what he had. The petit-bourgeois were thus jealous of their superiors and horror-struck at the thought of sinking back into the mass of their inferiors (some of whom had a higher take-home pay).” Black and MacRaild, \textit{Nineteenth-Century Britain}, 101.

ignored or unknown, could precipitate a loss of social standing. For most Londoners in the nineteenth century, the aspiration towards a higher status in society, and fear of the drop to a lower one, was of the greatest concern in everyday life. London was a meeting place for new faces, cultures, languages and dialects, mannerisms and backgrounds. The established social order was changing and thus the public assertion of one’s identity and ability to recognise another’s were not only an ideological impulse of the era, but also indispensable social tools in re-orientating oneself.

The visual and visible self became a Victorian’s vehicle for establishing his position within the many new social ranks, through association with desirable elements and disassociation with those he (or society) deemed disagreeable. The display of furs, walking canes, hats and spats were not mere adherences to fashionable trends. Certain garments and accessories were visual references to income levels, professions, respectability and knowledge of decorum. A white collar on a man, for instance, conveyed a variety of messages about its wearer: its cleanness allied him with those who did not need to engage in manual labour, and those who could afford servants to wash and starch white garments. Perhaps even more importantly, it separated the wearer from those who did not, or could

43 “When considered in critical retrospect, it is clear that very few individuals ever crossed the divide between middle class and aristocracy, but the promise (or the myth) of such possibility was very widely sustained. At the same time, the drive to adopt elegant standards motivated countless aspirants to improve their knowledge, social skills and income and to live ever more comfortable, genteel, middle-class lives in the process of trying.” Linda Young, *Middle-Class Culture in the Nineteenth Century: America, Australia and Britain* (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 14-15.


46 “The imitative character of middle-class culture is a pointer to its essential drive: the urge of aspiration, of self-improvement, of upward mobility. In practice, it contained a hollow element of promise that good or at least correct behaviour would achieve the reward of higher status.” Young, *Middle-Class Culture in the Nineteenth Century*, 15.
not, wear a white collar. The visible cultivation of identity in nineteenth-century London was about creating associations and emphasising difference in order to establish one’s position. These issues had a great influence on portraiture and are likely to have influenced the conspicuous display, or absence, of status-associated objects in the portraits to be studied here, many of which will be shown to be analogous with portraits of unrelated professions and character types.

The extent to which physiognomy, pathognomy and phrenology gained credence and popularity in the social, artistic and political worlds of nineteenth-century Britain is a topic which has been explored and verified by many recent writers, to the extent that it does not require further consideration here. What is of importance, however, is why they were so popular, the effect they had on people’s visual perceptions of the world around them, and to what extent this is manifest in the portraiture of nineteenth-century London. In answer to the first, Judith Wechsler’s research on the visual world of Paris in the nineteenth century is exemplary. She supports the assertion above that urban life in cities like Paris and London in the nineteenth century would have been one of uncertainty, novelty and social anxiety as people witnessed the formative stages of the global village of modern urban life. For the people constituting that proverbial melting-pot of races, religions, and dialects, contact with such diversity would have been a novel and bewildering situation. As Wechsler demonstrates, characterisation of people by immediately visible elements made the process of evaluating fellow city-dwellers a more manageable task. Speaking of nineteenth-century Paris, she recognises that “in a context of urban pressure, dislocation

47 During this period white became a symbolic colour due not only to the above, but also religious fervor and racial sentiment.

48 The same process was happening in the capitals throughout Europe and in America, (and to a lesser degree in British colonies such as Australia and New Zealand). After all, imperial England was not the only country to embrace industrialisation, nor was it alone in experiencing post-Enlightenment scepticism and mass urbanisation. However, the construction of individual and national identity in nineteenth-century England was unique in several aspects, simply because England itself was in many ways different to mainland Europe during this period.

and mass communication, this visual lore of physiognomy, bearing and gesture gained currency, immediacy and artistic power. Christopher Rivers offers the opinion that physiognomy, as a classification of people by semiotic, and ultimately synechdochal means, is also part of a basic human need “to order, to explain, to narrate.” The visual reception of fellow London citizens was, then, one of classification and narration – essentially a naturalistic visual response – in order to make sense of what was an entirely foreign social experience. The portraits to be studied in the foregoing chapters and the apparent focus on aspects of the subjects’ visualities are part of a wider preoccupation with appearance and physical labelling, and the material must be analysed with this in mind.

Within a society which placed great importance on social status, the strata of which had increasingly penetrable boundaries, music was one of many forms of social currency. It raised the status of the lower classes, but could lower the social status of the upper classes if consumed, or partaken, inappropriately. Like most aspects of nineteenth-century life in London, the domain of musical performance was controlled by the social roles enacted by its participants, both performers and listeners alike. Being seen engaging in unseemly activities or ignoring the common rules of etiquette could have major consequences professionally, financially or, perhaps most devastatingly, socially. The increasing purchasing power of London’s nineteenth-century middle-class citizens, their tastes in music and other cultural products, and the ways in which they asserted their identity through their visual selves were therefore influenced by social anxiety related to status and ‘improvement’, and were decisively influential in the development of music-making and listening in London.

50 Wechsler, A Human Comedy, 15.

51 Christopher Rivers, Face Value: Physiognomical Though and the Legible Body in Marivaux, Lavater, Balzac, Gautier, and Zola (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 101.

52 “Many of the social anxieties that afflicted the British arose out of a heightened appreciation of the precariousness of their place in the world, an appreciation that found its most visible expression in a new and insidious variant of social Darwinism.” Kennedy, Britain and Empire, 23.
The consumption of music, privately or publicly, was an activity through which Victorians displayed or challenged status issues, amongst many other things. The performance of music was more complex, however. The mid-nineteenth century, at which point this study begins, was an era of education, improvement and etiquette. Music education played a crucial role in the education of the lower classes and encouragement of morally enriching pursuits. This affected the types of music and musicians being produced: namely a surplus of vocalists and teachers, mainly women. Music consumption and production sat uncomfortably in the structure of etiquette and class awareness, and was not highly respected as a profession. To engage in music making was almost unthinkable for an English gentleman. The potential repercussions of professional music making for an Englishman were not only tied to his financial status, but also to his masculinity and nationality. The potential effects of this on a conductor’s visuality, particularly his portraits, are vast and complex. They range from the mitigating steps his portraitist might need to take in order to counter negative status issues, to the elements of his public persona that a conductor might seek to control or embellish.

Researchers have demonstrated that when positively presented to the public, the conductor epitomised the hero-leader of gargantuan forces and interpreter of the composer’s genius. Richard Leppert also acknowledges that through the role of the conductor, the ethics of the bourgeois movement were epitomised within the process of instrumental music:

… Schumann recognized the other side of virtuosity’s coin: namely, that it was a hyperbolic manifestation of the self-disciplining bourgeois. The performer wrests

53 Weber, Music and the Middle Class, 119.

54 “By the latter half of the nineteenth century the singing-class movement had created a great enthusiasm for music among the middle and lower classes. As we have seen, those who were active in fostering this were also anxious that music should exert a moral influence.” E. D. Mackerness, A Social History of English Music (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), 164.

55 To some extent this affected conductors least of all, because as shall become clear, the conductor was not considered a performer in the strictest sense, the role of the conductor being associated with intellectuals and businessmen.
the chaos of infinite sonoric possibility into the shape he demands – and the result of such work is the Work. Not for nothing is the etude the perfect metaphor for the complicated links between nineteenth-century Romanticism and the governing precept of industrial capitalism, defined by what Max Weber famously named the protestant [sic] work ethic. Frenetic performers, and equally frenetic conductors and their disciplined orchestras, constituted via sight the aesthetic transformation of human mass labor, and via sound the aesthetic manifestation of the results of work; namely, artistic production.56

The experience of an orchestral concert led by a conductor, in Leppert’s discussion, represents to the largely middle-class concert-going public their own struggles of power, achievement and the products of labour. The public persona of the conductor, therefore, is recognised as being parallel to that of the bourgeois factory owner, or entrepreneurial businessman. While this would be the case in any of the major cities in Europe, the power and sheer number of London’s bourgeois concert-goers, coupled with the values of activities of Victorian society, mean the reverence for the conductor as a hero-figure is not based on his leadership in a romantic or creative revolution. Rather, he becomes a figurehead of the industrial, moral revolution of Victorian London. The conductor is distinguished from creative individuals such as composers, artists, poets and writers, because the creation of an ideal artistic work is not at the centre of his labour. His main purpose is understood to be the re-creation of another’s creative vision through the control, instruction and improvement of his players and audience. The following chapters demonstrate that the conductor was often metaphorically framed according to concurrent social ideals and themes, and that this was likely to have carried over into more tangible elements of a conductor’s visuality. The literature and portraiture under investigation herein may shed light on the extent of the relationship between the conductor’s perceived role, its visual manifestations, and elements of the surrounding culture.

During the hundred-year period in which Jullien, Richter and Wood worked in England, the conducting profession and the visibility of its practitioners developed considerably: the

quality of performances was increasingly attributed to the proficiency of the conductor, conductors became more prominent in advertising material for concerts, and these changes were paralleled by the physical shift of the conductor to the centre of the stage. What the audience saw on the concert platform informed their conception of what a conductor was and did, and vice versa.

Given the prevailing visuality of nineteenth-century life in London, it is not surprising that access to, and dissemination of, portraiture also proliferated. The development of professional conducting in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century coincided with the mass production of portraits and resulted in a broad range of images of conductors produced for concert promotion, magazine and newspaper articles, *cartes-des-visites*, satire, and commemorative purposes. Many of the images were available for purchase by members of the public, either as individual cabinet portraits, or in larger portrait collections.

Photography, lithography and the industrial press made portraiture accessible and affordable for sitters and collectors alike, and conductors and their agents made use of the new technology with *cartes-des-visites*, elegant engravings to accompany concert programmes and biographical sketches, and later, propagation of their public image in magazines, advertisements and on LP covers. Due to their popularity and heightened status in the music world, the extant portraiture of conductors from this period is substantial and can often be found in anthologies and periodicals. The pictorial content of these portraits varies according to chronology and location amongst other things, but the subjects can generally be grouped within the greater genre of creative sitters.\(^\text{57}\) The sheer volume of images attests both to the status that conductors developed in a very short space of time, and the effort put into their promotion for professional reasons.

\(^\text{57}\) The more obvious categorisation as musicians is avoided here as at times we find conductors depicted as composers, academics or even businessmen, with allusions made to a more general creativity or involvement in music rather than the conductor as an executant. Victorian England is an exception to this, but for reasons we will explore later in this chapter, this was not due to the activities of the sitters, but wider issues and expectations in Victorian England regarding the status of musicians, creativity and some practical considerations.
Portraiture was, among other things, a vehicle for identifying, solidifying and sometimes falsifying a sitter’s status. Accordingly, conductors adapted it to their own needs. However, its function was greater than mere advertising. As an ancient pictorial form, rich in traditions, portraits had the potential to associate a sitter with social, racial, artistic and financial ideals. Moreover, as Patricia Fara notes, portraits “presented role models that simultaneously revealed and shaped social characteristics such as gender behaviour, class structures and national stereotypes”. To have a portrait painted of oneself as a means of personal or professional promotion was an obvious way to demonstrate both financial capital (presumably the portraitist is being paid), and to assert one’s cultural standing by association with historical or contemporary figures in portraiture’s annals. Additionally, the commissioning of a portrait by an institution, of considerable interest here, was a very public demonstration of symbolic capital. Caricature represents the negation of these values: by subverting the pictorial trends (e.g., exaggerating undesirable physical traits, showing the sitter in inappropriate clothing and postures, or emphasising unsociable behaviour), cultural and symbolic capital could be depleted. Nineteenth-century portraiture must therefore be viewed with the objectives and desires of an esteem-hungry society in mind.

The hunger for images of celebrities, including musicians, came from the newly stratified upper middle class, which emerged in the early nineteenth century when the existing middle class proliferated. Weber explains that “as the capital and the political power of the haute bourgeoisie grew, its members separated from the rest of the middle classes ... These were the people who made up the core of the ‘middle-class’ public in concert and opera life.” This group was educated, affluent, and strove to close the gap between itself and the aristocracy. Developments in technology were driven by, and aimed at, the increased prosperity and proliferation of the upper middle class, and their buying power influenced

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the production, dissemination and conception of all forms of imagery, resulting in a diverse range of new forms of portraiture. Traditional oil portraiture was still produced, but more accessible forms such as photographs, etchings, lithographs, caricatures and silhouettes were within the reach, physically and financially, of the diverse middle strata of English society. The print industry in particular aided the spread of visual communication. Cheap, mass-produced images were a collectible novelty to some, and, as illiteracy was still commonplace, the only comprehensible form of communication to others.

As important as the forms and varieties of portraiture are to this study, of equal importance, as the following chapter will demonstrate, are its functions. The consumption of portraiture, in its many forms, was thought of as a way of understanding others, making judgements about their status, and realising or changing one’s position in relation to others. For the sitter, it was a means of status definition, enhancement or mitigation. Portraits from the nineteenth century onward, particularly those which were small or affordable enough for the public to collect, or which were disseminated through periodicals, were viewed as statements about morality, national character and emulation. Due to these positive associations, they were valuable tools for concert promotion and publications of biographical material. The portraits of conductors, like those of other performers, were potentially a means of promoting upcoming concerts and even propagating a desirable public persona. They may have been produced also as commemorative images, artwork on sheet music covers, visual accompaniments to concert reviews or obituaries or, in the twentieth century, recording covers. Regardless of their specific forms and functions, the corpus of images in this genre contributed to, and reflected, popular opinions about conductors, their status and role.

As I argue, the idealised musician in a large portion of nineteenth-century continental portraiture can be identified as part of an established genre, with its own set of conventions and traditions established throughout a considerable period of time. Whether the portraits of the three conductors of this study conform to the idealised images produced in continental Europe remains to be seen. The various Anglo-specific visual themes discussed above, some of which are at odds with European trends, may counteract existing pictorial
style and may even have initiated styles and trends unique to England. In any case, the European situation falls outside the parameters of this dissertation.

The undercurrents discussed above continue throughout the following chapters. Chapter two clarifies the theoretical basis on which the dissertation is founded, discussing the source material, reviewing the literature around the topic and establishing a method with which to approach the study. The next three chapters each deal with one of the conductors, in chronological order. The first of these (chapter three) deals with the visuality of Frenchman Louis Jullien, and in particular his exoticism, which was both celebrated and denigrated. Serious and satirical portraits effeminise his appearance and reports of his conducting typically portray him as being flamboyant, demonstrative and theatrical.

In contrast, the subject of the fourth chapter, Hans Richter, was held in uniformly high regard, partly as a result of his Wagnerian heritage. This chapter focuses on the power of Richter’s conceptual image to influence his popularity and musical authority, and assesses the evidence of this over-arching conceptual image in his portraiture by establishing links between the content and form of the images and literary sources.

In chapter five, Sir Henry Wood’s visuality is shown to be fraught with contradictions regarding his national identity. As the first major native career conductor in England, and a highly celebrated one, it would not be unreasonable to assume that he would exhibit typically English characteristics in his public persona. However, his dogged construction of an idealised continental image in the earlier part of his career reveals a depth of concern about the potential loss of status as a professional musician, and a deep-seated idealisation of the perfect musician as being continental.

All three chapters discuss technical issues of posture, gesture, rehearsal and performance technique and behaviour, and elements of the conductor’s off-stage visuality. The source material is examined for suggestions of general changes in gesture size and style throughout the period, and indications of what musicians, audience members and critics considered to be ‘good’ conducting, as well as their expectations of what a conductor did and how it was effective. The three conductors under investigation existed within a newly visualised and visualising culture, and their careers display the greater prominence
conductors were enjoying in concert life. Different visual aspects dominate the reception and portraiture of each of the conductors, and the chapters will be focussed accordingly. However, these elements are characteristic of the changes and influences affecting all conductors during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. They contribute to our knowledge of the development of conducting as a profession, and deepen our understanding of the residual visual and literary artefacts from conductors’ lives.
2. Conducting and the Body: Source Material and Method

In establishing a sound methodological approach, it is necessary to clarify what related work has already been done and what remains to be investigated. To that end, this chapter seeks to examine the existing literature and determine its scope, content and methods, compare methodologies and theoretical approaches and, finally, to test these against the source material to which they will be applied. In order to review the published literature, the genre(s) of this study must be defined and the various fields of study with which it interacts identified. As in any multi-disciplinary study, it is not necessarily a straight-forward task.

Two forms of primary source material relating to a conductor’s visuality form the basis of this thesis: literature and portraiture. The study seeks to locate those components of the literature and portraiture which relate to, or impart information about, the conductor’s visuality. While most of this information is readily recognisable due to the obvious references to the conductor’s gesture, behaviour or appearance, some of it is less discernible, concealed within non-musical, or non-visual, factors.

Two developments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries coincided with the careers of Jullien, Richter and Wood: it was a period in which the number, affordability and, hence, dissemination of portraits grew considerably in London due to technological changes and reforms in stamp duty. Furthermore, as a result of the widespread availability of portraits, portraiture in the nineteenth century was available to a far greater portion of the population and to a broader cross-section of society.¹ The growth of the printing

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¹ “Advances in printing technology, reductions in the newspaper tax and paper duty, the widening demand for reading-matter, and publishers’ increasing efforts to supply this demand had together promoted the rapid growth of the popular publishing industry in England. Between 1830 and 1860, this growing industry played a fundamental part in the first phase of a broad transformation: the unprecedented expansion of the cultural experience of working people. From the centre of this new and enlarged popular culture, there developed concurrently the beginnings of a modern mass culture. As we will see, in the three decades following 1830 both the printed word and its associated imagery increasingly reached an audience that was not only larger
industry in the nineteenth century changed the market value and accessibility of portraits and the demographic, role and size of the intended audience. The materials to be studied are of a variable quality and aesthetic, and may be of a satirical nature, while still adhering largely to elements of traditional portraiture and music criticism.

The literature included here spans many genres, such as biography and autobiography, criticism, advertisements, editorial material from periodicals and private correspondence. Only those excerpts which concern the conductor’s visuality have been included and care has been taken to include a representative sample, not just material which supported the arguments of the chapters. However, the uniformity of many of the excerpts from newspapers and other periodicals ensured this was not a common problem. Where a written element accompanies an image, the two types of material are analysed together, as they usually reference each other.

Most of the published, publicly disseminated literature in the study conforms to Fred Everett Maus’s conception of music criticism:

More broadly, it is a kind of thought that can occur in professional critical writing but also appears in many other settings. In this broader sense, music criticism is a type of thought that evaluates music and formulates descriptions that are relevant to evaluation; such thought figures in music teaching, conversation about music, private reflection, and various genres of writing including music history, music theory and biography.³

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2 Colin Matthew estimates that “from 1859 hundreds of thousands of cartes de visite (small photographs mostly of public figures, also used by professional people as calling/advertising cards) were sold (cartomania or cardomania, the craze was called).” Colin Matthew, ed., The Nineteenth Century, 11 vols., vol. 9, The Short Oxford History of the British Isles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 25.

Maus elaborates that published music criticism and reviews are merely the most visible of a much greater form of engagement with the subject of music. In this way much, if not most, of the material falls within the boundaries of music criticism, even if it is expressed through private correspondence, biographical or autobiographical writing, or publicity material.

The glut of periodicals circulating in England from the mid-nineteenth century and the public’s desire for guidance in musical taste contributed to a demand for music criticism. Usually written by amateur musicians, critical articles generally fell within two topics, reviews of concerts and performers or discussions of the merits of new compositions. The latter had been a feature of music criticism since the eighteenth century, during which invention and originality came to be prized over imitation. Debates about specific performances and, in particular, the contributions made by the conductors were a result of the solidification of the canon. Individual performances were weighed against the perfect ideal of the composer’s intentions, as transmitted through the score.

Critics published regularly with the same periodical or periodicals, many writing for more than one publisher at a time. This led to the development of styles and opinions specific to certain periodicals, but also created the possibility for one opinion to dominate due to its author holding multiple reviewing positions, rather than widespread concurrence.

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4 “Professional journalistic criticism is a specialized, if highly visible, instance of a more widespread phenomenon. Members of an audience discussing a classical performance during an interval, piano teachers persuading their students to favour certain styles of performance and composition teachers responding to student projects all engage in music-critical discourse, just as fully as the paid critic whose words will appear in a newspaper or magazine. Again, a composer working on a score, a performer preparing a performance or a listener at a concert will typically engage in critical thought, even though they may not speak their thoughts or even formulate their critical ideas linguistically.” Everett Maus, et al, “Criticism” in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 670.

5 The tradition of criticism being written by amateurs and academics persisted even after the professionalisation of the rest of the music industry.

Furthermore, critics’ opinions could be affected, for better or for worse, by political, professional, personal or financial issues, though in general they were more transparent than their American counterparts.

Reviews of performances were more likely to appear in newspapers than specialist music publications such as *The Musical Times and Singing-Class Circular* and *Musical Times*, indicating interest from a broad readership who consumed music criticism along with more general news.7 Like the audience for music from the middle of the nineteenth century onward, the readership for reviews was likely to be diverse in background and musical experience, and much of the criticism of the time was specifically directed to readers with little or no formal musical training.8 While most authors of reviews in the nineteenth century remained anonymous, many of the most influential critics did not. Certain names recur throughout the primary source material, including Henry Chorley (1808-1972), J. W. Davison (1813-1885), Ernest Newman (1868-1959), Louis Engel (dates unknown) and George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950).

In the early twentieth century, other forms of music criticism, in the form of biographies, programme notes, collected writings of critics, histories of music and musicology journals, expanded the ways in which the public could read about music and musicians. Also included is a small amount of private correspondence, which acts as a gauge of authenticity – although that word, as shall become clear throughout the study, should be used within caution – providing a point of comparison between the public image, and the private, possibly unguarded one. Biography is a means to an end and not without its dangers, as biographies and autobiographies from the period in question did not necessarily have a factual representation of the subject’s life as their primary motivation.9 Even if the

9 This will prove to be an especially pertinent issue with regards to the biographies of Louis Jullien and Henry Wood. For discussions of biography as a genre in musicology, see: Peter France and William St Clair, eds., *Mapping Lives: The Uses of Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Hans Lenneberg, *Witnesses and Scholars: Studies in Musical Biography* (New York: Gordon & Breach, 1988); J. T. Pekacz, “Memory,
biographer’s motives were unbiased, biographies remain partial truths, usually only the most interesting or distinguished elements of a person’s life forming their content. They are valuable, nonetheless, in confirming or questioning factual details about the subject’s career and in ascertaining to what extent the subject was aware of and actively influenced his visuality.

The images are diverse, including formal and satirical portraits, cartes-des-visites, postcards, oil paintings, lithographs, etchings, drawings, satirical caricatures, watercolours and statuary, and are by no means the entire corpus of images of these men. However, they are a representative sample, chosen to illustrate recurring types and themes, or notable exceptions, and they were all intended for public dissemination. That is to say, there are no incidental or private images, and even those portraits which were not posed in the traditional sense (e.g., sketches or photographs taken during rehearsal or performance, photographs depicting the conductor at ease and not engaged in musical activity) warrant inclusion only if they made their way into the public arena via publication of some sort, with or without the conductor’s consent.

Throughout the thesis, the body plays an important role (to borrow from Richard Leppert) as a site as well as a sight of musical performance. However, the significance of the body in relation to music, and in particular to the method to be adopted, should not be confused with the field of ‘embodied music cognition’, which studies the role of the body in relation to musical activity from a cognitive scientist’s perspective, making use of empirical evidence. In this study, the relationship between body, sight and movement is examined as culturally significant.


It is too easy to categorise the study as entirely a reception history. To label it thus, and to adopt the appropriate methodology, would require serious theoretical negotiation. The points which warrant that classification are equalled in number and strength by the points which preclude it. In particular, as Niels Krabbe notes, reception histories commonly focus on a particular work or repertoire, not on a person, ensuring the object of study is an autonomous, immutable work of art. Nonetheless, reception history helps to define what this study attempts to do, if not precisely what it is. Rather than stretch the method of reception history over unintended and ill-fitting territory, it will suffice to borrow the concepts of that field in preparation for conceiving a unique methodological approach.

Harold Marcuse’s definition of reception history as “the history of the meanings that have been imputed to historical events” is multi-layered and is a suitable point of departure. It recognises reception history as incorporating “the different ways in which participants, observers, and historians and other retrospective interpreters have attempted to make sense of events, both as they unfolded, and over time since then, to make those events meaningful for the present in which they lived and live.” From his summation it can be deduced that the relativity of the literature as artefacts of a particular time, place and individual, will best be served by a methodology that forgoes strictures based on current values and assumptions. Our analysis of literature from another period must originate from the perspective of its original writers and readers, not our own.

The thesis touches briefly on a variety of secondary subjects and theoretical areas, and utilises jargon from within each discipline. The term ‘visuality’ is used throughout. Architects and designers use it to denote the study of images as signs, metaphors, and texts, and for cultural theorists the term is analogous to ‘visual culture’, a sub-discipline within cultural studies. Art historian Norman Bryson distinguishes between vision and visuality

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13 An alternative term might be ‘pictorialism’, which Thomas Tolley uses to imply “the whole range of visual culture, not just ‘art’, and how this range was used and perceived in its historical context.” Thomas Tolley, Painting the Cannon's Roar: Music, the Visual Arts and the Rise of an Attentive Public in the Age of Haydn (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2001), xiii.
thus: “Between subject and the world is inserted the entire sum of discourses which make up visuality, that cultural construct, and make visuality different from vision, the notion of unmediated visual experience”\(^\text{14}\). These definitions are consistent with the use of the term here. Visuality includes an awareness of the conductor as a viewer, an object for viewing and a self-aware member of a community. This definition encompasses publicly disseminated portraits of the conductor, and the conceptual view of any particular conductor, which a community might form and articulate in memoirs, biographies and criticism.\(^\text{15}\)

The relationship between the aural and visual facets of musical performance is not a new field of research. As early as 1993, Leppert argued in *The Sight of Sound* that the abstract nature of the musical product which the body generates heightens the importance of its means of production, and the principal way in which an audience member experiences that process is via sight.\(^\text{16}\) These ideas are developed in Thomas Tolley’s *Painting the Cannon’s Roar*, in which he explores the diverse relationships between music and visual culture in the eighteenth century. The collated chapters in *Picturing Performance: The Iconography of the Performing Arts in Concept and Practice* aim to encourage greater depth of investigation when analysing images of the performing arts, including images relating to music performance. While many of the contributors frame their chapters around issues of methodology, an underlying theme throughout the book is the connection between imagery, the arts and society. Although at times editor Thomas Heck’s willingness to read culturally embedded information into the images threatens the book’s integrity, the depth to which his


\(^{16}\) “... the slippage between the physical activity to produce musical sound and the abstract nature of what is produced creates a semiotic contradiction that is ultimately “resolved” to a significant degree via the agency of human sight.” Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body*, xxi.
research and that of his co-contributors probes, encourages a freely explorative approach. William Weber’s edited collection *The Musician as Entrepreneur, 1700-1914* begins with his premise that musicologists’ preoccupation with musicians as exalted, marginalised or avant-garde artists has led to musicians not receiving sufficient consideration as functioning members of, and within, society. This study attempts to review the literature and images pertaining to its subjects with his warning in mind; an idealised portrait of an interpretive conductor is an artefact of its surrounding culture, not necessarily a realistic depiction of the sitter, and the reasons behind the artist’s depiction of the sitter may be varied and complex.

Technical handbooks constitute the majority of conducting literature, and can be seen to have done so throughout history. The historiography of conducting, therefore, has focused on traditions of gesture, the transmission of practical knowledge and experience, and the aims and methods of successful conductors at a given point in time. These publications do not attempt to apply any cultural theory to the issues discussed, although they can be contextualised retrospectively by paying close attention to the kind of language used, in particular the metaphors and similes applied to the conductor and his role. The writings of Richard Wagner, Hector Berlioz and Sir Henry Wood are of particular interest in this thesis. Wood’s is covered in detail in chapter five, but a brief discussion of Berlioz’s and Wagner’s theorems here may prove useful to the ensuing discussions.

Berlioz and Wagner articulated the underlying issue of the professionalisation of the conducting profession from two different, but undoubtedly connected, viewpoints.

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separated by time and ideology. In both theorists’ arguments, the most influential aspect of the creative power struggle between composer and conductor was the separation of their duties. As composers relinquished their performance duties, the score gained greater importance as a text for the performers to follow. The improvisatory spirit of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century performances, was replaced by a reverence for the score and an awareness of correct and incorrect interpretations of the score.

The conductor’s role was one of significance to Berlioz as he was one of the earliest composers not proficient on an instrument and therefore reliant on others to play his music. The conductor was an obstacle between his music and the performers and in the end he took on that role himself to maintain greater control of his performances. The transparent impetus behind his treatise on conducting was the negligent performances that he felt his music had received in the hands of incompetent or malevolent conductors. In addition to his own conjecturing on conducting theory and the extent to which he put his ideals into practice in performance, the unprecedented complexity and the primacy of the orchestral palette to the spirit of his music affected the conducting of those who performed it.

Berlioz’s treatise, “Le Chef d’Orchestre: Théorie de Son Art”, addressed the role of the conductor more generally, but most of the comments could be traced to problems he would have experienced witnessing the treatment of his own music by other performers. He

20 Most current conducting historians and theorists distinguish the proceeding conductors as belonging to one of two broad categories: the transparent conductors, influenced by Berlioz’s writing and famously (and at times patronisingly) epitomised by Felix Mendelssohn; and the objectivists, whose approach to conducting was profoundly influenced by Wagner’s theories. Such a polarised model invites a simplistic view of the individuals whose careers are under scrutiny. It is more helpful to recognise the connections between Berlioz and Wagner’s theories, as examination reveals more similarities than differences between them, particularly with regards to their fundamental premises. Wagner’s theory is an extensive development of Berlioz’s with some innovations. In this way the transparent and objectivist conductors are not at opposite ends of a spectrum, but the latter operate on a more developed system of thought than the former, the basic premise of both being communal ground.

21 “Berlioz’ compositions were of so novel a facture that conductors needed to reconsider and reorient their procedures, and this served to expand conductorial technique.” Karl Krueger, The Way of the Conductor: His Origins, Purpose and Procedures (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 136-37.
wrote, “Music may claim to be the most exacting of the arts. Of all the arts it is the hardest to cultivate and its creations are the most rarely presented in conditions which allow one to appreciate their true worth, to see their outline clearly and to learn their inner meaning and real character.”

He noted that the composer’s message was all the more difficult to convey, as the transmission of his intent requires “a host of intermediaries between him and his audience. These may be intelligent or stupid, devoted or hostile, energetic or lazy; from first to last they can contribute to the glory of his work, or they can spoil it, insult it, or even wreck it completely.”

In his Mémoires, Berlioz advises “[u]nhappy composers” to “[l]earn to conduct yourselves (in both senses of the word); for conductors, never forget, are the most dangerous of all

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your interpreters.”24 The difficulties his music posed for conductors, including himself in his earlier days, were partly due to its unprecedented complexity and density of scoring.25

As Paris’s music culture centred around the opera house and its tradition of music as a changeable and transient event, concert works such as his were prone to be re-orchestrated, truncated or embellished in the spirit of their times, especially if they were too difficult for the players. As the surface elements such as instrumentation and orchestral balance are of such integral importance to Berlioz’s music, the common practice of treating the score as merely a guide, rather than a text to be followed to the letter, would change the very character of his music. Berlioz’s main concern was therefore that conductors refrain from distorting the score as this constituted a distortion of the work itself. In his eyes, the score was irrefutable and immutable, thus granting it elevated status and limiting the role of the performer to one of a re-creator.

Berlioz theorised that the conductor had two distinct roles: to understand the technical elements of the score and to then transmit these by inspiring the players.26 By performing these two functions, in this order, the conductor could then fulfil the greater overall task of illuminating the work, as one might shine a light on a painting. As the beam of light reveals, yet does not change the content of the artist’s canvas in any way, so the conductor should illuminate the music without distorting the composer’s intentions in any way.

Throughout Wagner’s essay On Conducting, cementing him as a prophet of modern conducting, and aligning his theory with Berlioz’s, is his dedication to realising the intentions of the composer. He opens the treatise with a passage which resonates with

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Berlioz’s earlier imploration to composers to take greater control of the performance of their works:

Composers cannot afford to be indifferent to the manner in which their works are presented to the public; and the public, naturally, cannot be expected to decide whether the performance of a piece of music is correct or faulty, since there are no data beyond the actual effect of the performances to judge by.\textsuperscript{27}

Whereas Berlioz’s intention was to impress upon conductors the importance of following the score and to not alter the text, Wagner’s message is for conductors to think like the composer, as an understanding of the creative process behind the score is necessary to understand how best to re-create it. At the centre of his thinking is the primacy of the composer’s poetic intentions. He suggests that the particular quality of a passage of music “cannot be conveyed unless it is played as the master imagined it.”\textsuperscript{28} The conductor’s power, in Wagner’s eyes, lies in his ability to transmit the composer’s intentions by creative means and enforce this unique interpretation upon the musicians by use of his authority and discipline.\textsuperscript{29} In recalling his own performance of Der Freischütz in Dresden, he notes


\textsuperscript{29}He uses the word melos to denote a correct choice of tempo based on the elucidation of the music’s true character and the conception of the melody as a sung line. Wagner, Über das Dirigiren, 15.
that in taking the tempo according to his instinctive feeling, he aroused the commendation of an elderly player in the orchestra who, he claims, told him “Yes, this is the way Weber himself took it; I now hear it again correctly for the first time.”

As shall be demonstrated in chapter four, this aspect of his conducting theory, which he believed granted him authority as a conductor, created problems in his relationship with Hans Richter and other conductors of his own music.

Wagner distinguishes, in a rhetoric which is to reappear throughout the ensuing reception history of conducting to the present day, between those men who serve the composer, the score and subsequently the musicians in a meaningful way, and the celebrity conductor who forgoes his duty to composer, score and musician in an effort to please an ignorant audience, or to produce a polite rendition. The charlatan, or showman conductor will prove to be a recurring theme and was not only abhorrent to Wagner (and other such critics) because of the less than desirous musical results, but also because their success, despite any perceived deficiencies, undermined the potency and import of other practitioners. He was particularly scathing of Mendelssohn’s conducting, and the “cosmopolitan bon ton” who followed in his tradition, and resented that “[e]ach of them was, and is, so busy with his personal affairs, and the difficulty of maintaining his artificial position, that he cannot occupy himself with measures of general import – measures which might bring about a connected and consistent new order of things.”

Wagner’s controversial practice of conducting without a score was influential, not only in its concomitant conceptual significance, but also in the fact that it was taken up by conductors such as Hans Richter after him as a further sign of the internal knowledge and

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30 Wagner, Über das Dirigiren, 42.

31 Wagner, Über das Dirigiren, 5-7.

intellectuality of the conductor, and perhaps by some as a feat of showmanship.\textsuperscript{33} In Wagner we see for the first time the tenets of the Romantic artist represented through his work as a conductor, the genesis of the virtuoso conductor, and the aim not only to present a performance of unified style, but more importantly a unified interpretation and understanding of the score as decided upon by the conductor and transmitted to the orchestra.\textsuperscript{34}

José Antonio Bowen asserts that the “nineteenth-century model for a musical work. . . . was based upon Beethoven’s “finished” concept: the idea that an artist creates a final fixed and immortal text ... Emphasizing the text was an antidote to the virtuoso excesses of the bel canto era.”\textsuperscript{35} There is an element of internal conflict in Wagner’s conducting theory, as to remain consistent with his other writings, his concept of music as work must somehow embrace music as a spontaneous event due to his focus on dramatic music and conveying the spirit of the work, despite his insistence on adherence to the letter of the score. He does this not by reverting to a theory which predates or opposes Berlioz, but by expanding on Berlioz, albeit with varying degrees of success. The “fixed” element cannot be the text in his theory because sets, costumes, movement and the director’s input in music-drama are impossible to fix eternally, and he has elsewhere made room for the performer’s creativity. His theory sets the poetic intent, or inner meaning of the work, as the fixed element, meaning that the score is no longer the “work” but a manifestation thereof.\textsuperscript{36} Whereas Berlioz’s conductor shines a light on a fixed work (the score) Wagner’s conductor moves

\textsuperscript{33} Wagner is reported to have led the concerts of the London Philharmonic Society entirely from memory in 1855. Galkin, \textit{A History of Orchestral Conducting in Theory and Practice}, 304.

\textsuperscript{34} There is an inherent irony, however, in that he abhorred the alliance between conductors and virtuosi when it superseded the spirit of German music. Wagner, \textit{Über das Dirigiren}, 8.


\textsuperscript{36} The many writings of José Antonio Bowen have been essential to an understanding of these issues and I am indebted to him for his insight and his generosity in sending me material from his forthcoming publication, \textit{The Conductor and the Score: A History of the Relationship between Interpreter and Text from Beethoven to Wagner} (in progress).
the light, and can even change the score if necessary, to better illuminate the inner meaning of the music.

Wagner’s conductor therefore has greater creative power than Berlioz’s and this is confirmed by his veneration of performers such as Chopin whose comprehension of a composer’s intentions he considers to be so complete and authoritative that their interpretive role is comparable in creative importance to the composer’s. Berlioz regards the conductor’s role as strictly one of re-creation; Wagner requires his ideal conductor to co-create. Realising that this allows for multiple possible interpretations of equal legitimacy, he posits that there will be one more consummate than others. Whereas Berlioz’s ideal conductor would first understand the technical elements of the score, and only secondly transmit inspiration and expression, the two roles of technical mastery and inspiration are effectively reversed in Wagner’s theory. He suggests that if the inner poetic content is comprehended and successfully transmitted to the players in the first instance, the technical aspects of the music will then take care of themselves. There are two similarities between the theories. Firstly, both conductors recognise the importance of nuances and details not included in the score such as oral traditions and matters of personal taste. Secondly, neither allow for arbitrary changes, Berlioz seeing them as alterations to the work itself, Wagner regarding surface details as changeable only if as a consequence of realising or transmitting the inner meaning more clearly.


40 “Streichen! Streichen! – das ist nämlich die ultima ratio unserer Herren Kapellmeister; hierdurch bringen sie ihre Unfähigkeit mit der ihnen unmöglichen richtigen Lösung der gestellten künstlerischen Ausgaben in ein unfehlbar glückliches Verhältnis. [Cut! Cut!’ – this is the ultimo ratio of our conductors; by its aid they establish a satisfactory equilibrium between their own incompetence, and the proper execution of the artistic tasks before them.]” Wagner, Über das Dirigiren, 81. Translated in Edward Dannreuther, trans., Wagner on Conducting (New York: Dover Publications, 1989), 99.
For Wagner’s conductor to make these creative decisions authoritatively (and not arbitrarily) he must have great insight into the score and, more importantly, into the mind of the composer who wrote it.\(^\text{41}\) The possession of intuitive insight was an argument that Wagner himself utilised to endorse his own decisions as a conductor when questioned. It introduced a new aspect to the concept of the conductor, which would gain popularity in the public imagination. The conductor as an intellectual genius who could read through the score to the intentions behind it, and in so doing see or know more than anyone else, was a distinctly Romantic phenomenon, a prophetic hero capable of acting as a conduit between composer and performers in rehearsal, and between composer and audience in performance. As Bowen notes, the Wagnerian conductor speaks as the composer, not just on their behalf.\(^\text{42}\) Through this the conducting gains superiority and authority, his interpretation attains validation through the ineffable and therefore incontestable channels of intuition and genius, and by assuming a larger portion of creative responsibility, the importance of, and distinctions between, different conductors’ interpretations assume unprecedented importance.\(^\text{43}\)

Berlioz and Wagner’s theses were arguably the most significant writings on conducting to appear in the period under investigation, and are the foundations of most scholarly works on conducting to date. They reflect the preoccupation that nineteenth century writers had with the meaning and processes of conducting. In the twentieth century, however, as conductors gained greater status and celebrity, biographical works of individual conductors began to appear. These differed from the dictionary entries containing biographical information published throughout the nineteenth century in that they aimed to capture the essence of the individual and include personal information, rather than restricting the


\(^{42}\) Bowen, “The Conductor and the Score,” 397.

\(^{43}\) One of the most concrete manifestations of this last change is evident in the changing tenor of musical criticism. Whereas before the work itself was reviewed, by the end of the century due to the standardisation of the canon and increased significance of the conductor’s interpretation, the performance becomes the primary object of the critic’s scrutiny. The advent of the recording industry would elevate the concept of individual interpretations even further as conductors released competing recordings of the same repertoire.
information to facts related to the individual’s career. More recently, writers such as Norman Lebrecht, Raymond Holden and José Antonio Bowen have sought to explore non-technical aspects of the profession, including issues of virtuosity, power, programming and the canon, gender, and psychology.


Benjamin Grosbayne’s article “A Perspective on the Literature of Conducting”, published in the Proceedings of the Musical Association from 1940 to 1941, was the first English-language historiography of conducting, although it has since been superseded in scope by *The Cambridge Companion to Conducting* and Galkin’s *History of Orchestral Conducting*, which, in conjunction with the entry in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, are the pre-eminent English-language general histories to date. Giovanni Conti’s paper *Die mittelalterlichen Quellen zum Dirigieren*, which investigates medieval sources on conducting, and Ivano Cavallini’s monograph *Il direttore d'orchestra: Genesi e storia di un'arte* are small but significant contributions to the field.

Bowen and Galkin’s works comprise the most comprehensive modern literature on the history of conducting, providing factual accounts of the profession: *The Cambridge Companion* includes regional histories and Galkin’s work includes both regional histories and a historiography of conducting instruction manuals throughout history. Both also contain images of conductors, serious and satirical. The imagery is not subjected to analysis, however.

The visuality and portraiture of conductors have received little attention from music iconographers. Of the published collections of images of conductors, whether of a group of conductors or an individual, only one could be categorised as an iconographic study in the

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sense implied here. K. M. Knittel’s article on anti-semitic themes in the caricatures of Gustav Mahler, “‘Ein Hypermoderner Dirigent’: Mahler and Anti-Semitism in Fin-De-Siècle Vienna,” is the only published research to apply a significant level of iconographic analysis.48 Its focus is firmly on elements of the images which communicate messages about anti-Semitism and, at times, this presupposed agenda threatens to mask other readings of the images. Others, such as the collections of Wagner’s and Mahler’s extant portraits, are catalogues of images with little or no iconographic theory applied, despite sometimes including the term ‘iconography’ in their title.49 While such cataloguing efforts are undoubtedly valuable, the images themselves, particular periods, geographies and individuals, can be appreciated more fully after rigorous analysis.

To engage with images at this level, the methodological approach must draw upon many branches of the social sciences, and strive to avoid the reductive tendencies of some theoretical models which fail to view the image as an autonomous artwork. Although no studies of conductors’ visuality have been published to date, several related branches of research provide comparative material and theoretical models for the thesis. In the field of portraiture, Shearer West’s Portraiture and Marcia Pointon’s Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England are informative sources.


for the significance of portraiture within society.\(^5^0\) An earlier book, David Piper’s *The English Face*, presents a history of the significance of the human face and recognition in England, contributing to a greater understanding of the significance of the English portrait.\(^5^1\) Alison Winter’s *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain* is an exemplar for the way in which a study of individuals’ visualities can unlock further meaningful investigation of reception, practice and even biography.\(^5^2\)

More closely related to the topic are iconographies of composers and members of other professions, including scientists and academics, and recent publications addressing the specialised theory and method of music iconography. In particular, the following offer robust methods from which to borrow: Alan Davison’s thesis on the iconography of Franz Liszt, and his article “The Musician in Iconography from the 1830s and 1840s: The Formation of New Visual Types”; Patricia Fara’s “Images of a Man of Science. (Paintings of 19th Century Naturalist Joseph Banks Offer Insights into the 19th Century)”; Franca Trinchieri Camiz’s “The Castrato Singer: From Informal to Formal Portraiture”; and Ludmilla Jordanova’s *Defining Features: Scientific and Medical Portraits 1660-2000*.\(^5^3\)

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The theoretical discussions of Antonio Baldassare and James McKinnon present the least reductive approach to method. These, and other, writers owe much to the iconographic theory of Michael Baxandall, to whom I am also indebted. Generalisations and broad historical concepts like “Romanticism” are inevitable in a study relating musicians and their portraits to period, style and ethos, among other things. Romanticism, Victorianism and any other “isms” should be viewed as chronologically indistinct, interrelated and mutable thematic threads that provide a convenient method of showing relationships between people and their ideas within and across geographical and temporal borders. Like any ‘Ideal Type’, they are flawed but useful, and in keeping with the extant literature of any of our topics, inevitable.

Erving Goffman’s work on identity construction, particularly *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, remains at the centre of current research in this field. His analogous interpretation of the stage, props and costumes in relation to representation of self is a valuable model when considering the intentional aspects of identity construction. More recent theoretical works include Anthony Cohen’s *Self Consciousness: An Alternative Anthropology of Identity*, which, like Goffman, contains an argument for the agency of the individual, and while Kath Woodward’s *Questioning Identity: Gender, Class, Ethnicity*


deals specifically with identity in the modern age, her dual awareness of agency and social conditioning ensure that it serves as a cogent theoretical model.58

Much of the general material relating to gender identity, and the related field of fashion in nineteenth-century England, focuses on female gender identity and fashion and issues of sexuality. Research specialising in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century masculinity and masculinism in England is sparse, but includes Michael Kimmel’s *The History of Men: Essays on the History of American and British Masculinities*, which traces masculinity’s history, without separating it from the tenets of feminist theory.59 He examines men in a variety of social positions, and at points of crisis that forced the meaning and expression of masculinism to be re-evaluated. Michèle Cohen’s “‘Manners’ Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750-1830”, Graham Dawson’s *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities*, Lin Foxhall and John Salmon’s *Thinking Men: Masculinity and its Self Representation in the Classical Tradition*, and J. A. Mangan and James Walvin’s *Manliness and Morality: Middle Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* discuss particular factors relating to the negotiation of masculine identity in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century England, often using a variety of source material as examples, including literature, artworks and artefacts of political sentiment.60

Researchers who assess assertions of masculinity in the gender identity of men whose association with established masculine stereotypes is in some way problematic, such as

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creative men, include Herbert Sussman and James Eli Adams. Christopher Breward addresses the often overlooked importance of fashion consumption and display to Victorian men and, like Sussman, recognises the contradictory nature of masculinism for the Victorian man, the social requirements of that era countering many longstanding beliefs about masculinity. The theoretical bases of masculinity studies are discussed in works such as Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman’s *Theorizing Masculinities*, a multidisciplinary compilation of theoretical work in the field, and Judith Allen’s “‘Mundane Men’: Historians, Masculinity and Masculinism”.

The concept of national identity remains controversial and, therefore, the literature is diverse. Anderson’s *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* is the central text on the history of nationalism and its political, social and cultural repercussions, while Eric Hobsbawm’s *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* traces the history of the idea of nationhood and Ernest Gellner’s *Nations and Nationalism* elucidates and evaluates existing theoretical models.

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D. Smith’s *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History (Key Concepts)* includes the seminal theories of the authors listed above, while also providing an overview of more recent research.\(^{65}\) Krishnar Kunan’s *The Making of English National Identity* focuses on the cultivation or myth of English national identity in particular.\(^ {66}\) His claim that the primary motivation of English nationalism was the desire to disassociate from other cultures and races is central to the discussions of nationality and nationalism herein.

With the exception of some notable figures, musicians throughout history have not been granted a high status in society. As formal portraiture was mostly limited to the affluent classes until the late nineteenth century, the circumstances surrounding portraits of musicians require our attention. The commissioning and hanging of them relates valuable information pertaining to the status of the sitter and of creativity, denoting a crossing of boundaries in a genre closed, by definition, to anyone of a lower class, such as musicians. In light of this, the pictorial elements seen in the portrait must always be assessed, not only in relation to the history of pictorial style within the genre, but also in relation to the intended function of the portrait. That the portraitist shows a particular musician in a lavish domestic setting, with bulges above his eyebrows, does not necessarily mean that the musician’s forehead looked like that, neither that this was the sort of life to which he was accustomed. What it does tell us, unequivocally, is that the portraitist chose to make use of pictorial devices that were likely to communicate something to the viewer for whom the portrait was intended, relating to the status of music, musicality, talent and associations with other musicians purported to be endowed with similar creativity. Essentially, that a portrait of a musician exists is enough to warrant its examination. Civilisation’s fascination with portraits is multi-faceted. The subject of the portrait existed in real life and probably sat for the artist, although this is not always the case. This immediate relationship between artist and sitter is unique to portraiture. In looking at a portrait we see an earlier likeness of a person who is now older, or dead, at the time of our viewing, often looking directly at us. Essentially, we are sitting in the portraitist’s seat and seeing the sitter through historically informed eyes. Consequently, the genre has assumed associations of mortality and


temporality that have aided society’s fascination with the commissioning, collection and production of portraits.

Furthermore, portraits in their various forms could also be exemplars of noble, heroic or idealised behaviours and appearances. While the image of the sitter in the portrait represents that which it purports to, (i.e., the sitter), it also represents an ideal sitter. The illustrated figure in the portrait is concurrently an illustration of a real person and a personification of a universal one. To achieve the latter, portraitists adopted the use of text, typified stances and attributes, openly symbolic objects, articles of clothing, or props with which to furnish a portrait and consequently the identity of the sitter. For instance, a portrait of a man of science may well feature implements that indicate his learnedness and interest in the sciences, such as books, a globe, or a telescope, and may have a pertinent inscription placed within the picture. To the portraitist’s contemporaries, they were a familiar part of the vernacular of art and representation, and were part of a classical tradition of respecting universality over specificity.

The bias toward either of these two polarities can demarcate chronological, social, aesthetic and political trends particular to the circumstances of that individual work of art. Therefore, while a gradual evolution of individual likeness over time is evident, it would be simplistic to assume it was merely due to improving standards of ability and tools. Technical, practical, aesthetic and ideological factors can be seen to be at work in influencing the weighting of either end of the spectrum: the emergence of sitters’ features as the genre developed is as much a matter of function, desire and social history as it is a matter of proficiency or technology. The evolution of likeness is a sociological concern, to which end artists developed appropriate tools and techniques, and brings to our attention the importance of context and function in portraiture, key concepts in establishing an iconographic method.

From the seventeenth century, the concepts of individuality and self in a person’s identity came to take on importance in Western society, but were manifest in portraiture only after the Romantic period. Prior to this, identity was about external references to generic type in the form of facial expression, deportment, attire and mannerisms. Yet even in early examples, the brief of the portraitist was to provide a ‘likeness’, that is, a rendering of the
sitter that was recognisably true to their particular physical characteristics and therefore unlike anyone else. This ambiguity of intent that lies at the core of portraiture, that a portrait should on the one hand represent the physicality (and to a greater or lesser extent depending on the period, personality) of an individual, and on the other, show the sitter as conforming to general types, creates a tension that West associates with ancient Greek and Roman portraiture:

Although there were both stylistic and functional differences between them, portraits in ancient Greece and Rome were therefore like enough to enable a human association with the individual depicted, but they were idealized to reflect those qualities felt to be worthy of admiration and emulation.  

Jan Bialostocki, in summarising Hinks, extends the link to antiquity further, citing the preference the Greeks had for mythological rather than historical depictions. Bialostocki (and before him, Hinks) state that the reason for this was that mythology contained “general truths, whereas history contains particular ones”. While this dualism has remained central to portraiture and its analysis, the evolution of intellectual and religious thought and changing social values have affected the ways in which artists use symbolism within portraiture and, not inconsequentially, the way in which the viewer recognises and seeks to understand such references.

Nadia Tscherny, in reference to early Romantic portraiture in particular, notes that “[t]o assess the validity of a portrait’s resemblance to its sitter (whether two-hundred years dead or a contemporary) is a near impossible task. What is easier to judge is a portrait’s likeness, or its ability to enchant the viewer and evoke the presence of the sitter … What ultimately unites the greatest portraits of [the Romantic] period is that they capture not a likeness, but our imagination.” Portraiture’s power is not in the representation of the

67 West, *Portraiture*, 27.

68 Bialostocki, “Iconography,” 525. Also see Aristotle, “Poetics,” 3.

sitter, but in the fantasy it engages in the viewer’s mind, that the person represented is still alive, in close proximity, or linked with ideals of status, beauty or immortality.\textsuperscript{70}

It must also be remembered that insofar as a portrait attempts a resemblance to type, in this case a creative type, it also seeks to portray the unique character of the sitter. In particular, it seeks to highlight the perceived positive aspects of the character’s sitter.\textsuperscript{71} In mid to late nineteenth-century England, these personality traits were tied not only to the sitter’s value and identity, but to the identity of the nation as a whole. A fine sitter was an example to the masses, as noted by Lord Palmerston in his motion for parliamentary financial support for the National Portrait Gallery on 6 June 1856:

... there cannot be a greater incentive to mental exertion, to noble actions, to good conduct on the part of the living, than for them to see before them the features of those who have done things which are worthy of our admiration and whose example we are more induced to imitate when they are brought before us in the visible and tangible shape of portraits.\textsuperscript{72}

Portraits fulfilled a variety of societal, governmental, formal and domestic functions, many of which were to change during the nineteenth century as technology developed. With regards to print media, technology contributed to the rise of visual fame and celebrity. The market for images of popular public figures grew, and portraiture reached a more diverse audience as printed portraits became more accessible. The diversity of functions broadened also. Lithographs, posters, advertisements and pornography proliferated and, as a result, the concepts surrounding ‘image’ diversified.

\textsuperscript{70} This element of portraiture can be witnessed to a great degree in our current society’s obsession with celebrity and body image. See: West, \textit{Portraiture}, 96.

\textsuperscript{71} Satirical portraits are obvious exceptions to this and will be discussed later.

Nineteenth-century portraiture was not limited to the medium of paint on canvas. A diverse range of examples such as stamps, medals, coins, statues, busts, effigies, sketches, banknotes, and print media constitute a large portion of portraiture. These were all very obviously for public dissemination, but as Shearer West describes, even domestic portraiture was intended for the public realm:

Many portraits were produced for public places such as city squares, civic or religious institutions, or for mass dissemination in the form of coins or in prints, for example. However, even portraits that had an ostensibly private function, such as miniatures or family snapshots, are usually intended to be viewed and responded to by a group of individuals rather than a single person. Portraits therefore are normally created with the understanding that they will be in the public domain (however that may be defined) and that they will serve a special purpose.73

The “public domain” and the exposure it entailed changed considerably in London in the nineteenth century due to the growing print industry, changes in class structure and the higher income enjoyed by many urban dwellers. The original function of the portrait is essential in determining those pictorial elements used by the painter which individualise the sitter, and those which associate the sitter with the generalisations of a greater tradition.

In the portraiture of artistic sitters certain elements remain constant, albeit with small variations and undoubtedly constant evolution, leading to a meta-language of imagery consistent with, and ultimately necessary for the depiction of the individual valued for their creativity. The result is the establishment of a genre within portraiture, which deals specifically with the depiction of creative types.74 This can be in the form of clear attributes

73 Prescott, “Fame and Photography: Portrait Publications in Great Britain, 1856-1900”, 43.

74 Portraitists adopted the use of text, typified stances and attributes, openly symbolic objects, articles of clothing, or props with which to furnish a portrait and consequently the identity of the sitter. Attributes, distinctive poses, and facial expressions may seem overly symbolic and incapable of speaking directly to a viewer today, but to the portraitist’s contemporaries, they were a familiar part of the vernacular of art and representation. Roubillac (1702/1705 –1762), David d’Angers (1788 –1856), Eugène Delacroix (1798 –
connecting the sitter to his or her creative profession: a writer holding a pen and paper; a musician sitting at a keyboard or holding a music score; a painter standing at an easel or holding a brush. References to divine or creative inspiration, in the form of muses, heaven-sent rays of light or pictorial connections between head and sky or nature, are common also. To portray the less definable aspects of genius and inspiration that infiltrated the Romantic imagery of musicians, subtleties derived from the natural sciences, and popular physiognomic and phrenological conventions provided an important pictorial tool for the portraitist. At an even more abstract level, manipulation of lighting, posture and the frame communicated some of the fundamental tenets of what it was to be a Romantic musician. Conversely, such overtly Romantic elements are absent in the portraits of many late Victorian conductors. This thesis addresses, among other things, the lack of obvious symbolic content and its replacement with other objects of value to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century England.

Once isolated, references to the conductor’s visuality are subject to the same basic questions: who wrote or depicted it, who was the intended audience, and how and to what extent was it disseminated? Beyond these initial inquiries, it must be established where the comments or pictorial types fit within the greater corpus of music criticism and portraiture at the time. Are the observations typical or unique of conductors at the time, and do they conform to other artists’ or authors’ descriptions of this particular conductor? Analysing Beethoven tributes are examples of this in relation to a musician.

1863), Max Klinger (1857-1920), August von Klöber (1793-1864), Josef Kriehuber (1800-1876) and Antoine Bourdelle’s (1861 – 1929) Beethoven tributes are examples of this in relation to a musician.

75 Lavater’s contribution relates mainly to intellect, social status and moral fortitude. Le Brun’s physiognomic sketches provided a rich source for artists, in particular his depiction of ecstasy. In the area of phrenology, Combes states unequivocally those aspects of skull formation that one would expect to find in a talented musician, and which when present therefore confirm the individual’s musicality. He isolates the area on the outer corner of the eyebrows as the seat of “tune”, which when enlarged in an individual denotes musical skill. This, according to Combes is, however, “only one ingredient in a talent for music. Time is requisite to communicate a just perception of intervals, - Ideality, to give elevation and refinement, - Secretiveness and Imitation, to produce expression, - and Constructiveness, Form, Weight, and Individuality, to supply that mechanical expertness which is necessary to successful performance.” The skull of a true musical genius, therefore, will show protuberances in each of those areas which correspond, according to the phrenological system, to the other aspects listed above.
this diversity of material with consistency requires an over-arching methodological approach, with allowances made for issues specific to either genre. However, Antonio Baldassarre notes that “although the significance of visual sources to provide new insights about the researched topic is basically undisputed these days, there is a clear lack of agreement on the point of how visual sources should be acquired and used.”

Due to the great number and variety of images used as primary source material in this study, the field of musical iconography forms a significant portion of the methodological framework. However, the methodology of iconography remains disputed. The twentieth century writings of Aby Warburg (1866–1929), Fritz Saxl (1890–1948) and Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968) mark the beginnings of the extension of iconography beyond the identification and classification of the content of images. These theorists established iconography as having a greater ultimate purpose, to discern the meaning of images. Panofsky’s oft-quoted definition of iconography as “that branch of the history of art that concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form” lies at the core of the field in its current form.

Panofsky prescribes three steps in the analytical process, which facilitate iconographic and (in the third stage) iconological analysis of a work of art. The first phase, or “pre-iconographical description” involves an enumerative interpretation of the artwork requiring practical experience controlled by a corrective knowledge of “the history of style”. The second phase, which he labels the iconographic phase, constitutes the analysis of the secondary subject matter of allegories, personifications and history, based primarily on the researcher’s familiarity with contemporary and historic motifs and literary sources by which the artist might have been influenced. Once again, Panofsky recommends using history as a corrective principle. The third and final phase involves the iconological

76 Baldassarre, “Reflections on Methods and Methodology in Music Iconography,” 34.
78 Panofsky, Studies in Iconology, 11.
analysis of the work of art.\textsuperscript{79} In this, Panofsky seeks to find the intrinsic meaning of the artwork in relation to the culture from which it sprang and its connections with other artefacts of its surrounding culture. At this level, although the history of tradition is still maintained as a corrective, an insight into the human mind and its historically relative expression through the ideology of the time is the key to Panofsky’s theory.

The use of the history of tradition as a “corrective principle” at all three levels of his method is one of Panofsky’s greatest methodological strengths. In relation to iconographic and iconological method it requires of the researcher a knowledge of the history of styles, forms and society prevalent at the time the artwork was created; in short an awareness of all those things that determine the subject matter, context and value of any work of art. His aim was to identify the general attitudes of a community and how an artist condensed, or expressed them through an artwork.\textsuperscript{80}

Panofsky’s contemporary, Godefridus Hoogewerff (1884 - 1963) suggested a simpler description than Panofsky’s in 1928, using as an analogy the distinction between geography and geology: “the first is descriptive, fact-collecting and analytical; the second, employing the observations of the first, is explanatory, synoptic and exegetic.”\textsuperscript{81}

In the \textit{Dictionary of the History of Ideas} (1973-74) Jan Bialostocki reformulated Panofsky’s distinction between content and meaning. He distinguishes between “intended (or implied) iconography” and “interpretative iconography, describing the first as “the attitude of the artist, the patron, or the contemporary observer toward the function and the meaning of visual symbols and images”. By comparison, he describes the second form as “that branch of historical study of art which aims at the identification and description of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{79} This nomenclature is from 1955. In 1939 Panofsky called it “iconographical analysis in a deeper sense”.
  \item \textsuperscript{80} In this it drew upon the principle of empathy contained in his predecessor Aby Warburg’s art-historiographical theory.
\end{itemize}
representations, and at the interpretation of the content of the works of art (this last function now preferably called ‘iconology’)."\(^{82}\)

Music iconography, the specific branch of iconography under which the imagery of this study falls, has its own traditions and definitions, although the basic aim corresponds to that of general iconography. The separate stages of iconography and iconology, or intended and interpretative iconography to use Białostocki’s terminology, are as relevant to musical subjects as they are to any other, and the distinction between the two is reflected in one of its sub-genres, organology, which holds as its exclusive aim the identification of musical instruments within works of art. But James McKinnon argues that organology is not the proper object of musical iconography. He pleads with music iconographers “to pay more attention to the ideas expressed in early works of art and to be less single-minded in their pursuit of hard evidence”. Iconography, he contends, “has more to do with ideas than with artifacts”.\(^ {83}\) At the time of writing, it was a provocative statement, but recent trends in the field would suggest that he was correct. The vast majority of music iconographical output within the last few years, including that which deals with organological subjects, goes much further than mere labelling. Antonio Baldassarre notes, however, that the interdisciplinary roots of music iconography threaten to undermine its validity. The theoretical models of art-history, on which music iconography ought to be based, do not necessarily find their equivalent in music iconography methodology.\(^ {84}\)

The most significant development in iconographic method since Panofsky is the acknowledgement of the importance of an image’s function. In addition, the fixed structure of Panofsky’s method limits the depth to which an inquiry can proceed. It is conceivable that certain elements of analysis in the first or second phase would be better explained in light of the third iconological analysis, rather than prior to it. Henri Van de Waal’s triangular model ‘improves’ upon Panofsky’s method in two areas: It recognises function as a step, thus including non-autonomous and ‘low’ art and also introducing the idea of an

\(^{82}\) Białostocki, “Iconography,” 524.

\(^{83}\) McKinnon, “Musical Iconography: A Definition,” 15.

\(^{84}\) Baldassarre, “Reflections on Methods and Methodology in Music Iconography,” 34.
intended audience. Considered by Van de Waal as no more than an educational tool, it also enables a free flow between the three stages, which Panofsky’s method does not.\textsuperscript{85}

Figure 1. De Waal’s Triangle

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
  \node (function) at (0,0) {Function};
  \node (content) at (-1.5,-1.5) {Content};
  \node (form) at (1.5,-1.5) {Form};
  \draw (function) -- (content);
  \draw (function) -- (form);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

However, de Vries asserts, “[a] sound method is no guarantee of solid results, but a gifted researcher may still reach impressive results with a somewhat insufficient method … the final responsibility for the result of art historical work will always rest on its author.”\textsuperscript{86} Preferably one should find an appropriate method or mindset, which is broad enough to encompass the many positive aspects of earlier theories yet of a sufficiently telescopic nature, or with a degree of adjustment possible as to the specificity of its application, to enable research of depth and exactitude.

Michael Baxandall’s theory of ‘intentionality’ provides such a mindset as to be inclusive of Panofsky’s seminal theoretical work, yet free of cultural and aesthetic bias.\textsuperscript{87} He approaches a piece of art as if it is an answer, the question to which we as the researcher must determine. The ‘intention’, therefore, is observed not in the artist, but in the art itself. As a result, the complications in human accounts caused by the unconscious, the unreliability of memory and ego are avoided by engaging first and foremost with the work of art itself and the ‘intentionality’ read therein. This in turn avoids a reductive approach and maintains the value inherent in the artwork.

\textsuperscript{85} Baldassarre, “Reflections on Methods and Methodology in Music Iconography,” 58.

\textsuperscript{86} Baldassarre, “Reflections on Methods and Methodology in Music Iconography,” 51-62.

\textsuperscript{87} Baxandall, Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures.
Alan Davison notes that although Baxandall’s application of the notion of the period eye was specifically in relation to the fifteenth century, “it is equally pertinent to images from the nineteenth century or indeed any period distant to our current sensibilities.”

Davison continues:

The development of a period eye is arguably more fundamental than the recognition of styles and genre, for potentially it can identify broader undercurrents common to social practices and artistic movements and styles that could otherwise be missed. This is particularly so with nineteenth-century art, where a plethora of genres and styles exist side-by-side: high art portraits in a variety of styles, popular prints and caricatures, for example.

Music iconographer James McKinnon’s methodology begins from the basic tenet that the art object is the starting point for investigation. He defines iconography as “the subdiscipline of art history which deals with the content of art and which rests upon the assumption that images in art, especially during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, are represented conventionally.” It follows, in his estimation, that musical iconography “is simply iconography applied to pictures with musical subject matter.”

In his discussion of methods and methodology in music iconography, Antonio Baldassarre states that “[m]ethodological principles must always be developed in relation to the subject which is investigated rather than treating the subject as a mere stimulus for methodological projections. Simply put, it is the subject that determines the form of the method, rather than the method that dictates how a subject will be explored.” His warning is prompted by the

88 Davison, “The Musician in Iconography from the 1830s and 1840s: The Formation of New Visual Types,” 147.

89 McKinnon, “Iconography,” 79-93.


92 Baldassarre, “Reflections on Methods and Methodology in Music Iconography,” 35.
numerous tangential fields which impact upon or constitute music iconography, all of which lay claim to their own methods. While a depth of knowledge of these peripheral areas and their methodological discourses is essential, he asserts that “music iconography requires independent methodological models that are appropriate to its subject and which capture the subject’s structure.”

The ideal iconographic approach is one that is not simply empirical, which acknowledges historical context and which still regards the work of art itself as the primary focus, not as evidence from which socio-historical agendas are inferred or proven. As Michael Kelly observes, such a reductionist “theory is useful for constituting the subjectivity of art historians”, but little else.\(^{93}\) There are further ramifications to a reductionist method: “If symbols are acknowledged to be effective, surely it is only because the intended viewer shares an understanding with the artist of these symbols.”\(^{94}\) McKinnon’s theory offers a more tempered approach, citing not overt symbolic labeling, but genre recognition as the necessary first step to place the work in context with others of same genre, and to aid interpretation.\(^ {95}\)

With these considerations in mind, it is clear that a prescriptive methodology is less helpful than a carefully considered approach to the material under investigation. The specific genre to be studied here is English portraiture, one of its complexities deriving from its familiarity. It is easy to forget it was not made for our eyes. If the aim of the study is to analyse images of London’s nineteenth- and early twentieth-century conductors, then it must be approached with knowledge of the various pictorial genres, a sound understanding of the social and cultural background of artist, sitter and intended viewer, and a willingness to suspend contemporary notions and assumptions, in short, assuming a ‘period eye’. At the time of their production, the images to be studied held value beyond their content and immediate function. Any analysis must take this into account, when assessing the artist’s motivations and influences. Furthermore, Baldassarre’s warning regarding the application

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\(^ {95}\) McKinnon, “Iconography,” 82-83.
of methodological models from other fields of social science must be recalled, ensuring that any methodical task undertaken, such as the investigation of the way in which content, form and context are accounted for in each image, must be driven by the image itself.

The same principles apply to the literature to be studied. It must be viewed with an awareness of its content, form and function, and the material itself should stimulate the development of a method, not the reverse. At the centre of a robust methodological approach to analysing critical literature of a different time and place is the premise that the written artefact is both the product of an individual, and that the individual’s perception occurs within a web of influence. Jim Samson frames this concept thus:

... there exist certain stabilizing factors (mentalités) which influence the responses of particular cultural communities, establishing the frameworks within which individual acts of perception take place.\textsuperscript{96}

Baxandall asserts that “noting bits of social practice or convention” can “sharpen our perception of pictures.” Importantly, although to be treated with caution, he states that one can also ask how “the forms and styles of painting may sharpen our perception of the society”.\textsuperscript{97} Samson’s view parallels Baxandall’s, when he acknowledges that “[a] reception study can light up the ideology concealed in the corner of music history”. He further recommends that “[r]eception histories should be more than just supposedly neutral opinion-collecting.”\textsuperscript{98} This study will examine the content of images and words, in light of what we already know about Victorian and Edwardian London and its professional conductors. The findings may shed light on, or open up new fields of inquiry for the culture in which they were created.


\textsuperscript{97} Baxandall, \textit{Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures}, 151.

3. Spectacle and Romantic heroism: Louis Jullien (1812-1860)

“… the picturesque Conducteur, who is a whole gallery of pictures in his own proper person.”

It may seem peculiar that a musician should be described as picturesque, but Louis Jullien embodied a little-acknowledged, yet pivotal concept pertaining to the mid-nineteenth-century conductor, which was to influence the ongoing development of his profession. He was primarily a visual phenomenon: his unique visuality permeated every facet of his life, and was acknowledged by contemporary commentators to contribute directly to his success as a conductor, both in terms of his musical output and the cultivation of his fame.

His value as a subject of further study is, likewise, evident from a variety of perspectives, not least that he was the first conductor resident in England to be described primarily in such visual terms. He was hugely successful in his day yet widely denigrated as a charlatan, a charge which lacked substance but was also to dominate his posthumous reputation. Most importantly, the very visuality which ensured his success, and which led in part to the widely held belief that he was a charlatan, went on to play a significant role in the development of the visuality of conductors in England and beyond. In short, Jullien is one of many musical entities of nineteenth-century England to have been prematurely dismissed as evidence of that period’s musical stagnation.

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2 His influence over ensuing generations of English conductors extends beyond the visual to include, among other things, programming, music education, concert management, artist promotion and the development of the canon. These themes are explored below.

3 There is one notable exception to this. Adam Carse’s *The Life of Jullien* (1951) is informative and appreciative, combining and comparing the scant biographical accounts of his life. Carse’s study, completed out of interest as a tangent from an earlier general musical history, has more recently been followed by
Despite the success it engendered, it was Jullien’s flamboyant visuality and demonstrative conducting style that his critics cited most often when denigrating him as a charlatan. His main contemporary detractor was Henry Chorley, whose obituary of Jullien, published in *The Athenaeum* on 4 March 1860, concedes Jullien’s popularity and success, stating that he was “busy in no common degree”. Chorley attributes his fame in England “not so much by his dance-tunes, which in no respect approach those of Strauss, Lanner, Labitsky, or the Musard just mentioned – neither by his skill as a conductor; but by his peculiar appearance, his melodramatic gestures, his embroideries, and (to be just) by his tact in attaching to his staff certain piquant and effective players, such as, for instance, König”. He continues by noting:

The romance and grandeur which up to a culminating point had deluded and amused their owner, were, after that point, set to work to keep up appearances – at the cost of others. A charlatan may be trained by prosperity into abandonment of his charlatanry (if he have within him instincts for better things) – few charlatans are able to resist the temptations of ill fortune.

A range of Jullien’s colleagues were of a similar opinion, although it can be assumed that at least a portion of their derision was provoked by Jullien’s success where they had failed.

Michel Faul’s *Louis Jullien: Musique, spectacle et folie au XIXe siècle* (2006). Although the present study’s interest in Jullien concentrates on one aspect of his career in particular, it is hoped that he will be represented, in a more general sense, with sufficient detail to elicit further interest. More recently, studies have sought to reappraise the general musical life of England during this period, recognising the vitality of and thirst for musical life in England outside of ‘high’ art institutions such as the Philharmonic Society. See, for instance, Peter Bailey, “Conspiracies of Meaning: Music-Hall and the Knowingness of Popular Culture,” *Past & Present*, no. 144 (August 1994): 138-170; Peter Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); John M. MacKenzie, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture*. Studies in Imperialism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).


in producing profitable performances of classical works for large audiences. Violinist Joseph Joachim turned down an engagement at the Surrey Gardens due to Jullien’s appointment as the conductor, stating that he would not perform with a “mountebank” and “undisguised charlatan.” Charles Hallé called Jullien’s concerts “hocus-pocus” when a Manchester concert was ill-attended, possibly due to Jullien’s concert on the same night. Ignaz Moscheles, on the other hand, was happy to take his children to Jullien’s concerts at Christmas, recognising the attractiveness of their content and spirit.

That Jullien’s flamboyant public persona and demonstrative podium style contributed to his reception is evident. But these elements should not be judged by later standards of authenticity, for the association between such theatrical display and artifice is relatively modern. Nor would they be enough on their own to ensure his success as a conductor. The distinction must be made between notoriety borne of theatricality, and his actual skill. Although many derided Jullien as a charlatan, with the benefit of distance his capacity as a conductor, regardless of his fame, becomes clearer.

Jullien’s overall success can be measured in various ways. Over an unprecedented period of time, which witnessed the failure of his many competitors, he ran financially viable and popular concerts. Although not all his ventures were financially successful, none of these failures diminished his popularity with the public, or jeopardised his more profitable

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7 Carse informs us that the “Concerts Valentino at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in 1839 and the London Wednesday Concerts at the Exeter Hall in 1848-1852 had given good music at cheap rates, the former on two days a week an the latter on only one day a week, and both had to be abandoned because of lack of support.” Carse, The Life of Jullien, 120.

8 Johannes Joachim and Andreas Moser (eds.), Briefe von und an Joseph Joachim, 3 vols. (Berlin: Julius Bard, 1911–1913), 140-141.


concerts in the long term. The reception of his concerts by audiences was overwhelmingly positive, despite the fact that their populist nature left him open to criticism and contempt from colleagues and critics.\textsuperscript{12}

Evidently, most considered him unremarkable as a composer and instrumentalist. He was also a poor businessman and unlucky investor. Two themes emerge regularly with little or no contention throughout the reception of his London years, however: his conducting technique was both precise and demonstrative, resulting in accurate ensemble playing; and his unique appearance, manner and behaviour appealed to his audience at least as much as the music, if not more. Whether the latter was considered either admirable or detestable by different critics, we can find sufficient testimony from Jullien’s contemporaries to trust the accuracy of both. They lead to the conclusion that his success both musically and publicly was attributable, at least in part, to his visual self.

A short summary of his career in London further attests to his success as a performer and, though not necessarily related, his skill as a conductor.\textsuperscript{13} Over the course of the two decades between 1840 and 1860 that Jullien spent in London, he established the most successful ongoing mass musical entertainment series that city had witnessed. Most significantly he was the first to run large numbers of promenade concerts over a long period of time, with undiminished popularity. He also founded the Monster concerts at the Surrey Gardens, undertook many private engagements in between winter and summer concert series and toured extensively in the provinces. The musical organisations with which he was in competition for players, performance space and audiences were numerous, as concert life in London at the middle of the century was highly competitive. While many orchestras relied on amateur players to reduce costs and, in some cases, increase exclusivity, Jullien paid his players and was therefore able to hire the best in London. As a result, his orchestra often boasted the same players as the Philharmonic Society – although

\textsuperscript{12} The Illustrated London News, in particular, published numerous objections to Jullien’s mixing of dance music and ‘art’ music. Fifield, True Artist and True Friend, 119.

\textsuperscript{13} Most of the information in this section is a summary of that already collated in Fifield. It is augmented by information from Galkin’s History of Orchestra Conducting, The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, and Bowen’s The Cambridge Companion to Conducting.
the repertoire, audience and ticket prices were different – and was widely considered to be
the best in the city. The theatres and public gardens in which his concerts took place were
independent organisations, leasing the space to the highest prospector. It was common,
therefore, for a concert series to shift from one theatre to another between seasons. This
could be due to renovations, conflicting bookings or financial reasons.

Jullien’s target audience was the broadest cross-section of the public: he aimed to attract as
many people as possible, regardless of their social status or income. He was, therefore,
technically not in competition with the elite music institutions of the city such as the
Philharmonic Society, although there was probably some overlap of their audiences,
particularly later in his career. His audience was threatened, however, by other large-scale
events aimed at the mass populace such as the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace and
the Handel Festivals. There were also other attempts at establishing promenade concert
series throughout his early years in London in particular, but as Carse notes, none gained a
successful foothold, even during Jullien’s absence in 1853, while he undertook a tour of
America.¹⁴

Jullien’s first series in London, entitled the Concerts d’été, was held at Drury Lane Theatre
in 1840, although he may well have arrived in England up to two years earlier.¹⁵ The
theatre had already been leased to Edward Eliason, a violinist and leader of the orchestra at
Drury Lane, but due to personal connections with two of the committee members Jullien
negotiated compromises so that Eliason would retain the lease and, one assumes, a portion

¹⁴ “It is not surprising that there should have been some attempt to step into Jullien’s shoes and to trade on his
success while he was away in America. There were at least two such ventures, and in both cases their first
season was also their last. In December 1853 M. Moirato begged respectfully to inform the Nobility, Gentry
and the Public that he intended to give a season of promenade concerts beginning on 19 December at St.
Martin’s Hall with an orchestra of seventy players and many of Jullien’s old soloists, namely, Barret,
Baumann, Lazarus, Richardson, Tolbecque, Nadaud, Cioffi, Howell, Rowland, Prospère and Piatti. In April
1854, a Mr. Smith was giving promenade concerts in Drury Lane Theatre “after the fashion of Monsieur
Jullien, but on a smaller scale and much less brilliant.” The musical dictionaries have nothing to say about
either M. Moirato or Mr. Smith, and nothing more was heard of these presumptuous upstarts who dared to
imagine that they could ever take the place of the great and unique Jullien.” Carse, The Life of Jullien, 85.

¹⁵ Carse, The Life of Jullien, 36-37.
of the profits, and that Jullien would conduct. The season was one of three promenade ventures to run in London throughout 1840, but it fell in a gap between other series. The Drury Lane concerts under Jullien featured one hundred performers, twenty-six vocalists, gaslights and decorative fountains, and were sufficiently successful to extend Eliason’s lease. Jullien was not engaged to conduct the second series, however.

The already established Opera House Concerts were revived on September 28 with a Signor Negri conducting and Auguste Tolbecque (1801-1869) as the leader. On September 30 violinist J. T. Willy started a third series of promenade concerts at the Princess’s theatre. By the end of November Negri’s concerts had come to an end. Meanwhile, audiences were so small at the Princess’s Theatre that Willy had resorted to programming British works. As Carse notes, he could not have made a less astute programming decision and the series came to an end early the following year. In the meantime, Eliason had reopened at Drury Lane with Jullien’s Parisian competitor and eminent predecessor Philippe Musard (1792—1859) conducting on October 12. On December 28 Negri mounted a second attempt at the English Opera with a smaller orchestra under the title Soirées Musicales. At the end of 1840, then, London had three series of Promenade concerts in production, none of which Jullien conducted, as he had not been re-engaged by Eliason. On December 3, however, The Musical World announced that of the many series that ran during that year, it was Jullien’s Concerts d’été that had enjoyed the greatest patronage.

Perhaps due to this public recognition of his first English success, Jullien returned to the Drury Lane concerts on 18 January 1841 for the Concerts d’hiver. With the theatre

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16 Promenade concerts under the leadership of Negri at the English Opera House closed on 30 May 1840, reopening on 28 September of that year. Violinist J. T. Willy ran another series at the Princess’s Theatre from 30 September. Eliason’s season with Jullien fell between these engagements, running from 8 June to 15 August. Carse, The Life of Jullien, 39-40.


18 When Musard returned to Paris on 19 December to fulfil prior engagements, Eliason himself took over the baton.
unavailable due to a season of German Opera, Jullien undertook a tour of the provinces and Ireland, returning to Drury Lane for the *Concerts d’été* with Eliason. These first years in London set a precedent for what would follow during Jullien’s twenty-odd years there. He conducted the *Concerts d’été* and *Concerts d’hiver* in each promenade season, at the best theatre available to him, and between seasons toured the provinces with an orchestra, undertook private and society engagements at salons and conducted dance music in ballrooms. The following is a typical programme for the early promenade concerts.¹⁹

Part I

Overture to Auber’s *Fra Diavolo*

Chorus from the Introduction to Rossini’s *Semiramide*

A Rossini duet, *Dunque io Son*, sung by Miss Nunn and Sig. Paltoni

Balfe’s descriptive ballad, *The Young Soldiers*, performed by Mr. Fraser

Halévy’s Romance for cornet-à-pistons, performed by Mons. Laurent, jun.

Rossini’s aria *Miei Pompolli*, performed by Sig. Paltoni

A Rossini terzetto, *Zitti, Zitti*, performed by Miss Nunn, Mr. Fraser and Sig. Giubilei

Part II

Hérold’s *Zampa* Overture

Bellini’s chorus *Sonnambula*

Russei’s ballad, *The Old Oak Tree*, performed by Miss Nunn

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¹⁹Carse, *The Life of Jullien*, 41. Spellings and layout are altered from Carse’s account for greater consistency.
The Rossini trio, *Papataci*, performed by Mr. Fraser, Sig. Paltoni and Sig. Giubilei

Dufrèsne’s Quadrille, *Gais Loisirs*, with chorus

Musard’s Galop. *La Victoire*, with solo cornet-à-pistons, performed by Mons. Laurent, jun.

In 1844 Jullien started his own music publishing business to capitalise on the popularity of his compositions and arrangements. Not long after, he took to the practice of signing each copy as an act of authentication to protect his interests from forgery. He also expanded the promenade concerts by introducing a *grand bal masque* at the close of each season and later started his infamous *concerts monstre* at the Surrey Zoological Gardens, which were to attract audiences of unprecedented size, and become the platform for many of his gargantuan arrangements. Between his first performance in London in 1840 and the end of that decade Jullien conducted fifteen seasons of promenade concerts, four summer seasons at the Surrey Gardens, one season of grand opera (a financial and critical failure), at least one provincial tour per year and innumerable private engagements at society functions. From this point onward he was to have no serious competitors in the market for cheap mass concerts in London and endeavoured to further expand on his position.

On 9 November 1850 *The Illustrated London News* ran an announcement from Jullien, stating his intention of “ensuring amusement as well as attempting instruction, by blending in the programmes the most sublime works with those of a lighter school.” He followed this announcement by introducing ‘festivals’ dedicated to the music of one of the masters, usually Beethoven or Mendelssohn. The one event which had the potential to seriously threaten Jullien’s popularity was the Great Exhibition of 1851, held in the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park. The organisers appear to have made sure the low-brow Jullien was not included in any capacity, and the popularity of the Great Exhibition precluded running a promenade series in competition with it. Jullien capitalised on the influx of visitors to the capital and filled his time with private social engagements and balls. He resumed the promenades at Drury Lane in early November and there is no evidence to suggest they had lost any of their popularity.
On 28 March 1853, in preparation for Jullien’s upcoming concert tour of America, the first of a series of articles under the title *A Sketch of the Life of Jullien* appeared in *The Musical World*. On Monday 25 July Jullien’s supporters and fans invited him to the Hanover Square Rooms, to present him with a Maplewood baton, set in gold and inlaid with diamonds. On August 1 he travelled to Liverpool to board the ‘Baltic’ which sailed to America two days later. He returned on 28 June 1854 aboard the ‘Arabia’ and, after a rest at his chateau in Belgium, returned to London for the winter promenade season at Drury Lane on October 30 1854.

During his time in America, two hopefuls, M. Moirato and Mr. Smith, attempted to make the most of Jullien’s absence. Both were unsuccessful. The following year, 1855, boasted an extraordinary array of conductors in London: Wagner at the Old Philharmonic, Berlioz at the New Philharmonic and Michael Costa at Covent Garden. Jullien’s activities continued unabated. A letter to J. W. Davison in 1857 intimated that he was suffering from depression, but he was soon making plans for a Universal Musical Tour, in which he hoped to promote universal harmony through the arts. The only part of his plans to reach fruition was a composition, the “Hymn of Universal Harmony”, which he performed at his final promenade series in the Lyceum Theatre ominously entitled his *Concerts d'Adieu*. He

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20 Jullien began his tour of America with forty-one concerts in New York, including a performance of his new American Quadrille. After performing in Boston, Washington, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Cincinnati, New Orleans, Mobile and Charleston among other centres, he ended the tour with a concert produced by P.T. Barnum at the New York Crystal Palace. It culminated in the Fireman’s Quadrille, which included a real fire that required three companies to extinguish. French pianist and composer Oscar Comettant’s recollections of the tour imply that Jullien lost a large sum of money: “Jullien arrived with the finest orchestra that could be formed. He played Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Berlioz, Rossini, Meyerbeer, Verdi, and Jullien; . . . he had cornet solos by Koenig, oboe solos by Lavigne, flageolet solos by Collinet . . . and bass viol solos by Bottesini; he embellished his promenade concerts with elegant fountains in which champagne flowed freely; the price of all this was only four shillings, and in spite of everything, few people attended. All the combined efforts of Jullien, his orchestra, and his promoters themselves could not keep the latter from losing the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand francs.” Oscar Comettant and Ivor D. Spencer, “Musical America 1850 as Seen through a French Squint,” *Music Educators Journal*, vol. 55, no. 6 (1969): 43-44. Critical reviews from the tour, however, are superlative in their account of audience attendance and appreciation. It is likely many official reviewers received cash bribes from Jullien or his promoters in exchange for positive reviews, a common custom in America at the time.
toured these concerts to the provinces in 1859 and then made what would be his final journey, leaving London for Paris.

**Critical Reception**

That Jullien’s visuality played an important role in his success as a conductor is irrefutable when one considers the descriptions of his concerts published in periodicals such as *The Musical World, The Illustrated London News* and *The Athenaeum*. Notices and reviews of Jullien’s concerts are unique in London during that period in the attention paid to the conductor as an important, and even central, part of the performance.²¹ The language employed in describing his role in the performance reveals much about Jullien’s unique appeal and popular conceptions of what a conductor’s role entailed. References to him in reviews and other published material can be categorised under four broad headings:

(i) descriptions of his persona (clothing, hairstyle, moustache, stature, non-musical podium behaviour etc.);

(ii) appraisals of his efficacy in producing favourable musical results and the manner in which he was seen to achieve this;

(iii) metaphors relating to his role as a conductor (he is variously described as, among others, Apollo, Napoleon, and Prospero);

(iv) the perception of his gestures as cues to the audience providing information regarding musical meaning, form and response.

(i) Descriptions of his persona

Of Jullien’s appearance, his frequent reviewer, correspondent and friend J. W. Davison has this to say in an obituary for the conductor:

Much of his popularity has been, and not altogether unreasonably, attributed to his physical conformation. To features intelligent and even handsome, a frame robust and firmly knit – with no sign of corpulence, however, but, while beneath the ordinary stature, almost a Hercules in strength of frame and symmetry of proportions – there was added a stamp of originality so marked, that Jullien could by no possibility ever be mistaken for another, even by those who might have obtained a glance at him for once and once only … So singular and vivid, indeed, was the physical impression that he created, that his figure became a household shape no less than his name a household word, throughout the length and breadth of the country…

Davison’s words reveal not only that Jullien himself was famous, nor even that his popularity led to the familiarity of his appearance. Rather, he suggests that the singularity of Jullien’s appearance itself contributed to that fame, and was at least equal to his accomplishments as a musician in securing the public’s fascination.

George Augustus Sala’s memoirs include a more vivid description of a then unknown travel companion who, it transpired, was Jullien:

I found that I had another travelling companion here (Potsdam) in the person of a magnificent incarnation, all ringleted [sic], oiled, scented, dress-coated, and watered-silk faced, braided, frogged [sic], ringed, jewelled, patent-leathered, amber-headed stucked [sic], and straw-coloured kid-gloved, who had travelled in the same train from Cologne, but had been driven out of the adjoining carriage, he said, by the execrable fumes of the German cigars, and now was good enough to tolerate me, owing to a mild and undeniably havannah cigar I had lighted. This magnificent creature shone like a meteor in the narrow carriage. The lamp mirrored

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itself in his glistening equipment; his gloves and boots fitted so tightly, that you felt inclined to think that he had varnished his hands straw-coloured, and his feet black. There was not a crease in his fine linen, a speck of dust on his superfine Saxony sables, his waxed moustacheios [sic] and glossy ringlets. I felt ashamed, embaled [sic] as I was in rugs and spatterdashes [sic], and a fur cap, and a courier’s pouch, all dusty and travel-stained. When I contemplated this bandbox voyageur, so spruce and kempt, the only sign of whose being away from home, was a magnificent mantle lined with expensive furs, on the seat beside him, and who yet, he told me, had been travelling incessantly for six days.

Descriptions of his non-musical podium behaviour portray a similar self-consciousness and tendency toward vain theatricality. Many of these contemporary references have become the basis for more recent descriptions of Jullien and his career, possibly to the detriment of his reputation, as they often eclipse the more serious aspects of his music making. Not surprisingly, a description in Punch provides one of the most vivid accounts of his podium behaviour:

The overture to the promenade concerts usually consists of a pantomime entirely new to an English audience. Monsieur Jullien, having made his appearance in the orchestra, seats himself in a conspicuous situation, to indulge the ladies with the most favourable view of his most elegant person, and the splendid gold-chainery which is spread all over his magnificent waistcoat. A servant in livery then appears, and presents him with a pair of white kid gloves. The illustrious conductor, having taken some time to thrust them upon a very large red hand, rises, grins upon the expectant musicians, lifts his arm, and – the first chord is struck.

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23 “In the nineteenth century high breeding was equated with a delicate bone structure, and small, narrow hands and feet were emulated by both men and women.” Penelope Byrde, Nineteenth Century Fashion (London: B. T. Batsford Limited, 1992), 117.

24 George Augustus Sala, A Journey Due North (London: Richard Bentley, 1859), 16.

25 Punch, or the London Charivari, 5 September 1841, 96.
A lithograph of Jullien in performance confirms a number of anecdotal claims about his non-musical podium behaviour (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Anon., “M. Jullien’s concert at Drury Lane Theatre – The Corps de Tambour” (23 November 1850). Original publication unknown; copy held by the National Portrait Gallery, London.

He is standing with his side to the orchestra and beside him sits an ornate chair. Of Jullien’s positioning in relation to the orchestra few commentators have anything of note to impart. A correspondent writes in The Musical Times that Jullien was one of the first in London to conduct with his back to the orchestra.26 Musgrave suggests Jullien’s practice was not so much to have his back to his orchestra as to have them grouped around him in a circular or semicircular arrangement, resulting in different views of him from different sections of the orchestra.27 Certainly the instrumental forces Jullien habitually employed


would gain from this seating method, rather than stretching out in one direction away from him. This seating plan would also better facilitate the viewing of Jullien and the orchestra from the surrounding promenade and would place him at a focal point within the group of musicians. It is likely that he utilised both seating plans at different times, as conflicting bookings and renovations often forced him to move his concerts between theatres, impacting on the instrumental forces he was able to have onstage, as well as the layout of performers and decorations. It is clear that even in an unfamiliar or temporary theatre Jullien sought to enhance the visual interest of his concerts through the use of plants, fountains and lighting effects, and by maximising the visibility of himself and his players by various means such as raising the stage to the same level as the promenade, or by standing on unusually large podiums.

The accompanying article reports that the orchestra is “extended and elevated to the very ‘flies,’ the rear filled with players in uniform, from three military bands (the Royal Artillery, the Coldstream, and the 2nd Life Guards, with their respective masters, Messrs. Collins, Godfrey, and Grattan Cooke).” 28 The figure standing at the centre to Jullien’s left at first glance resembles statuary, but is “Tambour Major, M. Barbier” of the drummers of the French National Guard who can be seen sitting directly behind Barbier. Jullien occasionally employed secondary conductors to assist when conducting larger forces, but it is also clear that he promoted military spectacle in his concerts and it is likely that he positioned the French drum major at this central point mainly for this visual effect. The article notes how “fierce and yet courteous” Barbier looks and that with “a graceful jerk” he marks the end of drum rolls from his own bandsmen, but there is no other indication of traditional conducting gestures. The author of the article saw little distinction between the drum major and Jullien’s duties, however, noting that the two men had “really made a treaty offensive and defensive, and their united batôns of England and France marshal the orchestra with mighty vigour”, although Jullien is acknowledged as the ultimate “general”.

28 All quotations from this article are taken from a photocopy of the press clipping “M. Jullien’s concert at Drury Lane Theatre – The Corps de Tambour”. Artist unknown, 23 November 1850. Original publication unknown; copy held by the National Portrait Gallery, London.
Figure 2 clearly depicts the throne-like chair at Jullien’s side, which received particularly vivid descriptions in the American press. His dramatic habit of collapsing into it at the end of a symphony in Byronic attitude is regularly mentioned in more recent writing, but references to this ritual in relation to a specific concert are scarce. This article is one of the few extant English reviews to verify Jullien’s use of the “golden throne” as part of a post-conducting display of exhaustion. The writer observes that after his musical exertions, it is “no wonder Jullien sinks exhausted in his chair of state”. A writer for *The Morning Herald* in 1850, the same year that the image in Figure 2 was published, commented that “[t]he pedestal of Jullien stood high in the centre. . . . his golden music-stand and his lustrous fauteuil formed a group of objects distinct from everything else.” While it has gone on to be remembered as a particularly Jullienesque feature, it is likely that others also made use of a chair onstage. Jullien’s protégé Jules Riviere, for example, is reported to have reclined on a monogrammed, red velvet armchair.

Whether unique to Jullien’s performances or part of a greater tradition, the ‘throne’ nonetheless contributed to the visual opulence of Jullien’s concerts and to the cultivation of Jullien’s theatrical public image. Some contemporary writers described Jullien’s use of the chair as a podium to increase his visual prominence on the stage. J. W. Davison, in his memoirs, claims Jullien was not unknown to stand on the chair when particularly excited. The velvet and gilt throne was evidently a much-used prop in Jullien’s concerts and one which not only served practical functions in his repertoire of non-musical antics (to be leaned upon, stood on or, most commonly, sunk into exhaustedly at the conclusion of a performance), but also engaged the eye as a focal point on the stage, a frame for Jullien and his audience.

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31 Whall, “Conductor with Back to Orchestra,” 739.

a symbol of decadence, gentle social satire and regal authority. Moreover, Jullien’s need (be it theatrical or actual) to recover from his artistic exertions communicates the extent of the heroic sacrifice he had made for the audience’s benefit, signalling him as a servant of the music and audience and as a self-sacrificing medium of communication between the two.  

Equally oft-quoted in more recent writing is Jullien’s use of a jewelled baton and white kid gloves, presented to him on a silver platter, whenever he conducted Beethoven. This was presumably the Maplewood baton that was presented to Jullien by his admirers and supporters at the Hanover Square Rooms on 25 July 1853. The accompanying inscription reads “Presented to M. Jullien by the members of his orchestra, the musical profession of London and 5,000 of his patrons, admirers and friends, July 11, 1853”. As he was already nearly three quarters of the way through his time in England by this date, it was actually a late addition to his performances.

The practice of conducting in kid gloves, meanwhile, was certainly not unique to Jullien. Felix Mendelssohn is most commonly credited with the genesis of the tradition in England. Wagner’s refusal to conform to the convention when conducting the Philharmonic is evidence of how deeply entrenched Mendelssohn’s influence was considered to be in the matter. The use of the silver platter and the manner in which Jullien evidently put on the gloves while onstage indicate that the common practice of wearing them became, in Jullien’s performances, part of an elaborate display. No doubt the jewelled baton, however

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33 Warren Bebbington locates the origins of the display of “renunciation in the service of art” in Romantic writing, and suggests Beethoven’s Heilegenstadt Testament (1802) and the writings of Wackenroder and Hoffmann are early expressions of it. He cites Charles Munch’s (1891-1968) claim that conducting is a sacred calling which requires “total self-renunciation and a profound humility” in 1955 as an example of its enduring presence in the psyche of conductors. Charles Munch, Je suis chef d’orchestre [I am a Conductor], trans. Leonard Burkat (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 9-10. Quoted in: Bebbington, “The Orchestral Conducting Practice of Richard Wagner”, 15-16.

34 Carse, The Life of Jullien, 74.

35 One can, of course, presume that Wagner’s refusal was due to his ill-concealed contempt for Mendelssohn, rather than a particular dislike for gloves.
late in his career it appeared, added to the visual poignancy of this micro-performance. The fact that he reserved this for Beethoven’s music gave conflicting messages to his audience. On the one hand he was signalling to them that Beethoven’s music required special attention or was different in some way, or that it was a higher class of music deserving of such luxurious and respectful treatment. It was also possibly a satirical gesture as, in his ostentatious way, Jullien may have been mimicking those conductors who venerated Beethoven by repeated programming of his symphonies and ensured the exclusivity of this music by restricting access to the wealthiest members of society. Jullien’s exaggerated display would have therefore informed his more democratic audience that they too were worthy of hearing Beethoven.

The theatricality implied by Jullien’s onstage behaviour and his evident self-consciousness are not as disingenuous as they may seem. In her study of acting techniques, Lynn Voskuil argues that in nineteenth-century England, “theatricality and authenticity often functioned dynamically together to construct the symbolic typologies by which the English knew themselves as individuals, as a public, and as a nation.”36 Jullien’s stylised behaviour was, in itself, an act of authentication. By enacting behaviour that was informed by Romantic stereotypes, such as his exhaustion after delivering Beethoven to the audience, he used visual means to authenticate contemporary views about the role of the artist in society. The audience’s acknowledgement and acceptance of these behaviours and visual tropes indicate their complicity in authenticating such stereotypes.

(ii) His efficacy and method as a conductor

Jullien’s efficacy as a conductor and the manner in which his physical gestures transmitted his ideas to the orchestra are visual themes which, although discussed often by his contemporaries, have received little attention from more recent writers. Writers believed that Jullien’s movements, and in particular his baton, had a positive effect on the musical results heard. While this may seem obvious to a modern audience it should be remembered

36 Voskuil, Acting Naturally, 2.
that at the time Jullien arrived in London most orchestras were led not by a conductor with a baton, but by a system of dual leadership comprising of a ‘conductor’ at the keyboard and a ‘leader’ at the head of the first violins. In the first edition of Grove’s *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians (A. D. 1450-1889)*, under “conductor”, Grove lists the conductor’s duties. These include studying the score, correcting orchestral parts, beating the time and animating the performers “with the spirit of the work”.

He credits Michael Costa with being the first to make significant changes to the leadership system, insisting on sole leadership and conducting with a baton. Costa began the process of acclimatising orchestras to the practice at The King’s (later Her Majesty’s) theatre by 1832, two years after his arrival in England from Italy, and Hippolyte-André Chélard (1789-1861) may have adopted sole leadership at the Opera in the same year. Visiting conductors from continental Europe such as Louis Spohr, Felix Mendelssohn and Weber conducted with the baton even earlier, but due to their status as guest conductors the practice was not maintained after they left. Despite Costa’s consistent attempts to demonstrate the value of sole leadership and baton conducting, the earlier practice remained entrenched at most establishments until closer to the middle of the century, and as an arbiter of official sanction and preference, it was not until 1846 that he was able to convince the Philharmonic Society to adopt the new method. By this point, Jullien had already been conducting away from the keyboard with a baton in England for six years. While critics and musicians were still arguing the merits of baton conducting, Jullien was being praised for the musical results he, and his baton, could produce.

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38 “Conductor” in *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 390


40 The concert in question was on the 16 March. England’s reluctance to imitate developments from Europe earlier was in part due to less than satisfactory rehearsal conditions. A severe lack of rehearsal time and the much discussed deputy system, whereby a musician could send a student or colleague along to play in the rehearsal in their place, hampered any efforts at improvement in musical standards and were slow to change, despite the efforts of many.
His non-musical podium antics have become the central point for historians despite the fact that in his own time he was regarded by many as a highly efficient conductor possessed of good technique and the ability to enforce metronomic precision, even when conducting gargantuan forces. Of his conducting style we learn early in his time in London that Jullien conducted with a “necromantic baton and his vigorous flourish, marshalling and supermarshalling his euphonious colleagues in a style productive of great effects, and most eminently satisfactory to all beholders.”\(^{41}\) Two years later, Jullien “has succeeded in training a very excellent band to work with great energy and precision, and his conducting is a thing quite unique, efficient in regulating his orchestra, as well as entertaining to the eye of the spectator”.\(^{42}\) In 1845 *The Illustrated London News* similarly reports of his ability to maintain ensemble, remarking that “M. Jullien kept the masses of musicians together; from first to last their precision was remarkable.” \(^{43}\)

*The Morning Herald* elaborates five years later, describing his movements and their effects thus: “His baton flies about with the restlessness of lightning, and his attitudes, while working up a climax, dallying with a diminuendo, or enunciating a staccato, were as explanatory as words, and infinitely more prompt.”\(^{44}\) The previous year, 1849, *The Illustrated London News* had reported that when “the promenade conductor turns around with vehement gesture to animate his adroit executants of the parchment and brass, his pantomime is most intense and insinuating. He typifies a crescendo, or a crash, with astounding vigour – his stick rolling spasmodically and his body writhing convulsively. Nothing can be more exhilarating than this action of Jullien while embodying, as it were, the composition under weigh.”\(^{45}\)

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Beyond London, the same demonstrative technique and effects were witnessed, although
the manner in which this was communicated made recourse to more mystical explanations.
A reviewer in Birmingham noted that “[h]e sways his baton through the noiseless air, and a
burst of harmony follows; he moves his arm in slow and gentle undulations, and the music,
obedient to his behest, rises and falls with the softest cadence, the variations of which are
felt rather than heard. The slightest motion, and the most animated, are followed by their
appropriate musical effects. It seems as if he alone were the performer.”\(^{46}\) In Manchester, it
was observed that “[t]he joy he felt, he communicated, by the talismanic influence of his
wand, throughout the vast hall, which was one scene of universal radiance and pleasure.”\(^{47}\)

Comments relating to the precision of his beat are not surprising given his background in
military bands. Many conductors who began their musical careers in military bands were
noted for their precise time-beating and ability to enforce musical discipline.\(^{48}\) In addition
to The Musical World’s opinion that Jullien “succeeded in training a very excellent band to
work with great energy and precision”, double-bass player John Reynolds attested that he
had “never heard finer performances of many classical Overtures and Symphonies than
those directed by Jullien, and I have played under all the great […] conductors for over
fifty years.” He added that of “the twenty or thirty classical works he had made a study of,
no one I have known has made them go so well.”\(^{49}\) An ardent opponent of Jullien, Henry
Chorley, reviewer for The Athenaeum, was unable to deny the musical results of Jullien’s
conducting, although in his quest to denigrate Jullien, he suggested that “when the music
went well it was merely by favour of the excellent band”.\(^{50}\)


\(^{48}\) Toward the end of the century, comments regarding military-style conducting were used in a negative
manner by critics, as this style of gesture was inconsistent with interpretive conducting.

Joseph Bennett, Forty Years of Music, 1865-1905 (London: Methuen, 1908), 208.

\(^{50}\) “M. Jullien” in The Athenaeum, no. 1691, (24 March 1860): 409
There is some evidence that his beat was unusually demonstrative and eccentric. Kuhe said of it that it “was so amusing and eccentric that many people, to my knowledge, attended these concerts more for the sake of watching his ‘beat’ than hearing the music.”\(^{51}\) Similarly, but perhaps more affectionately, Davison said of Jullien’s “demonstrative beat” that he “not only conducted but acted.”\(^{52}\) A modern student of conducting would hold that a demonstrative or eccentric beat does not usually contribute in a positive way to musical ensemble, so perhaps Chorley was correct in his cynicism regarding the value of the players, and lack thereof with regards to Jullien’s contribution. The band may well have played just as well had the rostrum been empty. However, with the exception of Chorley, the written responses to Jullien’s concerts are overwhelmingly in favour of the notion that Jullien’s beat played an active part in the musical success of the performance, regardless of whether it actually did or not, and this became an integral part of Jullien’s public persona, heightening the importance attributed to his role in the performance. Furthermore, our reading of these comments is too easily filtered through current perceptions of conducting technique. A more reserved or subtle beat may not have had as much significance for nineteenth-century musicians. In this way, the theatricality of Jullien’s gesture may have assisted in their understanding of his musical intentions, due to his obvious and unsubtle manner. The opinion that such gestures would be counter-productive to musical standards is essentially modern.

If it seemed “as if he alone were the performer”, a large degree of agency is being attributed to him regarding the production of sound. The conductor, however, is mute. Whilst a rehearsal may involve verbal explanations, these can be seen as contributing to the quality of playing, or elucidating the gesture, but are not part of the process of conducting *per se*. So Jullien’s agency in producing the sound does not stem from his own sound. He is affecting the sound by other means, namely gesture; and this communicative process from meaningful gesture to informed sound is complex, both physically and conceptually, requiring him to produce movements which are not only meaningful, but also readable. The players’ expectations as to what his movements will signify are as important


in this process as the gestures themselves and their implied symbolic content. It also places him in an exaggerated position of authority, highlighting the leadership qualities required of a conductor, while minimising the creative contribution of the players.

(iii) Metaphors used in describing his role

Although not universally accepted as a tool for musical leadership, where it was used, the baton was a focal point for speculation about the conductor’s role. In an age which valorised fearless exploration and colonisation, popular mythological figures, industrial achievement, wealth and robust morality, creative men were faced with a difficult task in conceptualising and articulating their masculinity.\(^{53}\) The baton as a symbol of authority was an important factor in the conceptualisation of conductors. In particular it was a symbol within a larger metaphorical discourse relating the conductor to more traditional roles such as military heroes or mythological characters. This discourse gained currency in the public sphere through literature, news media or portraiture, as prototypes of masculinity to which English men could aspire.

When Jullien’s use of the baton is discussed, prosaic descriptions of his actual technique are rare, usually replaced with more colourful language likening the baton to Prospero’s or Apollo’s wand, or a field-marshall’s baton. Metaphorical associations with the baton alluding to its authoritative symbolism were not uncommon in the nineteenth century. For instance, when Berlioz exchanged batons with Mendelssohn as a sign of mutual respect, he

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\(^{53}\) Sussman’s formulation of this problem in relation to writers and artists is equally applicable to musicians: “Applying such typologies of Victorian manliness to artists and to writers productively complicates the pervasive academic model that situates nineteenth-century gender conflicts solely within the binary of masculine and feminine. Early Victorian male poets and painters sought to differentiate themselves from the feminine, but to do so each male poet, novelist, painter had to shape from the varied possibilities of manly self-fashioning available in that historical moment a personal configuration of artistic manhood that was often at odds with the normative model of manliness in a bourgeois industrial society.” Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art*, 14.
referred to the baton as a tomahawk and Mendelssohn as a “Great Chief!”\footnote{“Au chef Mendelssohn! Grand Chef! Nous nous sommes promis d’échanger nos tomahawks; voici le mien! Il est grossier, le tien est simple; les squaws seules et les visages pâles aiment les armes ornées. Sois mon frère! Et quand le Grand Esprit nous aura envoyés chasser dans le pays des âmes, que nos guerriers suspendent nos tomahawks unis à la porte de conseil. [To Chief Mendelssohn – Great chief! We are pledged to exchange tomahawks. Here is mine. It is rough-hewn. Yours is plain. Only squaws and palefaces like ornate weapons. Be my brother; and when the Great Spirit sends us to hunt in the land of souls, may our warriors hang our tomahawks side by side at the entrance to the council chamber.]” Hector Berlioz, Mémoires de Hector Berlioz, Membre de l’Institut de France, Comprendant Ses Voyages en Italie, en Allemagne, en Russe et en Angleterre, 1803-1865, Avec un beau portrait de l’Auteur, (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1870), 264-265. Translated in David Cairns trans. and ed., The Memoirs of Hector Berlioz, 2\textsuperscript{nd} rev. ed., (London: Everyman Publishers Inc., 2002), 299.}

More commonly it was likened to a “marshall’s [sic] baton” or attributed similar militaristic associations, and even earlier had been associated with symbols of religious authority such as a Bishop’s rod.\footnote{“Batons of drum majors, frequently ornamented with metal at each end, have become emblematic accoutrements of military authority – like the Englishman’s “swagger-stick” or the field marshall’s [sic] baton.” Galkin, A History of Orchestral Conducting in Theory and Practice, 489. On religious symbolism of the baton see: Galkin, A History of Orchestral Conducting in Theory and Practice, 488.}

Thus, we find the following descriptions of Jullien and his baton, some of which describe his actions and others which regard the baton, and consequently Jullien himself, in a more metaphorical manner. In Cheltenham, the way in which his baton communicated to the players was likened to “the secret influence of mesmerism”.\footnote{The Cheltenham Chronicle, 1845. Quoted in: Carse, The Life of Jullien, 113.} “His baton flies about with the restlessness of lightning”\footnote{The Musical World, 1850. Quoted in: Carse, The Life of Jullien, 112.}; “There in his pride of place soared M. Jullien, the soul of the great Polybody, a pharos [sic] in the mystical sea of harmony, there was the wizard, with his plenitude of ringlet and whisker, his exuberance of gesture, his necromantic baton and his vigorous flourish, marshalling and supermarshalling his euphonious colleagues”\footnote{The Musical world, 1842. Quoted in: Carse, The Life of Jullien, 112.}; “The joy he felt, he communicated, by the talismanic influence of his wand, throughout the...
vast hall”\textsuperscript{59}; “Apollo, we could almost believe, has conferred upon Jullien, for his musical enthusiasm, the power of creating harmony by a wave of his cabalistic wand”\textsuperscript{60}; “Jullien with uplifted bâton, again marshalled his instrumental forces, and again did the orchestra thunder forth the anthem.”\textsuperscript{61}

Jullien’s American critics were similarly moved by his apparently heroic use of the baton, writer John Ross Dix (1800-1865) noting that Jullien “raises his baton as if it had been the wand of an enchanter”\textsuperscript{62}, the \textit{The New York Herald} commenting that “[i]n his hand the baton may be likened to the magic wand of Prospero, with which he magnetises, or rather galvanises the public”\textsuperscript{63} and \textit{The New York Musical World and Times} saying of the gracefulness of his gesture that it is “as if all the tones of this monstrous band were concentrated in his little baton.”\textsuperscript{64}

One American review is of particular interest and worth quoting in full as an example of Napoleonic references in Jullien’s reviews, and as an introduction to two themes which are touched upon in the reception of Jullien, but did not reach their zenith until later in the century: the conductor as an industrial and imperial hero.

\begin{quote}
Have we a Napoleon among us? We answer – Yes – the Napoleon of music, who, after conquering Europe, has invaded the realms of Yankee Doodle and Hail Columbia, with fiddles, fifes, trumpets, drums. The invader is known to fame by the patronymic of Jullien; in the musical world every rap of his drums, every note of his viols and trumpets proclaims its emperor. Jullien is the strategist of musical art; he deals in vast masses of sound; he collects and gives unity to a hundred
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{60} \textit{The Birmingham Journal}, 1845. Quoted in: Carse, \textit{The Life of Jullien}, 113.


different airs, played by as many instruments; he can calculate with precision how far they may be allowed to wander from the line of march, and then collect them all for a grand musical crash – a vehement charge in mighty column.65

Two themes clearly emerge from the above reviews: Jullien as a mesmeric or magical figure, and Jullien as a military or heroic figure. In both cases, the baton itself plays a major role, represented as a recognisable tool in what is otherwise an incomprehensible process. The ‘magic’ of gesture transformed into meaningful sound is rationalised, or made possible, by the cabalistic baton.

But, there is particular significance in the references to Jullien’s talismanic, necromantic and magnetic powers. What are now metaphorical phrases used in everyday language were understood, by the Victorians, as scientific terms associated with mesmerism, or animal magnetism.66 Alison Winter asserts that by the 1840s, Jullien’s first decade in England, mesmerism was widespread, practised in hospitals, university lectures, private salons, and public halls. A skilled mesmerist induced a coma-like trance in his subject by use of his eye contact and ‘magnetic’ hand movements. While under this influence, the subject lost the use of their senses, gained the ability to travel to distant places without the use of their body, and became a vessel through which the mesmerist could communicate his thoughts, sensory experiences and even bodily movements.67

What was on the surface a contested field of science was, on a much deeper level, a tool “for modeling [sic] the nature of human interaction and social power” as mesmerism was both widespread in its popularity and display in England, and experimented with by


66 “The vocabulary of mesmerism has assimilated itself into our own speech. Unless we deliberately avoid the now hackneyed expressions bequeathed to us by the mesmerists, we find ourselves talking without a second thought of “magnetic” personalities that exert an irresistible influence and “mesmerizing” gazes that weave a magical spell. It is easy to forget that these colorless, now nearly dead, metaphors were once alive with meaning.” Maria M. Tatar, Spellbound: Studies on Memerism and Literature (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), x-xi.

67 Winter, Mesmerized, 2-3.
diverse groups of people.” It was one of many scientific developments of the time concerning the function and value of the human psyche. By his ability to control his subject, the mesmerist also enacted the predominant and, for many, problematic issues of domination and subordination of will in play throughout the colonised world. Furthermore, the specific circumstances of each mesmeric séance had the potential to subvert or exploit engrained social, sexual and racial relationships, depending on the status and gender of mesmerist, subject and audience.

The use of terms synonymous with mesmerism in connection with Jullien’s conducting, recognisable to a Victorian reader, refers most obviously to his ability to communicate musical information across space to the minds of the instrumentalists (and even to the minds of audience-members) through bodily gesture. If the mesmerist can control a subject like a human marionette, then Jullien’s baton (and the mind and body which govern its movement) holds the players like puppets on strings. The use of mesmerist terms also articulates the complexity of Jullien’s power, all conditions of class, gender and race being undermined by his magnetic influence.

Furthermore, Winter contends that mesmerism “was an ocular practice”:

It provided both a display and an account of the way displays affected audiences, an account of the power of looking as well as a powerful sight for Victorians to see. It often achieved its displays through the use of the eye, since one of the primary means of establishing the trance was through sustained eye contact. The power of looking and the relations of influence operating between the person looking and the thing being looked at were at the heart of experiments. But mesmerism not only explained what was going on in an altered state of mind; it also explained how the

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Winter, Mesmerized, 5. For interesting studies of mesmerism and literature, see: Fred Kaplan, Dickens and Mesmerism: The Hidden Springs of Fiction (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); Tatar, Spellbound; Martin Willis, Mesmerists, Monsters, and Machines: Science Fiction and the Cultures of Science in the Nineteenth Century (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2006).

Punch published many caricatures involving mesmeric gestures and postures being used to bring about political reform, influence foreign relations and provide commentary on English society.
performance affected the audience. What was being performed explained how people reacted to it. Mesmeric performances, more openly than other forms of display, emphasized their own status as theater. Indeed, because they promised an explanation of interpersonal influence achieved through the eye, the explored the very nature of theatricality.

The parallels between Winter’s account of mesmerism as an “ocular practice” and conducting are numerous: like mesmerism, conducting simultaneously relies upon sight to achieve its musical objectives (the conductor’s eye contact with the players, the players’ view of his beat), and provides a visual spectacle in which the audience see the dynamic relationship between conductor and players, as well as hearing it. The conductor, like the mesmerist, has the potential to subvert established social conditions based on race, gender and class; and finally, both disciplines had at their foundation the belief that bodily gestures could have an effect over the minds of others – the mesmerist’s arm and hand movements induced the altered conscious state, the conductor’s gestures conveyed musical thought to the understanding of the musicians and enacted the music visually for the audience.

There is a further connection between Jullien and the popular image of mesmerists. The science was negatively associated with seductive “foreign scoundrels”, “dark and foreign-looking” magnetizers. Winter has the following to say about one of London’s most prominent mesmerists, Dr John Elliotson: “[h]e walked a fine line between charismatic fashion and “dandification,” and was known for his love of the latest fashions more generally: he rode the crest of all trends.” These exotic men of singular appearance “drew comment not merely because they stood out in a crowd, but also because of the power they claimed for themselves: their bodies demonstrated how one person could ‘penetrate’ another with his ‘vital principle’.” Jullien’s notable appearance is the subject of comment by critics, friends, opponents and strangers (as in the case of George Sala), and the

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conductor’s primary task is to “penetrate” the music-making of others with his own tastes and choices regarding matters such as tempo and dynamics. Furthermore, as the following section of this chapter will establish, his audience felt the influence of his musical “vital principle”, citing his ability to control their aural perceptions of the music being played.

The militaristic theme apparent in Jullien’s reception reflects more than his leadership skills. His nationality, idiosyncratic personal style, charisma, ego and military background also provide links with famous military figures such as Napoleon. The visible action of Jullien surrounded by orchestral players and, often, military bands in a productive relationship akin to that of a battalion or regiment and its leader, reinforced this. Encapsulated in this is recognition of the organisational efforts involved in ‘marshalling’ vast numbers of performers to creative productivity, but in the context of an industrial and imperial society, these nuances are subtler and deeper.

The industrial hero as a visual type is reflective of changing values from the early to the later nineteenth century, the sitter’s masculinity being highlighted through his public role, demonstrable wealth, and pride in his industriousness. The industrial man as a hero-figure was therefore a product of, and flagship for, ‘improvement’, as he represented the leadership, instruction and mobilisation of productivity, respectability and commodities. In this way, the industrial hero became a metaphorical model for many men whose interests did not necessarily lie in commerce. Writers, teachers, the clergy and conductors could present themselves as industrious heroes in their own vocations as leaders improving the masses (be that a readership, a classroom, a congregation or an orchestra), by creative or moral means.

Public recognition of, and respect for, Jullien’s militaristic herding of vast orchestral forces into organised productivity therefore falls within the bounds of industrial heroism.

73 The nineteenth-century industrialised middle-classes subverted the established associations of work with the lower classes, by focusing on the products of their (or their workers’) labour and destabilising the aristocracy’s claim to privilege based on inherited wealth and leisure.

74 See for instance, Sussman, Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art, 42.
Jullien was evidently also aware of himself as an imperial tool, improving the tastes of his audiences by gradually including larger proportions of ‘serious’ music as their ears became accustomed to it, and planning a Universal Musical Tour in the last years of his life to civilise the globe through music.\textsuperscript{75} The tour never eventuated, due to his death in 1860, but in its missionary-like proposal Jullien was further exercising his role as an educational leader and figurehead of ‘improvement’.\textsuperscript{76}

For many, therefore, Jullien’s effectiveness as a conductor was at least partially due to his ability to transfer musical ideas into the minds and bodies of his players and audiences, by visual, but not necessarily technical means – a role akin to that of a mesmerist, and to personify military and industrial heroic ideals. The result is the heightened significance of the conductor’s visuality onstage beyond a basic semantic representation through hand and arm gestures. His musical authority was seen, literally, to be analogous with other non-musical forms of power.

(iv) Gestures as audience cues

The fourth and final recurring element in Jullien’s critical reception is the way that his movements were observed to ‘act out’ or explicate the meaning of the music to his audiences.

\textsuperscript{75} “M. JULLIEN’s Twentieth and LAST ANNUAL SERIES of CONCERTS will commence on the 1\textsuperscript{st} of NOVEMBER, continue for One Month, and will be given as M. Jullien’s Farewell and “Concerts d’Adieu,” before his departure for his “Universal Musical Tour” through every City and Capital of Europe, America, Australia, the Colonies, and civilized towns of Asia and Africa, accompanied by the élite of his orchestra and other artistes, “savants, hommes de lettres,” being the nucleus of a Society already formed, under the title of “Société de l’Harmonie Universelle,” instituted not only to popularize the divine and civilizing art of Music, but to promote, through Harmony’s powerful eloquence, a noble and philanthropic cause.” “M. Jullien’s Concerts – Royal Lyceum Theatre” in The Athenaeum, no. 1616 (16 October 1858): 495.

\textsuperscript{76} As with many imperialist ventures, the Universal Musical Tour assumed the superiority of English, or greater European, culture and the need of other cultures to assimilate for their own benefit. Jullien was not the only musician to be moved by the spirit of his times in this way: the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace, in addition to promoting British manufacturing, encouraging trade and celebrating art and culture, was a display of English success and superiority for people of other cultures to behold.
audience. English reviewers noted that Jullien’s conducting was “entertaining to the eye of the spectator”, “as explanatory as words”, a “pantomime” and “most eminently satisfactory to all beholders”. Carse convincingly states that Jullien “visibly acted the music that was being heard”, that he was a conductor “who took the centre of the stage, and who posed, so to speak, in the limelight and deliberately drew unto himself the attention of the audience. . . . There can be no doubt about it, Jullien was a showman-conductor who conducted at his audience as well as for the orchestra” despite the fact there is no available testimony from Jullien himself to confirm this. On his American tour it was suggested by one reviewer that “if you are not bright enough to understand all this musical language – look at the index, M. Jullien, who acts it out, and who is, in fact, the living letter-press placed under an engraving, to explain the subject”.79

The language used informs us of the demonstrative nature of Jullien’s gesture, both as a visual spectacle and a communicative tool: it was visually entertaining and visually informative. The significance of this from the audience’s perspective is that they interpreted his gestures as being at least partially intended for them, and believed that those gestures indexed specific meanings implied by the music. Jullien’s gesture was more than a visual means of controlling musical forces: it was a theatrical display of gestural semiotics. Also inherent in this perception of Jullien’s movements is the belief that he had a deeper understanding of the music and its hidden meanings, otherwise incoherent to the audience. It was through the “talismanic”, “necromantic” and magnetic powers discussed in the previous section that Jullien communicated these ideas to the audience and, of course, players.

The way in which promenade concerts were arranged to include room for walking, dancing, and the consumption of refreshments supplies further evidence that the organisers of such concert series were aware of their target audience’s desire for multi-sensory


78 Carse, The Life of Jullien, 115. (Carse’s emphasis.)

Jullien was no exception, providing extravagant visual effects and decadent hall decorations from the beginning of his career. The demonstrative nature of his conducting and the fact that he engineered it thus for the benefit of his audience was the one point about which Jullien’s supporters and detractors were in agreement. Where critics such as Davison regarded it as evidence of Jullien’s cheerful “bombast”, Henry Chorley was more likely to attribute his “melodramatic gestures” to misguided and “self-deluded” charlatanism.

Beyond gaining a sense of Jullien’s performance practices, the significance of his gestures to spectators reflects the demographic of his audience, although contemporary commentators indicate that it was unusually diverse. Of an 1854 concert Punch remarked that:

Amid the merry, but decorous throng, we noticed several families of professional gentlemen and tradesmen, as well as persons of higher rank; and many men, whom we personally knew, had brought their sisters. . . . Many of the young men wore plain black suits and white ties, and though some of these youths, thanks to the early closing movement, may have been linen-drapers’ assistants, a greater proportion evidently were of the aristocracy, and not a few, who abstained from actually dancing, had all the appearance of curates. A bishop occupied a private box among the spectators. . . . The general tone of the assembly was that of perfect ease, and perfect propriety; the unrestrained and correct expression of amiability and animal spirits.

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80 This is, of course, the source of the concert series’ name.

81 J. W. Davison and Henry Davison, From Mendelssohn to Wagner, 109; Henry Chorley, Obituary in The Athenaeum, 24 March 1860, 409

Diversity was a natural concomitant to Jullien’s stated aim of providing “entertainment, relaxation – and, he trusts he may add, instruction – to the masses.” There is much evidence to support the usual assumption that the majority of his audience members were from the working or lower middle classes. Most obviously, he marketed his performances specifically to people in a low income bracket by offering his concerts at low prices, a move which brought the concerts within the reach of the working man and deterred patronage from higher social classes who, affirmed their status by the consumption of more exclusive and expensive products. There are also reports in several publications detailing antisocial behaviour at Jullien’s concerts. In 1856 *The Illustrated London News* indicated that the opening nights of Jullien’s concert series were often marked by rowdiness when stating that “the densely crowded assemblage, as usual on the first night of Jullien’s concerts, was now and then very uproarious, and at one time seemed approaching to riot.” *Punch* confirmed this tradition, commenting in particular on the ritualistic smashing of hats whenever audience members refused to remove them during the National Anthem. “The nightly demolition of hats at Drury Lane Theatre is something so tremendous during the shakes, solos, ad libitums, and encores of God Save the Queen, that there are at least six dust-pans full of old beaver to one of orange peel to be removed every morning after the performance of the previous night.”

Assuming that Jullien’s audiences were mostly patronised by Londoners who did not have access to the Philharmonic Society’s concerts or the Italian Opera, let alone a comprehensive musical education of their own, the importance of Jullien’s programming policy and his demonstrative performance style gain greater significance. Of the first, Jullien’s populist approach to programming, while introducing the music of Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Mozart gradually to the repertoire, is the product of both his desire for large audiences (and their money) and the exploitation of his own reputedly uninspired

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83 Advertisement in *The Illustrated London News*, 6 October 1856.

84 *The Illustrated London News*, 8 November 1856.

85 *Punch, or the London Charivari*, 25 November 1848, page unknown.
dance music on the one hand, and a genuine aim to gradually accustom his patrons to the symphonic repertoire once he had secured their regular attendance.

On 7 September 1841 Jullien’s programme was typical of his early concerts. A programme on 12 February 1844 included one piece by Mozart, the rest of the concert exclusively devoted to lighter dance music. By the end of 1845, Beethoven was appearing in the programmes; by 1855 his Beethoven and Mendelssohn Festivals were regular events. His promenade concerts featured an even greater selection of serious music by 1856, one on 8 December featuring no less than three works by Mendelssohn. In 1857 he dedicated separate nights to Haydn’s Seasons, Creation and Mendelssohn’s Elijah. These were followed by Festivals for Rossini, Verdi, Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Mozart, the entire series finishing with a performance of Handel’s Messiah.

Of the Mozart Festival in January 1855, The Musical World commented that “Nothing could be more striking than the profound silence and earnest attention with which these long, elaborate and refined instrumental pieces were listened to by a vast promiscuous assemblage, who, a very few years ago, would not have had the patience to give them a hearing”.

After his death The Illustrated London News summarised Jullien’s programming policy, and the reception of his educational attempts:

His earliest concerts were not what they afterwards became. They consisted almost wholly of showy and brilliant dance-music, quadrilles, waltzes, polkas, etc., things calculated to catch the most uncultivated ear. But he began to mingle this familiar music with things of a higher order: movements (short at first) from the

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86 See a typical early Jullien programme on page 82 of this thesis. The concert on 7 September 1841 included, for instance, Rossini’s William Tell overture, a Strauss waltz, several quadrilles composed by himself, Strauss’s Pot-pourri Le Bouquet des Dames, and a gallop by Musard.

87 Carse, The Life of Jullien, 91.

symphonies of Haydn, Mozart, or Beethoven, and a few vocal pieces from the finest Italian or German operas. But these innovations, cautiously as they were made, were not immediately successful. They were often received by the denizens of the promenade, not merely with impatient inattention, but with loud (and sometimes riotous) disapprobation. But still Jullien went on, gradually increasing wholesome doses, till his treatment of his patient (the public) at length prevailed; and he has left behind him a name which will live in our musical annals as the name of a distinguished man, who has done as much as ever has been done by any single individual in promoting the progress of his art in this country.\(^{89}\)

Jullien’s concerted popularisation of this music with an audience that otherwise would have had no contact with it, and that due to the working week probably had a preference for relaxing entertainment rather than serious musical appreciation, must have benefited from his flamboyant physical display and ‘acting out’ or visual explication of the musical content to assist musical understanding.

That Jullien sought to visually titillate his audiences with his gestures is not surprising, but that commentators made a connection between his gestures and their own reception and comprehension of the music reveals an interesting aspect of the public’s perceived role of the conductor. That he was observed to be physically embodying the character of the music for the audience’s benefit, rather than merely giving musical cues to his orchestra through physical movements, indicates a massive shift in ideology from the conductor as a teacher or timekeeper to something closer to the interpretive role which would evolve later in the century.

Like any other conductor, Jullien would have been acutely aware of his physical gestures and their efficacy in conveying details such as tempo, nuance and musical character to his players. He is also likely to have been aware of the effect these same gestures had on the audience, and the way in which movements intended for fellow performers could influence how an audience heard, reacted to and even anticipated a piece of music. His manner of dress, deportment on the podium and interaction with the audience and other musicians in

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\(^{89}\) *The Illustrated London News*, 21 November 1863, page unknown.
a concert were also visually communicative, carrying messages about the role of the
conductor, the importance of the music being performed and social status issues related to
concert audiences and performers.

**Constructed biography and image reception**

This section is concerned primarily with the elements under Jullien’s control, and their
visual manifestations through imagery and written descriptions. To that end, much of the
material from the first half of the chapter is revisited. In the first instance, the portraits and
sanctioned biographies of Jullien provide information about Jullien’s control of his public
image. Audiences, publics, and critics received this projection through frames of
experience which were beyond Jullien’s control, but over which satirists and commentators
could potentially exert a degree of power. Thus, magazines such as *Punch* introduced
Jullien to their readers through pre-established tropes and metaphors, ultimately
influencing readers’ reception of his image.

His portraiture and written reception can therefore be divided into approved portraits and
biographical information and satirical/subversive/critical portraits and literature. Despite
the logic of this structure, it implies a polarity between the two sides of Jullien’s reception
which does not necessarily exist. Caricatures have the propensity to subvert the aims of
non-satirical portraiture. However, the means by which both genres achieve their ends can
include masking, exaggerating or fabricating elements of the sitter’s identity. Artists
working in both pictorial genres tend to manipulate the image, albeit for different reasons.
All images, of both genres, can be placed on a continuum between realistic and idealised
depictions, and the two ends of that continuum may not necessarily be dominated by one
genre or the other.

The written sources also require ‘unpacking’, to separate truth from fiction, biased from
unbiased opinion. Even more importantly, the separated components themselves fall within
traditions, tropes, and frames which gain greater significance if viewed with nineteenth-century eyes. There are numerous elements of Jullien’s biography, for instance, which were obviously invented. These fictions were in the public domain and as such their veracity is of little importance to this study when compared to the influence that they had on the public imagination and overall composition of Jullien’s public image. Rather than discredit Jullien’s or his biographers’ credibility, these eccentricities are invaluable threads linking him with his audience through recognisable themes and frames. Here they are viewed with an awareness of their function within a narrative, rather than their trustworthiness as biographical details.

(i) Formal portraits and biographical information

Only one early biographical source, the Sketch of the Life of Jullien published in The Musical World, addresses the details of Jullien’s childhood. It does so in a particularly inventive manner, probably due to its publication as promotional material on the eve of Jullien’s American Tour in 1853. The author focuses on certain key moments, real or otherwise, in Jullien’s childhood that present the conductor in an idealised light, verging at times on the mythical. Biographical details of a less idealised nature appear in various sources.


91 These include E. J. Fétis’ Biographie Universelle Des Musiciens et Bibliographie Générale de la Musique, Vol 4, 2nd ed., (Paris: Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1874); Jules Rivière’s My Musical Life and Recollections, (London: Low, Marston Publication, 1893); J. W. Davison and Henry Davison, From Mendelssohn to Wagner: Being the Memoirs of J. W. Davison Forty Years Music Critic of “The Times” (London: Reeves, 1912), 109. While these would by no means be the only literary works to mention Jullien’s character or biographical details, it can be deduced by the number of citations in consequent articles and books that they were (and still are) considered to be primary source material in researching Jullien’s life. This is not to say that they are necessarily infallible or comprehensive, but that they were clearly well circulated in Jullien’s lifetime and immediately after. As a reception history, it is their prominence and consistency which are of interest, not necessarily their veracity.
Jullien’s time in London is not well-represented in biographies; although concert reviews and press notices give ample evidence of his actual activities. Given the readily available and well-disseminated facts from this period, it would be much harder for Jullien or his biographers to construct a non-factual narrative of this time. The fantastic style typical of the *Sketch* is only further applied to the last days of his life, which were reportedly spent in Paris in considerable distress.⁹²

Many of Jullien’s biographical details, particularly those in the *Sketch*, are so romanticised and, at times, impossible to believe, that they make for humorous rather than informative reading. In addition to their contributions to the particular knowledge (or myth) of Louis Jullien, these publications illustrate the use and manipulation of biography to perpetuate scandal, influence public perception of creative types and, ultimately, advertise their subject.⁹³ They are mainly biographical in nature and demonstrate a concerted effort on the part of Jullien and his supporters to promote a certain image of the conductor, mainly non-musical in nature, but ultimately constructed with the aim of affecting people’s perception of his musical activities. Moreover, as the principal surviving primary source material, they form the basis of modern biographies of Jullien and as such have been considerably influential in the development of his posthumous reputation.

Five themes dominate Jullien’s biographical material: epic heroism, physical frailty, musical genius and untutored talent, rebellion and the military. Not surprisingly, they bear strong associations with the themes discussed in the first half of this chapter. However, they are not the results of external observation but are conscious constructs often lacking factual basis. That they influenced the observations of critics, colleagues, and audience

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⁹² On February 21, Fétis reports, Jullien suffered a mental breakdown, cut his throat in an alley the next day and died two days later in an asylum. The same story is reported in George Sims’ *My Life* and in Jules Rivière’s *My Life*. *The Illustrated London News*, on the other hand, denied Jullien made any attempt at suicide and the French newspaper *Figaro* reported Jullien had tried to murder his niece, was taken to Maison de Santé at Nevilly and died within days.

members testifies to the potency and consistency of their dissemination. It also suggests that they were themes which resonated with the public, and that they were probably chosen by Jullien and his biographers for that very reason.

Epic heroism

The majority of references to epic or heroic themes in Jullien’s biography occur in the Sketch’s account of his childhood. For that reason they form a discourse about his musical heritage and upbringing as a foundation to audiences’ reception of him as an adult musician.

Tales of peril from which Louis was miraculously saved proliferate. These begin with his parents’ treacherous journey on foot through the Alps while he was in utero. During their journey they were caught in an avalanche and forced to shelter in a hunter’s chalet near Sisteron in the Basses Alpes. The infant Louis, who was initially raised by the hunter and his wife who had first sheltered the family, narrowly escaped death when an eagle carried him off into the sky, only to be dropped from the eagle’s beak when his girdle broke. When his family came to take him at the age of three to live with them in the town, they found him suckling at the teat of a white goat, along with her kids. Later in life, the epic journey of his infancy was recalled when Louis scandalously deserted the army in a bid to cross the Alps to visit his mother in Turin. Mozart, that most famous of musical prodigies, was also the subject of heroic childhood legend, and it is likely that it is in this tradition that the writer of the Sketch wished to present Jullien.

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94 On 16 April 1812, the Julliens and their three daughters left Rome to cross the Alps, despite the fact Mme Jullien was heavily pregnant.

95 He survived the fall and a passing hunter who had witnessed the event shot the bird and gave it to the Julliens who had the carcass stuffed and hung on the wall.

96 Maynard Solomon notes “tales in the Herculean mode of [Mozart’s] endless labours and heroism: he was undaunted by blindfolds and by keyboards covered in cloths; he emerged victorious from contests with other players; it was reported as a miracle that he was able to write down Allegri’s Miserere – of which the Church
Physical frailty

Illness, frailty, and depression recur throughout accounts of Jullien’s life. The Sketch reports that as a child Louis became violently ill with a fever in response to any musical stimulus. It records that the local doctors expected the child to die.\(^97\) Louis recovered, however, and the doctors amended their diagnosis to declare the child phonophobic. Louis’ symptoms were not the result of aversion to music, but of extreme sensitivity to it. His father Antonio gradually accustomed him to music by playing instruments in an adjoining room. During this period, Louis is reported to have experienced another near-fatal incident in which he became trapped inside the bell of an ophicleide. As Carse points out, unless the Sisteron Philharmonic Society was in possession of an unusually large instrument, or Louis had remained the size of a newborn baby, this would be a physical impossibility.

J. W. Davison informs us that Jullien suffered from depression in his last years, and his suicide is evidence of a general frailty or sensitivity which manifested itself through his body. Jullien made this a feature of his performance behaviour, collapsing exhausted into his throne on stage, as described above. The display would have had conflicting resonances in the eyes of a Victorian audience. On the one hand, physical frailty and vulnerability was an inherently feminine trait, often associated with hysteria.\(^98\) However, the exhaustion his behaviour implied also established an association with physical exertion and the concomitant implications of labour, masculinity and manliness.

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\(^97\) Why there were apparently multiple doctors present for the diagnosis of a small child in a small mountain village is unclear.

Musical genius/raw talent

It is not surprising that Jullien’s biographers would portray him as having musical talent, and it was probably one of the more realistic aspects of his public persona. One aspect of his musical talent, in particular, persists. The raw, untutored nature of his musical ability puts him in the realm of genius, rather than competent executants.

The young Louis’s prodigious musical talent features in various ways in the Sketch including the musical legacy of his father and the blessing of the entire orchestra of Sisteron at his birth. Louis’s father, Antonio Jullien, was a bandmaster in the Swiss Guard, and the only one of that regiment to survive an unspecified massacre at the Louvre in the 1789 revolution. After his arrival in Sisteron with his new wife, Antonio performed with the Sisteron Philharmonic Society, the 36 members of which gave their names to the infant Louis at his baptism.

There are conflicted accounts of the beginnings of Louis’s own musical proclivity, as discussed above. But once Louis’s phonophobia was cured, his prodigious musical talent emerged. His father toured him around the south of France with a repertoire of French and Italian songs, but the child mysteriously lost his vocal ability at the age of six on 11 July 1818. Antonio sought to remedy the situation by teaching Louis the violin. Halfway through his first lesson, during which Antonio was explaining scales, Louis startled him by playing Viotti’s Concerto in G from memory. In response to this display of untrained virtuosity Antonio and Louis embarked on a lucrative tour of Italy.

The underlying message is that Jullien’s talent was inherent and largely untrained. In conjunction with childhood stories such as the eagle, goat and phonophobia, his biographers construct a decidedly Romantic picture of Louis’ musicality. His talent emerges unsolicited, his unique talents recognised and fed by nature rather than man, his musical activities compulsive rather than rational. The emphasis on his early prodigious talent, and the presentation of him as a touring child performer, links him with more famous examples of the childhood prodigy, such as Mozart and Mendelssohn, who were a
source of fascination to early Romantics.\textsuperscript{99} As Peter Kivy notes in “Child Mozart as an Aesthetic Symbol”, the legend of Mozart’s enduringly childlike nature was intrinsically tied to his reception as a genius.\textsuperscript{100}

Rebellion

Rebellious behaviour is a recurring theme throughout all of the accounts of Jullien’s life. He was condemned to death after his desertion on the night he fled to visit his mother in Turin. Having completed the crossing back over the Alps to France, he surrendered and was immediately pardoned. This not only recalls the earlier journeys and brushes with death in Jullien’s childhood, but is also the first of numerous chapters in his life in which Jullien’s rebellious nature saw him in danger of arrest or death, and it is stories of this nature that predominate in the period leading to his departure from France for England.

After yet another long journey through Europe on foot, this time from Turin to Paris, Jullien’s rebellious nature is highlighted by a number of sources, this time through his less than propitious period of study at the Paris Conservatoire. From this point onward, the biographical sources gain in frequency and reliability, although certain details of his last years in Paris remain inconsistent. His success and inclination toward drama and controversy are recurring themes throughout them all. Fétis reports he was admitted to the Conservatoire on 23 October 1833 and graduated on 1 May 1836. These dates are repeated in Grove’s \textit{A Dictionary of Music and Musicians (A. D. 1450-1889)}, although the date of admission ot the Conservatoire is given as 26 October 1833, and Grove suggests that he left in early 1836 with graduating.\textsuperscript{101} The anonymous author of \textit{Sketch} suggests this happened about two years earlier than in Fétis’s account, but gives no exact dates. Both


Féti and the Sketch state how Jullien’s lack of interest and talent in counterpoint and his preference for dance music created problems with his tutors. It is likely that he did not graduate at all, leaving of his own accord in May 1836, not having attended classes since the previous year.¹⁰²

During this time, various independent sources report that Louis fought at least three duels, the last of which was written about in detail in various papers and precipitated his departure from Paris. Again, the circumstantial details differ in the various accounts, but most revolve around Jullien’s lease at the hotel of the Duke of Padua, in which he had established a concert venue called the Casino, and a dispute with local theatre managers over the excessive noise created by Jullien’s performances, which included gunfire and canons. The Sketch informs us that Jullien left for London because the Casino was shut down by the authorities. Rivière and Tait’s Magazine add to this that Jullien ignored the formal complaint and injunction from the police, responding with a poster featuring a message with certain letters highlighted which, when read aloud, formed an unspecified insult to the police and government. He escaped arrest by fleeing to London. Féti merely states that Jullien left France to escape imprisonment for debt.

At the other end of his life, the events leading to his reported suicide are indistinct due to varying reports in literary sources. Grove suggests that Jullien spent the final months of his life in an asylum in Paris, having been forced to return to Paris “by pecuniary reasons” and arrested on 2 May 1859 due to his debts.¹⁰³ J. W. Davison claimed that Jullien’s imprisonment was a result of his being a naturalised Englishman, a charge which was dropped at the end of July after he proved his French nationality.

Highlighting Jullien’s rebellious nature and the dangers he face throughout his life, contributed to a more general Romantic portrayal. These stories demonstrate a breaking of codes of social conduct, and in almost every instance Jullien did so for an ostensibly noble purpose, be it to visit his ailing mother or to uphold his musical principles. Furthermore, the appeal of scandal and danger to the English masses was already established, stories and

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¹⁰³ “Jullien” in *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 45.
engravings of criminals and popular gossip items for purchase at very low costs on the street.104

Military

Jullien’s military background and that of his father were factual elements which contributed to, and embellished, invented tropes in his public image. Figures such as Napoleon and Horatio Nelson were already popular heroes, and modern warfare was a source of fascination and pride.105 Dana Gooley’s *The Virtuoso Liszt* includes a discussion of Napoleon’s influence on Franz Liszt’s popular image, and the omnipresence of military bands in musical life. She argues that “[m]ilitary heroes and rituals figured heavily in the public spaces of the 1830s and 1840s, moving audiences to react admiringly and vociferously to spectacles of heroic valor ... At the same time, romantics were fostering a cult of Napoleon whose influence spread beyond social and political boundaries, and which made the French hero a symbolic fulcrum of the pre-1848 era.”106 Again, the Sketch establishes the connection through his father, Antonio having served as Bandmaster in the

104 Patricia Anderson distinguishes three types of imagery in the nineteenth century, which were often attached to corresponding literature: Imagery relating to sex and death, religious imagery and secular, radicalist images. Of these, she contends the first was the most popular, and included “likenesses of murderers”, execution scenes, and pornography. The second and third were antidotes to the first. She identifies commonalities between all three types, including a prevailing moralising tone, even in popular imagery, and the sharing of visual tropes and forms between all three. Patricia Anderson, *The Printed Image and the Transformation of Popular Culture 1790-1860* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 41-43.


Swiss Guard. Antonio was later employed as a band director in the navy after moving to Marseilles, possibly due to financial difficulties, when Louis was fourteen. When he fell ill a year later, Louis was appointed his successor after some persuasion, so it is probably here that Jullien gained his first conducting experience. Both father and son also served in the Levant Squadron of the French navy for three years and fought in Navarino (1827) during which battle Louis was seriously wounded in his right shoulder. In 1830, aged eighteen, Louis left the Navy to join the 54th regiment of the French Army stationed at Briançon. The significance of the military was not confined to Jullien’s past. He regularly included military bands in his concerts, and composed quadrilles with military and naval themes. Comparisons between conductors and military leaders were also common in Jullien’s and others’ reception.

Much of his life story was, it would seem, if not actually sensational, romantic and mythical, at the very least presented to the public as being so. Jullien’s collective biography is a carefully and imaginatively constructed narrative. He, his promoters, and the publishers of articles such as the Sketch, obviously recognised value in propagating such an interesting tale. An examination of the publications offers some insight into what that value might have been.

The central point, around which the significance of Jullien’s early biographical accounts hinge, is the familiarity between Jullien and the authors. If they were not working from direct quotations from Jullien himself, they were writing about a man they knew. Given

107 Féti, whose Biographie universelle des Musiciens includes an entry for Jullien, was director of the Brussels Conservatoire. Jullien would have travelled to Brussels frequently as his chateau was nearby, and he hired instrumentalists from Brussels, the Conservatoire in particular, for his orchestra. He also approached Féti for advice when he began working on his opera Pietro il Grande. Carse suggests that the eleven instalments of A Sketch of the Life of Jullien were probably written by the editor of The Musical World, Jullien’s friend J. W Davison, or Thomas Bowlby, a journalist for The Times and, according to Carse, Jullien’s “agent or secretary” during the USA tour. Jules Riviè re did have contact with Jullien as a young man, having travelled to London in 1857 to work with him. Jules Riviè re, My Musical Life and Recollections, 123. Riviè re conducted promenade series well after Jullien’s death. His comments are sufficiently similar to those of Féti and the writer of the Sketch to assume he did not merely invent them, and the fact that he adopted some of Jullien’s performance traits (conducting with his back to the orchestra and sitting on an elaborate velvet throne, for instance) shows his respect for his predecessor. Whall, “Conductor with Back to
their intimacy with their subject, and the fact that no evidence suggests that any of their friendships dissolved after the publication of these biographical notes, it is unlikely that the authors published anything not sanctioned or passively accepted by Jullien himself, if only by his passive acceptance of their content. Almost certainly Jullien approved of the published narratives of his life. Possibly he played an active role in constructing them.

As to the veracity of childhood anecdotes, such as those published in the *Sketch*, and the conflicting reports regarding the reasons for his departure from Paris, numerous arrests, financial difficulties and death, we encounter an insurmountable problem from which we can tentatively make some measured assumptions. The inaccuracies, obvious embellishments (such as the ophicleide incident), and incongruities could stem from a lack of reliable source material. Perhaps Jullien himself provided scant information in which the writers were obliged to fill the gaps according to gossip. This seems unlikely given the established connection Jullien shared with most of his contemporary biographers. An alternative is that for those from whom the stories originated, (probably Jullien and his promoters), exactitude of dates was less important than dramatic impact. The circumstances surrounding the publication of the *Sketch* strongly support this theory.

The eleven instalments of *A Sketch of the Life of Jullien* ran in *The Musical World* in May, June and July of 1853. If Carse is correct in assuming that the anonymous author of the *Sketch* was J. W. Davison or Jullien’s agent for the American tour, Thomas Bowlby, we can be assured that even if Jullien did not contribute to the sketches himself, they were at least endorsed by him, as Bowlby went on to accompany him on the tour and his friendship with Davison remained close. We can also assume that both men (Davison for personal reasons and Bowlby for professional) hoped that the American tour would be successful, and that Jullien’s reputation in London would not diminish in his prolonged absence. As the principal measure of success would have been the volume of ticket sales, it follows that the *Sketch* was produced, at least partially, as a means of publicity.

Orchestra,” 739. Furthermore, his writing informs us that Jullien’s persona did not immediately diminish to something more ordinary and mundane after his death.
This raises certain points of interest. Firstly, it is not the orchestra or repertoire that features in this particular method of advertising, but rather the conductor. It has already been established that reviews and notices began to attach an increasing and unprecedented level of importance to Jullien as a crucial aspect of the concert. The lionisation of Jullien prior to and on the American tour was evident not only in the *Sketch*, but also in the way American critics and audiences responded to his concerts and in the proliferation of portraits and scores available for purchase at the time. In light of this, the *Sketch* is recognisably a cog within a greater marketing strategy, put into place for the American Tour. As such its eccentricities and inaccuracies take on new meaning. The *Sketch* was never intended to portray the mundane realities of Jullien’s life; the outline of his biography provided a skeleton which, once embellished with more interesting idealised details, formed an image of a unique and highly marketable public persona. As a factual biography, the *Sketch* is on decidedly shaky ground, but as an advertising tool and measure of what Jullien’s promoters considered to be enticing to a prospective audience, it is highly significant. The fact that the *Sketch* was also published in England indicates both that its publisher was astute enough to know that good advertising material should never be wasted, and also that there was perhaps some fear that in his absence, his fame in England might diminish.

The romanticised nature of the *Sketch* is of interest as an arbiter of public taste. Through the dramatic stories of his childhood the author seeks to establish a connection in the mind of the reader between Jullien and the mythical and historical characters on whose fables the *Sketch*’s style is based. Jullien’s heroism is not merely musical: his image is constructed to represent universal ideals, in particular those associated with Romanticism. This branding of Jullien as a romanticised mythical hero had some element of traction in the public imagination, and mirrored the treatment given other creative figures such as Byron and Liszt. In Jullien’s case, it is likely that there was a greater degree of self-promotion in

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108 Fépis’ *Biographie Universelle des musiciens*, as an independent publication with no direct link to Jullien’s career cannot be seen in the same light as the *Sketch*. It was not written for Jullien or for the betterment of his career, since it was published after his death. It was, however, written by someone who knew Jullien and, as Fépis refrains from speculating on those periods of Jullien’s life which are beyond his personal knowledge, namely his infamous childhood, we can hope that he approached Jullien’s later life with the same degree of
this vein, rather than the public establishing the link unprompted. As his career followed those of Byron and Liszt, it is highly likely that he, and his promoters, sought to draw upon this established tradition of heroic representation.

The sum effect of Jullien’s published biographies, both contemporaneous and posthumous was the cultivation of a character incorporating elements of epic heroism and Romanticism. Written descriptions of Jullien’s appearance focus on his behaviour, gestures and quasi-mythical powers as a conductor, as discussed earlier in the chapter. Descriptions of his fastidious attention to dress and personal grooming insinuate vanity, or at least self-consciousness. Given the focus of all of these themes on the visuality of Jullien, one would expect some correlation with them in his portraits.

The extant portraiture of Jullien includes lithographs, music covers and photographs. As sanctioned images, it can be assumed that they are intended to contribute positively to Jullien’s reputation, or at the very least to not detract from it. The most commonly reproduced of the portraits (Figure 3) is a watercolour on paper by Alfred-Edward Chalon, probably from the 1840s.

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reserve. One can only speculate as to whether Fétis referenced previous conversations with Jullien when writing the entry, but it bears sufficient similarities to the Sketch, in content if not in style, to suggest some common input.
Figure 3. Alfred-Eduard Chalon, Louis Jullien, watercolour on paper. (Ca. 1843). London, Victoria & Albert Museum (N° article BAL.6380)

The engraving was one of a large group of images based on the same basic design. Jullien’s left hand on the score and right hand with upraised baton suggest the artist intended to depict him in the act of conducting. However, the uncharacteristically awkward pose suggests that there is more to the image than an accurate depiction of his conducting gesture.

His eyes, directed upward, draw our attention away from the score, which is blurred and indistinct, and focus our attention instead on the point of his baton. Not only is the stylised shape of his body at odds with other English portraits of conductors at the time, most of who were portrayed as bland businessmen or industrialists. This distinctive bodily depiction mirrors that of theatre actors, dancers and mesmerists.

The upturned gaze, indicating the occupation of his attention elsewhere, suggests Jullien is unaware that his portrait is being drawn, due to his absorbed music making. It is unclear whether Chalon intended this to be a realistic depiction of Jullien conducting, as there is no audience or orchestra and the only other “real” element, the music stand, is rendered
insignificant by its blurred quality and the focus of Jullien’s posture and gaze away from it. If Jullien’s left hand turning the page retains some sense of connection with the score, his raised right arm and diagonally opposing gaze suggest the music that it depicts is conducted, like an electrical current, up his left arm and out through his raised baton. A subsequent engraving makes this explicit (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Anon., Louis Jullien, engraving after a watercolour on paper by Alfred-Edward Chalon (Ca. 1843). Held by the Royal College of Music Centre for Performance History (1993.4.19/24a)

Figure 4 is one of numerous engravings based on Chalon’s original watercolour. The anonymous engraver increases the level of Jullien’s musical absorption and further highlights Jullien’s role as a conductor by depicting a line of music, possibly one of Jullien’s own compositions, emanating from the tip of the baton. In both images, the visual line between score, head and baton depicts a musical equation as he absorbs the score, processes it in his body and produces music through the baton. His focus on the baton highlights its importance, and suggests he is a vehicle for the transmission of the score: a conductor in the scientific sense of the word. The artist makes clear that the efforts of his body and the baton produce audible music, as opposed to written music, as his body
language differentiates between the two, showing the progression from score to sound, and prioritising the latter over the former.

Jullien’s unusual pose suggests a physical process: he absorbs the mute information from the score through his body, and with the aid of his intellect and “magic” baton, produces music. This suggestion of a process of absorption, internal reaction (akin to a chemical reaction in a scientific experiment), and transference of a transformed product through his baton relates to some of the themes expressed in the literature. Most obviously, it is a pictorial representation of Jullien’s image as a magnetic, or mesmeric, figure. The focus in the image, as in the literature, is on the powers contained within Jullien’s physical self, which find issue through the “cabalistic” baton, from which flows the musical line. This focus is created by the strength of the diagonal lines created by Jullien’s arms, and reinforced through Jullien’s raised eye line, both of which culminate at the baton.

The Chalon watercolour and the engravings which followed are unusual. Contemporary portraits of conductors in England typically showed an impassive sitter, sometimes without any musical props, furnishings or attributes. Figure 5, a lithograph by Charles Joseph Hullmandel (1789–1850) of Michael Costa (1808-1884), conductor of the Philharmonic Society and Italian Opera, demonstrates the more common style in which conductors posed for portraits in England during the mid-century.\(^\text{109}\)

\(^{109}\) London-born Hullmandel drew and painted the many places to which he travelled throughout Europe. After meeting the inventor of the lithographic process, Johann Alois Senefelder (1771-1834), in 1817, he established a press at his home, from where he produced prints for the remainder of his life, becoming one of the most significant figures in the development of lithography in the first half of the nineteenth century.
Like the image of Jullien above, this was one of a number of images based on the same portrait. Characteristic of these images is the indeterminate profession of the sitter. The portrait of Costa includes no attributes overtly connecting him with his musical profession. His affable confidence and direct gaze to the artist and viewer, and fine clothing, suggest a successful man of business or private wealth. Despite the sketchy style Hullmandel employs for the lower half of Costa’s body and the table on which he rests his right arm, the portrait seems, nonetheless, lifelike. Hullmandel’s innovations as a lithographer of Romantic landscapes, in particular the subtle gradations of tone he was able to achieve, produce a sophisticated painterly quality in the Costa portrait, giving depth and texture to the coat and waistcoat. The original may well have been in colour, as many of
Hullmendel’s landscapes were. Costa’s eyes are directed toward the viewer, indicating he is aware that his portrait is being taken. The portrait is a stylistic descendant of aristocratic portraits of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Jullien’s portrait, on the other hand, is atypical in various regards. Firstly, Chalon was a watercolourist in the Royal Academy, appointed Portrait Painter in Water Colour to Her Majesty in the late 1840s and often employed to paint the portraits of members of high society. He also painted portraits of many prominent actors, almost always in character, dancers and only a small number of musicians. The portrait of Jullien most closely resembles those of theatre actors, rather than musicians or society sitters. A comparison with a lithograph by Edward Morton, taken from a Chalon portrait of Charles Mathews as George Rattleton in ‘The Humpbacked Lover’ reveals a similar pose, turned head, raised arm and accentuated bodily curvature (Figure 6).

Chalon, and the engravers who published the various copies of his original watercolour, established or perpetuated an association between Jullien and theatricality by portraying him in a manner analogous to actors: he is not merely associated with theatrical people, but more particularly with theatrical characterisation. However, it is the character of the music that he embodies, not that of a fictitious character. His body can be read as a physical embodiment of the music that pours from him, producing sound and, in the process, undergoing changes because of the music-making, just as an actor’s physicality changes to produce a character.
Figure 6. Edward Morton, Charles James Mathews as George Rattleton in ‘The Humpbacked Lover’, watercolour after a lithograph by Alfred Edward Chalon, (circa 1825-1845). Held by the National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG D5226)

Despite this image’s popularity as a model for portraits of Jullien, it is by no means the only style in which he is depicted. Figure 7 is an engraving by D. J. Pound after a daguerrotype by J. J. E. Mayall. It is probably taken in the mid 1850s, judging by the approximate age of Jullien’s face.
The chair on which he leans was a recurring prop in Mayall’s studio portraits of this period. It can be seen in Figure 8, a portrait of Charles Dickens, but is not the only link between the two. The poses, albeit one seated and one standing, are strikingly similar, the body in quarter profile to the left and head turned quarter profile to the right. Both

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110 “John Hannavy, Research Professor in Art & Design, at the Bolton Institute (UK) writes: ‘Mayall did not arrive in Britain until 1846 or 1847, so the date [of the photograph] must be after that and some time before 1854. There exists a Mayall portrait of Kate Dickens taken in 1853, and it may not be too unrealistic to presume that they attended Mayall’s studio together.’” William Glyde Wilkins and B. W. Matz, *Charles Dickens in Caricature and Cartoon* (Boston: The Bibliophile Society, 1924), frontispiece.
sitters wear clothing typical of a successful industrialist or gentleman of the period and have similar hairstyles, although Dickens’s looks more unkempt. Neither image conveys any information regarding the sitters’ profession.

Figure 8. Mayall, Charles Dickens, daguerreotype, (ca. 1853). Reproduced at “John Jabez Edwin Mayall (1813-1901)” http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/DSmayall.htm (accessed 4 November 2009)

Pound completed the engraving after Mayall’s photograph of Jullien for The Drawing Room Portrait Gallery of Eminent Personages published in three volumes between 1859

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Mayall employed the same visual formula for a portrait of Costa, also engraved by Pound, although the chair appears to be less ornate in the Costa portrait. In all cases, the engraving process reverses the image from the original. This is clear when the engravings are viewed next to photographs from the same period, in which all three sitters part their hair on the opposite side.
and 1860, and presented with *The Illustrated News of the World*. Jullien’s entry must have come out in 1860, as it is entitled “the late Monsieur Jullien”.

One of numerous Victorian publications aiming to use the images and biographies of eminent people as examples for ordinary people to admire and emulate, *The Drawing Room Portrait Gallery* included statesmen, politicians, members of the royal family and notable artists, authors, poets and musicians, although the last were often the least represented. The veneration of greatness is a persistent theme throughout the period. The benefits of this in constructing national identity were recognised by Lord Palmerston, in his motion for parliamentary financial support for the National Portrait Gallery, (quoted on page 65) and the painter G. F. Watts in a letter to *The Times* in 1887, in which he stated that “[t]he character of a nation as a people of great deeds is one . . . . that should never be lost sight of.” By publishing images of national heroes in collections such as *Men of Mark*, the greater populace could observe the countenances and emulate the greatness of the sitters. In a similar publication, *The Statesmen of England*, fifty portraits taken principally from Her Majesty’s private collection were presented as men whose names are “familiar in our families; and over our firesides their merits are canvassed with earnestness and interest.”

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113 John Clubbe argues that our need for the sight of greatness persists, stating that, “[w]e hunger, we thirst, for images of the great creative figures whom we venerate or love. We strain to visualize the individual – whether musician, painter, author, political figure or other hero or heroine of history who has created what we care about. We may read these images as expressions of personal qualities or evidence of cultural history, or, as often with twentieth-century works, for other reasons, expressions of composition and color, for example. We may read ourselves into such images, imagine ourselves in relation to them. The desire to see persists. The need to gaze upon relics of the holy and the great may be inherent in the human condition.” Clubbe, *Byron, Sully, and the Power of Portraiture*, 3.


These examples are indicative of a prevailing attitude toward national identity in England in the mid to late nineteenth century: that the nation has a special character and that its character is tied, in a biased manner, to the heroic traits its most eminent citizens exhibit (in particular greatness). This construction of national identity, as opposed to France’s revolutionary identity or Germany’s cultural intellectualism, stemmed both from England’s status as the world’s most extensive post-industrial Empire, and the Victorian tenets of control, improvement and respectability. Greatness was both a result of England’s stature, and a necessity for her continued global dominance and the improvement of the masses.

Another related aspect of the collection of portraits of eminent men is the growth of celebrity culture in Victorian England. Developments in photographic portraiture meant that cabinet portraits were accessible to an increasingly broad cross-section of society, most of whom were enjoying greater purchasing power as incomes rose. Portraiture was historically limited, in subject and commissioning, to the aristocracy: the purchase and domestic display of famous personages’ portraits linked the middle classes to a tradition to which they had never before had access. In a society faced with the globalising effects of industrialisation and newly realised prospects for greater social mobility, portraiture represented a connection with the upper classes and provided a model of the behaviour, costume and expressions necessary for social advancement. Jullien’s inclusion is understandable given his influence on the concert life of London in the 1840s and 1850s, but three bankruptcies, reported duels and a chequered reputation in elite musical circles would not normally be considered endorsements for eminence.

Significantly, the Pound/Mayall portrait contradicts Jullien’s notoriously theatrical manner. Jullien appears calm, respectable and conservative in the portrait, the antithesis of the literary descriptions. There are some practical reasons for this. Photographers would have a collection of backcloths, props, sets and clothes which signified affluence and respectability. This in its own way played an important part in the status-building of photography. Secondly, the photographic process at this point in the century could still take minutes rather than seconds to complete. Sitters’ heads often had to be supported by clamps to keep them still. Sitting in a relaxed or expressive position was unrealistic under
those conditions, inevitably leading in some part to the restrained, stiff postures seen in images such as this.

The official portraits of Jullien deliberately avoided perceived negative stereotypes as they were intended to promote him within a traditionally low-status profession. Thus, they avoided any references to less than desirable personality traits and aimed to challenge entrenched views regarding the status of musicians. To this end, the images omit the creative aspects of conducting, replacing them with the carefully cultivated public image of the conductor in the mould of an affluent businessman or statesman. The image can thus fulfil its function as presenting a subject worthy of Victorian aspiration, while simultaneously performing as a status-building promotional tool for Jullien. 

An earlier lithograph by Nicholas Hanhart of M & N Hanhart fulfils a similar promotional function, but draws on a different set of pictorial themes to achieve its objective (Figure 9).

Figure 9. M & N Hanhart, Louis Jullien, Lithograph, (ca. Mid-1840s). Copy held by the National Portrait Gallery, London

Despite his success in London, Jullien nonetheless was compelled to fight for status, as were all musicians, due to his nationality, profession, and because the position he occupied at the popular end of the music market had the potential to negatively distinguish him from the conductors of higher status orchestras such as the Philharmonic Society.
The portrait is markedly different to Hanhart’s other portraits, particular with regard to the sumptuous cloak draped around Jullien’s torso. Hanhart routinely depicted his professional sitters in clothing appropriate to their profession. There are no extant reports of Jullien conducting in, or even wearing, a garment such as this. It is demonstrably more Romantic than the garments worn by other of Hanhart’s sitters. Likewise, the hunched quarter profile torso with averted, uplifted eyes and aesthetic clothing creates an association with Romantic, Byronic imagery (see Figure 10). The effect is all the more pronounced, given the rarity of this type of image in Hanhart’s oeuvre.

Two non-pictorial elements of Hanhart’s portrait of Jullien merit attention. Firstly, the inclusion of Jullien’s signature under the portrait implies his authorisation of the portrait. Secondly, printed below the portrait is a two-stanza poem:

Thou child of genius who with Godlike hand / Canst sway the tide of music at command. / Thine is a magic wand whom sprites obey, / And Berlioz, Auber, Herold, own thy sway. / Yet rest thy sceptre – ‘tis a loftier skill / With such wild, liquid notes the ear to thrill. / Ah! Well from thee might jealous Philomel / Snatch graces yet unknown her lays to swell!

References to Jullien as a “child of genius” with a Godlike hand follow the ideas put forth in Edward Young’s *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759)\(^\text{117}\). He posited that genius provided inspiration to the poet, or other creative person, as an internal god. References to Jullien’s prodigious, and largely untrained, musical talent as a child in this and the *Sketch* resonate with the Kantian view of genius, which influenced Romantic thought. In Immanuel Kant’s philosophy, genius was an “innate mental disposition”, a “talent for producing that for which no definite rule can be given; it is not a mere aptitude for what can be learnt by a rule.” Moreover,

... the author of a product for which he is indebted to his genius does not himself know how he has come by his Ideas ... (Hence it is probable that the word genius is derived from genius, that peculiar guiding and guardian spirit given to a man at his birth, from whose suggestion these original Ideas proceed.)\(^\text{118}\)

\(^{117}\) Edward Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition in a Letter to the Author of Sir Charles Grandison* (London: 1759)

The deification of Jullien continues as the poem alludes to his ability to control nature and a triumvirate of his fellow Frenchmen. A thematic association discussed earlier in this chapter reappears in the third line of the first stanza. Again, it is his “magic wand” which allows him to exercise such absolute control, although in the first line of the second stanza, it is presented as a sceptre; a symbol of royal, therefore human, authority.

The philomel (or philomela) is a late-nineteenth century steel stringed instrument with the same tuning as a violin. It was considered the instrument of the dilettanti, and could therefore be a veiled slight to the Philharmonic society, which was largely composed of amateur musicians. More convincingly, Philomel is often the name used for the nightingale in poetry, due to the association between Philomela, daughter of King Pandion I of Athens, who according to Greek mythology was a rape victim who had her tongue removed, and then transformed into a swallow. In later retellings, however, including those of Ovid, Hyginus, Apollodorus and, much later, Keats, she is transformed into a nightingale, and it is this later version which informed the writer of the poem. The third and fourth lines of the second stanza therefore refer to Jullien’s exemplary music-making, implying that its beauty exceeds that of nature’s most musical bird.

Jullien’s serious portraits are aspirational in the greatest sense. They represent and celebrate the aspirations of Jullien, but they also motivate the portraits’ viewers, as they present Jullien as a respectable figure for emulation and admiration. Two forms of idealisation are utilised: Jullien is portrayed as an ideal musician in some and an ideal gentleman in others. In both cases, the portraitist uses established pictorial trends to heighten his status.

(ii) Satirical, subversive, or critical portraits and literature

Satirical written and visual material sought to place Jullien within established frames of reference for the British public. *Punch*, for example, published poems and caricatures of

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119 Hérold and Auber were, like Berlioz, esteemed French composers, and contemporaries of Jullien. They were particularly renowned for their operatic writing.
Jullien which, rather than present a factual or balanced depiction of him, focused on certain aspects of his career, personality, visuality and biography that were established points of satire in their publication. The satirical images, free from the formal pictorial conventions of the mainstream genres and the constraints of enforced positive representation, often highlight the characteristics that the serious portraits strove to eliminate, mocking his appearance and, sometimes, ability. In other instances, the satirical and serious material utilise the same resources.

The frame in which Punch presented Jullien to its readers drew upon established satirical themes from the magazine, particularly mockery of the French, and disdain for those who placed great importance on appearance. Punch had already established an association between foreigners and musicians in general. In the “THE ROYAL RHYTHMICAL ALPHABET, to be said or sung by the Infant Princess”, published 21 AUGUST 1841, foreigners are depicted as musicians. That foreigners are assumed to be musicians (and vice versa) is not the only factor of interest in the silhouette. Through their depiction as musicians, rather than business people or members of high society, the foreigner’s status is lowered. It also parodied Prince Albert, who was Britain’s best known foreigner, a patron of the arts, and a common subject in Punch.

![Figure 11](image)

Figure 11. Anon., “F doth stand for Foreigners, whom I should patronize” from “THE ROYAL RHYTHMICAL ALPHABET, to be said or sung by the Infant Princess”, *Punch* 21 August 1841, 62.
Punch’s most commonly-reproduced article about Jullien appeared in the magazine on 24 July 1841. It featured a shapely silhouetted figure with white gloves, and was accompanied by a poem:

MONSIEUR JULLIEN.

“One!”—crash! / “Two!”—clash! / “Three!”—dash! / “Four!”—smash! / Diminuendo, / Now crescendo:— / Thus play the furious band, / Led by the kid-gloved hand / Of Jullien—that Napoleon of quadrille, / Of Piccolo-nians shrillest of the shrill; / Perspiring raver / Over a semi-quaver; / Who tunes his pipes so well, he’ll tell you that / The natural key of Johnny Bull’s—A flat. / Demon of discord, with mustaches cloven— / Arch impudent improver of Beethoven— / Tricksy professor of charlatanerie— / Inventor of musical artillery— / Barbarous rain and thunder maker— / Unconscionable money taker— / Travelling about both near and far, / Toll to exact at every bar— / What brings thee here again, / To desecrate old Drury’s fane? / Egregious attitudiniser! / Antic fifer! com’st to advise her / ‘Gainst intellect and sense to close her walls? / To raze her benches, / That Gallic wenches / Might play their brazen antics at masked balls? / Ci-devant waiter / Of a quarante-sous traiteur, / Why did you leave your stew-pans and meat-oven, / To make a fricassee of the great Beet-hoven? / And whilst your piccolos unceasing squeak on, / Saucily serve Mozart with sauce-piquant; / Mawkishly cast your eyes to the cerulean— / Turn Matthew Locke to potage à la julienne! / Go! go! sir, do, / Back to the rue, / Where lately you / Waited upon each hungry feeder, / Playing the garçon, not the leader. / Pray, put your hat on, / Coupez votre baton. / Bah / Va!!
The poem, by W. H. Wills, immediately establishes a link to the effect of Jullien’s visuality on the music, pairing Jullien’s beats with onomatopoeic descriptions of the sounds they produce, and is meant, of course, to amuse. Although the poem attacks him from a variety of angles, the image itself is comparatively inoffensive. The author compares Jullien to the devil (‘devil of discord, with mustaches cloven’), casts dispersions on his ability as a piccolo player, mocking his Beethoven additions (the “rain and thunder” refers to sound effects he added to the “Storm” of the 6th Symphony), and suggests he had previously made a living as a waiter. The image, however, has no content to accompany these insults. Jullien appears in an uncharacteristically composed stance, with only his arms betraying a sense of movement. The caricaturist makes a point of highlighting the kid gloves referred to in the poem (and in many non-satirical sources), and the neatly tailored, curvaceous body mirrors reports of his appearance, and bears a resemblance to other images, satirical or otherwise.

There are several possible explanations for the apparent disconnection between the image and words. The first is that the silhouette may not have been produced specifically for this
poem, but came from a stock of silhouettes. The absence of an artist’s name attached to the image supports this conclusion, as it was not uncommon for *Punch* artists to merely “re-draw and touch up an outsider’s sketch”, under which circumstances it was standard practice “not to sign their drawings, but to leave them without any indication of their authorship”.120

Alternatively, the image can be seen to correspond with other satirical images from the magazine, the humour of which derives from its ability to hide its mockery behind genteel, seemingly serious articles and images. According to Spielmann, “the ‘Sunday Times’ and a number of provincial papers of some slight account in their day professed astonishment at the absence of grossness, partisanship, profanity, indelicacy, and malice from its pages.”121 Furthermore, Spielmann contends that the early *Punch* cartoons lacked the subtlety and intricacy of later images as a result of budget and technical restrictions, and due to the subservience of the image to the written humour: “The joke was the thing, not the artistic drawing of it.”122

A less overt, but nonetheless telling aspect of *Punch*’s placement of Jullien within existing tropes is the association it consistently made between the French and fashion-consciousness. On 11 December 1841 “A letter has found its way into our box, which was evidently intended for the Parisian *Courrier des Dames*”.123 In the ensuing fictitious correspondence the French and English languages intersperse as the writer, Alphonse Jambes D’Araignée, critiques current fashion trends. The link between the French and superficial attention to appearance and fashion is explicit.

When Jullien was temporarily replaced as conductor of the promenades in October 1841 *Punch* teased his replacement, Musard, for being a poor replacement. However, it was not

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Jullien’s musical contributions which were missed, but his eccentric appearance and movements:

The conductor of these concerts has not a single requisite for his office—he is several degrees less personable than M. Jullien—he does not even wear moustaches! and to suppose that a man can beat time properly without them is ridiculous. He looks a great deal more like a modest, respectable grocer, than a man of genius; for he neither turns up his eyes nor his cuffs, and has the indecency to appear without white gloves! His manners, too, are an insult to the lovers of the thunder and lightning school of music; he neither conducts himself, nor his band, with the least grace or éclat. He does not spread out both arms like a goose that wants to fly, while hushing down a diminuendo; nor gesticulate like a madman during the fortes; in short, he only gives out the time in passages where the players threaten unsteadiness; and as that is very seldom, those amateurs who pay their money only for the pleasure of seeing the bâton flourished about, are defrauded of half their amusement. M. Musard takes them in—for it must be evident, even to them, that what we have said is true, and that he possesses scarcely a qualification for the office he holds—if we make one trifling exception (hardly worth mentioning)—for he is nothing more than, merely, a first-rate musician. With this single accomplishment, it is like his impudence to try and foist himself upon the Cockney dilettanti after M. Jullien, who possessed every other requisite for a conductor but a knowledge of the science; which is, after all, a paltry acquirement, and purely mechanical.

The writer implies that Jullien’s spectacular visuality is the sole reason for his success, and concomitantly ridicules the “amateurs” and “Cockney dilettanti” to who this empty visual display appeals. Through mockery of Jullien and his methods, the author of the extract takes issue with the entire genre of mass musical entertainment and its easily “frauded” audience. It is, in effect, an attack on the popular taste for visually spectacular performances.
Punch was not the only publication to satirise Jullien, although the dates and details of these caricatures are not easily ascertained. Figure 13 satirises his outdoor concerts in all weathers and seasons and inability to conduct Beethoven (the “STORM” referring to the fourth movement of the Pastoral Symphony). His body is overtly feminine, the lines of his trousers making him look like an anatomical female, with an accentuated waist and wide hips.

Figure 13. Anon., “Playing July in and Juli-en out. The little musical monster and his monster concert. In the agonies of the “STORM” and the Storm above – conducting the one and non-conducting the other!” Unknown source and date. Photocopy held by the National Portrait Gallery, London

The delicacy of his hands, hourglass figure and theatrical body language appear in many images, both serious and satirical. They categorise him not only as un-masculine, but concomitantly, un-English. In a future generation, this treatment was later applied in a caricature of the very camp Oscar Wilde by “Ape” for Vanity Fair (Figure 14).

To modern eyes, pictorial feminisation such as this implies that the artist wishes to portray the sitter as being effeminate, and may imply homosexuality. The French had long been the
target of English ridicule and anxiety about ambiguous sexuality and promiscuity.\textsuperscript{124} The significance of gender definition is evident in the frequent differentiation of oppositional stereotypes, and England’s derision of French sexuality and gender grew from an attempt to validate English gender stereotyping and sexual boundaries.\textsuperscript{125}

The assumption that homosexuals, or people displaying ambiguous gender signs, are an inversion of heterosexuality is an outcome of a hierarchically gendered society, and leads


to a false equation between behaviour and strength of gender.\textsuperscript{126} This symbolic link was expressed visually in caricatures, the interposing of non-traditional or dysmorphic gender behaviours and physical traits on bodies being a visual sign of sexual decadence or ambiguity, and an indicator that the sitter was not a “real” man or woman.

However, Foucault contends that “homosexual” in the modern sense was not a recognised concept until the 1870s, after the aesthete Wilde became the face of homosexuality.\textsuperscript{127} Before this, emasculated and “camp” portrayals indicated a more general aestheticism, not necessarily related to sexual orientation, and communicated an indistinct other-ness, the opposite of virility, masculinity and therefore morality. Jullien’s “other-ness” and emasculation were not related to his sexuality – he married a woman, and there were no documented extra-marital affairs or sexual scandals – but to his nationality and profession.

Jullien’s representation as a foreigner is more complex than merely his place of birth and native language. When viewed through Victorian eyes, Jullien’s status as a foreigner also compromised his masculinity. From the Victorian era through to the end of World War I, distinction from other cultures, races and religions, (particularly those deemed inferior for any reason), was a major factor in establishing personal identity and reinforcing favourable national stereotypes. The importance of not appearing un-English also played a part in defining gender. Disdain for the effeminacy of foreigners such as the Italians and the French, and domination of foreign cultures rather than assimilation or synchronicity were key to the gender definition of a robust patriot. Travellers and explorers who came into contact with foreign cultures without adopting their inferior traits therefore retained their masculinity. Those who projected the tenets of English culture onto previously ‘uncivilised’ societies such as India, and areas of the South Pacific, heightened their masculinity and were regarded as heroes in England. Thus masculinity, racial identity and the imperialist spirit were linked through the Englishman’s claim to, and global display of, superiority and domination.

\textsuperscript{126} Bullough and Bullough, eds., \textit{Human Sexuality}, 241.

The significance of gender in the portraiture of late nineteenth-century conductors in England, and indeed any man of that period and location, was twofold. It was important to be differentiated from women, but also to be differentiated from effeminate men. Gender, therefore, had more to do with socially perceived norms, than with being a man or a woman. Its significance to this dissertation lies in the nineteenth-century understanding of masculinity. Mangan and Walvin’s explanation of manliness in the nineteenth century should be cited here:

Central to the evolution of the male image was the Victorian ideal of ‘manliness’ . . . . as embracing qualities of physical courage, chivalric ideals, virtuous fortitude with additional connotations of military and patriotic virtue. In the second half of the nineteenth century . . . the concept underwent a metamorphosis. To the early Victorian it represented a concern with a successful transition from Christian immaturity to maturity, demonstrated by earnestness, selflessness and integrity; to the late Victorian it stood for neo-Spartan virility as exemplified by stoicism, hardiness and endurance ... ‘Manliness’ symbolised an attempt at a metaphysical comprehension of the universe.¹²⁸

A further influence came by way of challenges posed by feminism in the same period. This was, after all, a time of reform and advancement for women’s rights in England. Among other things, women were pursuing higher levels of education, taking a more active role in the workplace, and in 1918 would be granted the right to vote. As the construction of gender is through opposition, not association, women’s increasing confidence and visibility undoubtedly challenged the stability and security of masculinism. Not surprisingly, the distinctions between male and female became even clearer during this period in England with more pronounced differences in dress between the sexes, and affirmation of differences in temperament. The oppositional nature of English nationalism was, therefore, echoed in masculinism. The positive construction of these identity factors for an Englishman was based on distancing oneself from foreignness and femininity. Nowhere is

¹²⁸ Mangan and Walvin, eds., Manliness and Morality, 1-3.
this more apparent, in Jullien’s case, than in descriptions and images of Jullien’s appearance and dress.

Jullien’s physicality and fastidious attention to appearance suggest a connection with dandyism as epitomized by key figures such as Beau Brummel, Barbey d’Aurevilly and Charles Baudelaire. However, this does neither Jullien nor dandyism sufficient justice. The tenets of dandyism, if indeed it can be reduced to any, are far more complex than the simple act of dressing well, or being effeminate or homosexual. A dandy is recognised, among other things, as one who achieves social distinction through idleness, who uses dress, irony and lifestyle to subtly subvert the norms of his bourgeois society; and as one who assertively seeks to live without the impediment of rule-following. The quality that facilitated the dandy’s later metamorphosis into William Pater’s and Oscar Wilde’s aesthete is made clear by Sima Godfrey:

The polemic of “the beautiful versus the useful” epitomizes the dandy’s struggle to define the meaning of his own life in terms of beauty in a world devoted chiefly to useful production; to invert the order of the superfluous and the necessary and redefine the aesthetic concept of “need” and “function.” Gautier’s dandy can live three days without bread, but not without poetry.

These descriptions of Dandyism have in common a type of apathetic anarchism which bears no relation to Jullien. There is, for example, no evidence that his professed


130 Sima Godfrey, “The Dandy as Ironic Figure,” *SubStance*, vol. 11, no. 3, issue. 36 (1982): 23.

131 “If the common ironic inversion is to say the opposite of what you think, the Dandy’s ironic inversion consists in saying (or doing) the opposite of what others think.” Godfrey, “The Dandy as Ironic Figure,” 28. See also: Thorsten Botz-Borstein, “Rule-Following in Dandyism: ‘Style’ as an Overcoming of ‘Rule’ And ‘Structure’,” *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 90, no. 2 (1995): 286.


133 Godfrey, “The Dandy as Ironic Figure,” 27.
educational impulse was not entirely sincere, nor that in catering to the tastes of his audience he was in any way being ironic. On the contrary, he appears to have shared those same bourgeois values and had no inclination to break the social rules or subvert them. Careful attention to his appearance was more likely to be part of a greater awareness of himself as a public figure and perhaps an outcome of his idiosyncratic personality, an obsessive-compulsive or vain tendency, rather than one of social or political satire. He had no apparent desire to shock.

The subject of Victorian male fashion has more dynamic in its theory than in its content, although this has only recently become a focus for historians and cultural theorists. Distinguished as it is by conservatism, conformity and lack of radical reform, the clothes men wore in mid-nineteenth-century London have long been dismissed as indicative of a lack of interest in fashion consumption and design on the part of men. The well-established polemics of English gender definition in this period likewise presuppose a gendered interest in fashion and dress: literature – general interest, iconographic and scholarly – has traditionally focused almost entirely on female fashion trends. This is partly due to a bias in extant primary source material and partly because women’s relationships to dress and costume fall easily into established discussions of women’s gender issues, domesticity and objectification. However, Christopher Breward in *The Hidden Consumer* challenges historians of this period to loosen the boundaries of entrenched dichotomous assumptions, which limit the construction of Victorian masculinity to patriarchal, dominating stereotypes, as these must be tempered with an allowance for anxiety and conflict. Awareness of, and interest in, dress and fashion (the two being separate entities) were therefore not necessarily evidence of dandyism or effeminacy. Breward recommends Graham Dawson’s “clear model for the historian of male clothing to emulate”.

An imagined identity is something that has been made up in the positive sense of active creation but has real effects in the world of everyday relationships, which it

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invests with meaning and makes intelligible in specific ways. It organises a form that a masculine self can assume in the world (its bodily appearance and dress, its conduct and mode of relating) as well as its values and aspirations, its tastes and desires.¹³⁶

Men’s clothes can therefore signify the projected character of the wearer, while simultaneously representing or producing an imagined or idealised identity for another wearer or observer. The general conservatism of Englishmen’s dress in the nineteenth century onward, far from being evidence of apathy or disinterest, is a signifier of purposeful adherence to the “unproblematised tradition of Englishness.”¹³⁷ Joan Nunn writes of nineteenth-century male fashion, that “the ideal image of the Regency buck was to change to one of simple elegance epitomized by the upright Victorian gentleman.” The style of popular figures such as Prince Albert and Beau Brummel influenced men’s clothing. The inconspicuous, understated colours and fabrics that they wore prevailed, as did “perfection of line and proportion, quality of cloth and immaculate grooming.”¹³⁸ Penelope Byrde identifies “an increasing divergence between male and female dress” in the second half of the nineteenth century, which she attributes to the dominance of “the middle-class businessman … the clothes he required were sensible, comfortable and practical. Dark colours conveyed a suitably sober and professional air but also answered a need in an industrial age.”¹³⁹

As an immigrant, Jullien’s attention to his appearance could well be symptomatic of foreignness. Dress is, after all, the most immediate and simple form of cultural acclimatisation. Jullien’s portraits offer some insight into this matter, the official portraits

¹³⁶ Dawson, Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities, 118-19.


¹³⁹ Penelope Byrde specifies that dark colours predominated, with black becoming established as the colour of choice from the mid-1820s, and that the same cloth was used throughout the suit. Byrde, Nineteenth Century Fashion, 91, 98.
displaying Jullien in typically English dress and attitude, and those of a satirical nature highlighting his foreignness.

The portrayal of Jullien in the caricatures is if anything more consistent with his reported concert behaviour and flamboyant conducting style than in the serious portraits, which are more influenced by status-enhancing pictorial traditions. The theatricality he reportedly displayed in concert is subverted by the artists to highlight associations with effeminacy concomitant with his status as a foreigner, and in particular as a Frenchman. The writers for *Punch*, in particular, derided the French (and, more famously, the Irish) until the end of the 1880s.

Jullien’s foreignness was not observed solely in his self-conscious sense of style and choice of attire, however. His foreignness and, in Victorian society, the attendant ambiguity of his masculinity were seen by his contemporaries to be manifest in his body language and musical taste. Furthermore, he appears to have endorsed this continental public image, as the sanctioned biographies and portraits, in addition to the satirical ones, contribute in varying degrees to a general image of exoticism and difference.

The themes which permeate Jullien’s visuality, biographies, performance style and portraits contribute to the cultivation of his public persona. The epic heroic narratives of his biographies complement the theatrical nature of his podium behaviour; the effort he made to visually excite his audiences with staging, design and theatrical displays is reflected in the written descriptions of his concerts. His status as a French immigrant granted him access to Romantic continental stereotypes, but conversely limited his acceptance in the higher echelons of London’s music world. Finally, the all-pervasive visuality, which contributed significantly to his popularity and success, polarised...

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140 Disdain for the effeminacy of the French was a common target in caricature and satire. Effeminate men were displayed as foreign, and foreign men as effeminate. Homosexuality was rarely an official corollary of these exaggerated characteristics, effeminacy and overt interest in appearance being more detrimentally associated with low morality, affectation, and idleness than ambiguous sexuality in the pre-Wilde era.

141 Spielmann, *The History Of “Punch”*, 51.
contemporary opinion and overshadowed other aspects of his career, such as his progressive approach to repertoire and the democratisation of concert attendance.

The denigration of Jullien’s merits as a conductor continued after his death and at the end of the century, by which time the expected role of the conductor was significantly changed by ‘interpreters’ such as Richter and the first of the native English conductors, his career was detrimentally judged against modern standards. Part of the problem was a more general disparagement of bourgeois Victorian popular culture and the tastelessness of the mass audiences that populist performers such as Jullien sought and encouraged. His performance style, although unique, was in reality the very opposite of exclusivity. The preoccupation with Jullien’s appearance and theatrical behaviour has limited many historians’ consideration of his successes. For many, Jullien’s effectiveness as a conductor was at least partially due to his ability to transfer musical ideas into the minds and bodies of his players and audiences, by visual, but not necessarily technical means – a role akin to that of a mesmerist.

At the first Annual General Meeting of the Wagner Association in England on 3 October 1910, the president, Louis N. Parker, announced Austro-Hungarian Hans (Johann) Baptist Isidor Richter (1843-1916) as one of the Association’s first members honoris causa.¹ In support of Richter’s election, Parker had the following observations to make:

It is no exaggeration to say that Richter’s entrance into English musical life was the beginning of great orchestral playing in this country, and revealed entirely new wonders in old masterpieces. He not only made Wagner’s music comprehensible, but he brought into full light all the beauties of the great composers which previously had to a great extent lain only subconsciously suspected. In his own person, moreover, he presented the type of the true Wagnerian: of the artist enflamed with a burning enthusiasm, not for the work of one man only, but for all that is true and great and beautiful in all the arts. . . . I insist that if it had not been for him, music in England – not conducting only, but the whole art of music – might still he wrapped in the magnificent self-sufficiency which made the old British drawing-room ballad and the dear old British choral society cantata the ideals of a vast public. . . . One of Richter’s most admirable characteristics is that he has never subordinated the composer to his own personality. He has never used any of the meretricious arts whereby some modern conductors seek to draw attention to themselves at the expense of the work they are interpreting. . . . I need not enlarge on the work he has done in England specifically for Wagner’s art. . . . Working under inconceivable difficulties, against age-old prejudices, against slipshod management, against the instincts of audiences who have come to think that the work they are listening to is of immeasurably less importance than themselves or their supper, he has yet brought it to pass that when we see his name

¹ His co-honouree was William Ashton Ellis.
on a programme we know that one-third of the work – the music – will be right: and we are grateful.²

The speech is quoted here almost in its entirety, as within it are multiple themes which are central to this chapter, and to a more general understanding of the development of conducting in the late nineteenth century. Despite being written at the end of Richter’s life, it is an appropriate point to begin this discussion, as it represents a succinct gathering of threads which permeate Richter’s reception.

There is a surprising omission: nowhere in the speech is there a reference to the musical results Richter produces, aside from the comment that they are invariably “right”. There is no mention of tonal quality, instrumental balance or the usual barometer of conducting standards in mid-nineteenth century commentaries, metric precision. This assumption that there is a correct way of performing a piece of music is a substantial shift from the previous century, during which time Jullien and his contemporaries were still regularly augmenting orchestrations, rearranging works and mostly shaping their performances to fit the audience’s expectations, not the composer’s. In this vein, Parker notes Richter’s humble subordination to the composer, signalling the shift in attitude regarding the form that a conductor’s contribution to a performance should take, and a new respect for the composer’s wishes. Parker’s differentiation between Richter and those who “draw attention to themselves at the expense of the work they are interpreting” reflects the widely held belief that the conductor’s creative contribution was now to recreate the music

² Excerpt from the address by the President of The Wagner Association at the first AGM, 3 October 1910 in which Hans Richter and William Ashton Ellis were elected the first members honoris causa. Quoted in: *The Musical Times*, vol. 51, issue 813 (November, 1910): 730
subjectively, but at the same time showing great respect for the composer’s text. He implies that Richter’s success as a conductor was a direct result of this reverence for the written score. The value of his contribution, in the opinion of the speaker, is measured by his role in developing the public’s comprehension of music otherwise unintelligible to them, and in the development of public taste to include works of greater sophistication.

These are all themes which will be explored further in this chapter, but it is on Parker’s framing of Richter, and his qualities as the epitome of a “Wagnerian” that much of this discussion focuses. It is an inevitable bias, as this aspect of Richter’s identity dominates his reception in England. It is also worthy of more nuanced investigation; the association between the two men is certainly significant, but the visual signs that audiences and colleagues responded to in making this judgement were not necessarily straightforward replications of Wagner’s conducting principles. An examination of Richter’s iconic Wagnerian reputation in England from a visual perspective finds specific details of Richter’s physicality, conducting style and popular image in portraits and written material. These sources also suggest some changes in the public’s conceptual image of conductors since Jullien’s generation.

Further to a small collection of extant portraits, there are numerous literary sources that record or cite contemporary observations relating to Richter’s visuality. Christopher Fifield’s recent biographical study of Richter, True Artist and True Friend (1993), is an excellent secondary source in which references to primary material, some currently housed in private collections, are extensive and clearly cited to enable further exploration. Of Richter’s interpretive process and his reception in England there is ample contemporary and primary source material, but it does not tell us much about Richter’s interpretive

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process and own thoughts regarding his role as a conductor, as his original diaries are lost, with only some excerpts having been copied by his son Edgar at the request of his sister Mathilde. Contemporary periodicals such as *The Illustrated London Times, The Musical World* and *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* published reviews of his concerts, and many players wrote of him in their biographies.

Musicians of the subsequent generation, such as Sir Adrian Boult, also gave testament to his ability, technique and stature in the music world, in radio and text interviews. He kept notebooks containing details of all of his performances, which were given to fellow Hungarian-British conductor Sir Georg Solti. These provide evidence of his busy conducting schedule and the varying catholicism of his repertoire throughout his career and in different centres. There are, however, a plethora of contemporary references to his conducting style, rehearsal and performance manner, general physicality and, above all, his conceptual image as a Wagnerian icon in periodicals and memoirs of other musicians.  

Throughout the written accounts and images of Richter, certain visual themes recur so frequently as to become foundations of his persona and indicate broader changes in public perception. Descriptions of him, and attempts to discuss what he did as a conductor, are consistent with reports about other conductors from this period and earlier, in that they contain very little about the quality of the musical product for which he is chiefly responsible. Instead, the commentators describe visual features, such as gesture, dress, hairstyle, and facial expression, and often supplement these observations with references to iconic leaders, magicians and gods. Richter’s Wagnerian image frames most of these observations, many comments implying direct links between factors such as his physicality, gesture style and personality, and Wagner’s conducting theory.

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4 The only sound recording he is ever known to have made was a spoken message in German to the painter Hubert Herkomer recorded on a phonograph at Herkomer’s house on 12 June 1894. Regrettably, it has since been lost. Fifield, *True Artist and True Friend*, 324. He declined an invitation to be filmed conducting by the Messter Company in Berlin in the spring of 1914. The Messter project aimed to film conductors from both the front and back to enable the reproduction of their interpretations in the future by playing the one to an orchestra and the other to the accompanying audience. His reluctance to be involved could have been because he had already retired. Fifield, *True Artist and True Friend*, 440.
The formation of Richter’s public identity in England as a “true Wagnerian” began early, as he could already boast a distinguished Wagnerian pedigree when he first arrived in London in 1877. Not only was he in London as Wagner’s co-conductor – and would prove to be considerably more popular than Wagner himself in that capacity with English audiences – but he had been Wagner’s chosen disciple to conduct the first complete Ring cycle at Bayreuth the previous year, after serving as the composer’s copyist at Tribschen. He arrived in London, therefore, having already firmly established himself as one of Wagner’s disciples in Europe’s Wagnerian capital. He went on to be a central figure in England’s musical world in the second half of the nineteenth century until his final English concert at Eastbourne on 22 April 1911. During that time he ran an annual series of concerts in London from 1879 to 1902 which became known as the Richter Concerts; he conducted opera at London’s main theatres; he conducted the Hallé orchestra in Manchester from 1899-1911; he was the principal conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra from 1904-1911; and he conducted at the Birmingham Festival from 1885-1909.

He was most famous for his championing of Wagner’s works, but he also enjoyed a productive professional and personal relationship with Edward Elgar, premiering much of that composer’s music and receiving a dedication for the 2nd Symphony. Further to his

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5 On Wagner’s first visit to conduct the Philharmonia, Kuhe recalled, “[h]is readings of familiar classical works, as many amateurs no doubt remember, were totally different from those to which they were accustomed. At that time his own works had not even begun to be understood, and there existed, moreover, some feeling of jealousy that a foreigner should have been selected for the important post of conductor of these concerts. At any rate, the engagement was not a success, and was not renewed.” Kuhe, My Musical Recollections, 257.

reputation in England, Richter maintained a successful career in Europe. His repertoire was more varied in later years and under his baton the music of many English composers was exposed to the English audiences, as was the music of comparatively unknown continental composers such as Antonín Dvořák and Jean Sibelius. He died in Bayreuth in 1916, that town having become a shrine to Wagner, his music and doctrines.

The personality traits Parker isolates in his address in 1910, including Richter’s humility and authority, exemplify many of the tenets of the Wagnerian conducting tradition. This is not surprising: Wagner’s influence on Richter’s and subsequent generations of conductors was considerable. Richter, Hans von Bülow (1830-1894) and Felix Mottl (1856-1911) were his assistants, Arthur Nikisch (1855-1922) played under him, and Hermann Levi (1839-1900) and Anton Seidl (1850-1898) both worked under him at Bayreuth. These conductors then passed Wagnerian principles of conducting on to the next generation of conductors either directly through tuition, or indirectly through the influence of their performances.

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7 Ferdinand Pföhl, a music critic in Hamburg, considered Richter to be one of four conductors in constant demand throughout Europe, the other three being Hans Von Bülow, Arthur Nikisch and Felix Mottl. All four conductors were disciples of Wagner’s conducting theory. Ferdinand Pföhl, “Leben und Schaffen: autobiographische Skizze und kleine Errinerungen,” Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft, vol. 9/10 (October, 1942), 445.


9 Bebbington traces their immediate successors thus: “Bülow taught Richard Strauss (1864-1949), Richter and Mottl taught the principal French exemplar of Wagner’s methods, Alfred Cortot (1877-1962), and Levi and Mottl taught Michael Ballings (1866-1925), conductor of the first Scottish Ring [sic]. Nikisch was the principal influence on Wilhelm Furtwängler (1886-1954), Albert Coates (1882-1953), Henry Wood (1869-1944), Adrian Boult (1889-1980) and – as much as anyone can be credited with influencing him – Gustav Mahler (1860-1911).” Bebbington, “The Orchestral Conducting Practice of Richard Wagner”, 5-6.
However, in Richter’s case, Wagner influenced more than just his repertoire choices and reputation as a consummate interpreter of Wagner’s music. Richter appears in many instances and through different paths, as Wagner’s conduit in England. Their biographical proximity played a major role in establishing the conceptual link between the two men, which was reinforced by an incident which occurred on Richter’s first visit to England in 1877. Richter was Wagner’s assistant conductor for the widely anticipated, but ultimately doomed, Wagner Festival at the Royal Albert Hall from May 7 to 29. According to a report in The Illustrated London News after the second concert, Wagner “conducted with energy and precision”. Nonetheless, Richter conducted most of the festival, as Wagner’s conducting was indecipherable to the London players. A critic for the Sunday Times, Herman Klein (1835-1934), related difficulties in rehearsal, reporting that the leaders of the first and second violins, both of whom were German, took turns translating Wagner’s corrections and instructions in an effort to expedite the rehearsal process. Despite their efforts, Wagner handed over the rehearsing duties to Richter, who the players greeted with applause.10

Wagner’s unsuccessful attempts to direct the London players did not improve in time for the performances. In the words of a reviewer for The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular, “Whenever the baton fell from the nerveless hand of the master Herr Richter took it up to retrieve the fortunes of the day.”11 After realising his inability to direct proceedings from the podium, Wagner relinquished the baton to Richter and sat at the edge of the stage in an ornate armchair facing the audience. The visual effect of this should not be underestimated. Wagner’s quasi-regal presence, enthroned in the line of sight between the audience and orchestra, is reminiscent of statues and busts of celebrated musicians, such as Max Klinger’s 1902 statue and bronze torso of Beethoven. The genius is commemorated for his creation, even though he is not playing an active part in the


concert. More importantly, as far as Richter’s reputation is concerned, was the handing over of the musical baton from composer to conductor. Richter literally began where Wagner ended as a conductor, and Wagner’s act of submission cemented the conductor’s authority as a Wagnerian.

After such a symbolically laden introduction to English audiences, it is not surprising that throughout his career we encounter comments such as the following:

As usual he conducted without a score, an easy matter for the man who … had copied the full score from Wagner’s original manuscript. It was this link with a legendary figure and a legendary past, far more than what seemed then the miracle of Richter’s conducting, which invested the occasion for me with considerable significance. He had known Wagner and had lived under his roof, and he stood that night as the incarnation of Wagnerian tradition.

In his obituary for Richter, Samuel Langford argued that “[m]uch of Wagner’s spirit must have passed into Richter” and Sir Adrian Boult recalled in the late twentieth century, that when Richter conducted Die Meistersinger, the central character of Hans Sachs “was a homage to Richter, the two people seemed to merge as the performance went on.” Like Goossens, critic Neville Cardus felt awe when considering Richter’s connection to Wagner:

To gaze on Richter was to experience wonder; I once followed in his footsteps as he shambled along the pavement and I tried to fit my boots exactly in the places trodden by him. He had spoken to Wagner; and no composer since has meant so much to the imagination as Wagner meant to those of us who in 1910 had just

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13 Sir Eugene Goossens, Overtures and Beginners (London: Methuen, 1951), 73.

come of age and were listening to the Halle orchestra under Richter beginning the Meistersinger overture.\textsuperscript{15}

On a number of occasions, Richter expressed an acknowledgment of his adherence to Wagner’s conducting doctrine. In May 1870, Richter’s birthday message to Wagner closed by stating that his whole life was dedicated to his “esteemed Master.” In response, Wagner told his disciple that one day he would be an archbishop when Wagner was pope.\textsuperscript{16} An excerpt from a letter that Richter sent to Dvořák in late 1884 is further proof that he thought of himself as a Wagnerian, although it also suggests some degree of competition with Hans von Bülow for the honour:

How often has the Symphony in D minor been performed in London? It is very dear to me (perhaps my favourite), but I must, for my manager’s sake, be careful that the same work is not given too often; although I may claim without boasting that only a dramatic conductor, a Wagnerian (Hans Bülow must forgive me!) can bring out the full value of this particular symphony.\textsuperscript{17}

However in 1876, Wagner complained that Richter’s conducting of Act II of Die Walküre in Bayreuth was inaccurate, claiming that he was not using the drama to help him find the right tempo.\textsuperscript{18} Wagner also told his wife of his concerns about Richter’s choice of tempi.\textsuperscript{19}

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Furthermore, in 1879 Wagner informed King Ludwig II of Bavaria of his concerns regarding trustworthy conductors:

I know of no conductor whom I could trust to perform my music correctly, nor any singing actor whom I could count upon to give a correct performance of my dramatic characters ... my conductor – in spite of the fact that I consider him the best I know – was not able to maintain the correct tempo, however often he got it right, because – he was incapable of knowing why the music had to be interrupted in one way and not another. For this is the heart of the matter: anyone may succeed by chance at least once, - but he is not aware of what he is doing, - for I alone could have justified it by means of what I call my school.  

Wagner’s concerns over his tempi may well have been justified; at thirty-three years of age, Richter was relatively young and was still maturing as an opera conductor. There had also been a misunderstanding between the two men as Richter struggled to gain his independence from Wagner, the latter resenting the former’s exploration of other composers’ work and the situation having been exacerbated by an erroneous report in the press regarding Richter’s Wagner performances. At the lowest point of their relationship, Wagner claimed that Richter was “nothing more than a bumbling artisan. As a man he’s always been a burden to me.”

Wagner’s attitude to Richter was often governed by external situations, particularly Richter’s independence. He was most fond of the younger conductor when he was working solely with or for him. After Richter left, the conductors who filled his place replaced him

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in Wagner’s affections. Moreover, many of Wagner’s criticisms reveal his frustration with his own limitations as a conductor. The underlying message to Ludwig II, in the letter above, was that no one else will ever get it exactly right, because they are not Wagner. Even Richter’s personal life could affect his relationship with Wagner: the openly anti-semitic Wagners were especially uncomfortable with Richter’s choice of a Jewish wife. Their personal relationship, therefore, was tempestuous and, on Wagner’s part at least, conditional.

Despite this, and in support of his Wagnerian status was a predilection in his programming toward Wagner’s music and German repertoire in general. However, Fifield notes that the English public often demanded no less from him in his earlier years, as “[t]hey did not want to lose the chance of hearing Wagner’s music conducted by the next best man to the composer himself.” Although Richter was a confessed Wagnerian, and maintained a predominance of Wagner’s music in his English programming, he exercised discretion in Vienna so as to not unduly polarise opinion against him and thus alienate half the city’s music world. Sigmund Bachrich confirms that he “maintained his non alignment to any party. All that mattered to him was the work, whose beauty he had the sensitivity to understand and in whose performance he knew how to achieve a perpetual elasticity.”

His reputation as a Wagnerian and his association with Wagner’s music, therefore, was more pronounced in England than in continental Europe.

Whether Richter programmed Wagner so frequently in London because of the refreshing lack of political friction in music circles, or because demand for Wagner’s music justified

22 In October 1872, at Richter’s suggestion, Wagner employed a group of aspiring conductors, later to be called the Nibelung Chancellery, who served as copyists and assistant conductors. Fifield, *True Artist and True Friend*, 60, 90.


his choices, remains a matter for speculation. His Wagner-centric programming drew criticism from many commentators, including Bernard Shaw, who accused Richter of programming according to commercial gain and to accommodate insufficient rehearsals due to his busy schedule.  

Even Richter’s ardent supporter Louis Engels expressed concern at Richter’s tendency to limit the breadth of repertoire he presented:

> Immense is Richter and immense is his obstinacy . . . . At the same time I will not for one moment dispute that his obstinately forcing down the throat of his audience such a quantity of Wagner which … must at least result in the audience dwindling down into a nucleus of enthusiasts, may cause the popularity of the conductor and the success of the concerts seriously to suffer.  

Wagner’s reception in England was, for many reasons, far from ideal. His compositions were often considered esoteric, and his conducting, although eliciting some positive results, was not universally admired. It was through his work as a conductor that most of Wagner’s exposure in England was channelled during his own lifetime as, apart from a small group of intellectuals and Anglo-Germans, his music was not destined to find a large appreciative audience in England until after his death. Richter turned the tide of favour, enabling the term ‘Wagnerian’ to become a compliment only a short number of years after it had aroused scepticism or even derision.

The complexities around Richter’s personal relationship with Wagner are not the only factors which suggest that his Wagnerian status requires a deeper investigation. Despite the frequent musical connections drawn between the two men, there is evidence that their conducting gestures and interpretative approaches differed in some respects. The following four portraits (Figures 15 – 18), notwithstanding the unfinished, sketchy style of Figures 15, 17 and 18, give apparently life-like depictions of Richter conducting. Figures 16 and 17

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show Richter in performance; Figure 15 is of Richter in rehearsal, and Figure 18 could be rehearsal or performance, although his unusually casual attire suggest the former.

Figure 15. Frank L. Emanuel, Hans Richter at rehearsal with the Halle Orchestra, drawing in The Manchester Guardian, (1904). Reproduced in Fifield, True Artist and True Friend, 419

Figure 16. Anon., Richter conducting the first Ring in English, The Daily Graphic, (28 Jan 1908). Reproduced in Fifield, True Artist and True Friend, 402
Figure 17. Thomas Edwin Wotton, *Hans Richter*, pencil drawing, (1908). Given to the Royal College of Music Centre for Performance History by Sir Adrian Boult (2000.8.2/18)

Figure 18. Henry Holiday, *Hans Richter*, pencil drawing, (1877). Bequeathed by Miss Winifred Holiday, daughter of the artist, to the Royal College of Music Centre for Performance History in 1949 (2000.8.4/33)
The similarities between the four images suggest some degree of verisimilitude. Richter’s facial expression, despite differing head positions and eye lines, remains consistently impassive. His arms are the only parts of his body to show a suggestion of movement. While Figures 16-18 do not even include his lower body, in Figure 15 the potential for bodily movement is reduced by Richter’s seated position.

In Figure 15, Emanuel draws attention to Richter’s head through the use of far greater detail compared to the rest of his body, and contrasted shading, a stylised depiction of the light cast by the music stand. The darkness of Richter’s hat is paralleled, in shade and angle, by his baton, the foremost stand light and the edge of the music stand. A visual connection exists between the stand (which holds the score), the light (which renders the score visible), Richter’s head (with which he interprets the score – despite his raised head, his eyes appear to be downturned) and his baton (the tool with which he physically transmits his interpretation of the score). Compositionally these lines are balanced by the dark shading at the back of Richter’s right trouser leg, and his right cuff.

Figure 16 is more realistically rendered with consistent levels of detail, the under-lighting of Richter’s hands from the stand lights an accurate depiction of the effect of pit lighting. The score itself is indiscernible, but its content is revealed through the accompanying caption as part of Wagner’s Ring. Richter’s baton, arms and the music stand again form a series of parallel lines, this time accompanied by Richter’s eye line, which is directed not to the score, but to the stage above him, indicating his attentive connection with the singers and sufficient knowledge of the score to enable conducting without it.

Figures 17 and 18 are more sketch-like and less finished than Figures 15 and 16, but similarly depict Richter’s lack of bodily movement and facial expression. His arm is raised uncharacteristically high in Figure 18, but the downturned head, impassive face and invisible body negate its height and activity. Wotton’s drawing (Figure 17) also depicts Richter as impassive and inert. As in the earlier examples, a connection is established between head, baton and score: in this example it is the intersecting of the lines along the music stand, baton and the implied line of sight down to them.
Whereas Jullien’s connection to the score was a minor element in the portraits discussed in the preceding chapter, his torso, arms and eye line diverting attention away from it, the images of Richter display close bodily proximity to the score. His attention directed toward the music stand or to the performers immediately above, maintains a stronger connection with the score and prioritises it within the pictorial components. These formal and pictorial devices raise obvious questions about Richter’s technique in rehearsal and performance relating to his posture, gesture and range of bodily movement. They also suggest Richter’s approach to conducting involved closer engagement with the score than Jullien’s, a line of thought that is investigated further below.

Testimonies and memoirs from Richter’s musicians describe his gesture as being minimal in size and undemonstrative, and recount that he had an impassive face but communicated chiefly to his players by way of powerful eye contact, reiterating the gestural and behavioural themes indicated in the portraits. The following description from trumpeter Walter Morrow is typical:

In conducting an orchestra Dr. Richter naturally beats time with a baton, and his beat is always unmistakable. But his power is not there, it is in his eye and in his left hand. What a wonderfully expressive left hand it is! And he seems to have every individual member of the band in his eye; he misses nothing, and we do not seem able to escape from the influence of that eye for a single moment.30

Sir Adrian Boult recalled Richter’s conducting style in precise detail:

Hans Richter’s stick was half an inch in diameter at the butt end, the handle was an inch in diameter . . . . He gripped it with his whole fist, grasped it with his whole hand, though it was all very loose and easy. . . . The movement of the stick had a very direct effect on the quality of the performance he produced. . . . Everything had a steady rhythm and pulse. . . . He could do Tchaikovsky No. 6 straight through, but somehow or other it was most telling and dramatic. It might have been

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due to accentuation, but I’m inclined to think most of it came out of Richter’s eye and went straight to the player concerned. Richter’s stick always held everything together; one felt that the point of that stick was an emotive force through which everything was going to the orchestra.

You might say that Richter was the last conductor who quite clearly felt himself that the right hand was for rhythm and time, and the left hand was for expression. He only used his left hand for expression when there was anything wrong really. He would sometimes put up his hand to get or anticipate a diminuendo, but generally speaking his left hand only came in almost for an emergency. 31

Richter’s use of left hand gesture to communicate expressive information, and the division of duties between his hands in general, is a recurring feature in many of the descriptions of his conducting. Although Boult suggests that Richter was the last conductor to display this technique, it has continued as a central tenet of modern conducting theories. The division of the two hands is an ideal toward which many conductors strive, but one which many do not attain. If there were no conductors of Richter’s standard rising through the ranks at that time, it may have appeared to be a dying standard.

While two of the images above omit the left hand entirely (Figures 17 and 18), the other images indicate some form of left-arm movement. In some, the artist depicts the two arms in different positions, suggesting the subdivision of duty discussed in Boult’s description. The prevalence of left-arm movement in the images casts some doubt over the assertion that he rarely used it.

The disparity between written testimonies and illustration occurs through the different expectations of the writers and artists. Fellow conductors, musicians and even music critics would have had knowledge of accepted conducting techniques which artists would probably have lacked. Therefore, it is likely that the written descriptions were influenced by the writers’ expectations of good conducting which, at this time, was believed to

include the separation of the two hands into two distinct spheres of activity, the left hand only being raised to gesture when needed for expression, difficult entry indications and cut offs. Hugo Riemann’s 1882 *Musik-Lexikon*, for instance, has an entry for ‘conducting’, in which he notes that “only the noiseless movements of the marshall’s baton in his hand can be the interpreters of his intentions. A glance cast at a singer or player may occasionally prove to be of invaluable service, and an occasional movement of the left hand may be found helpful; but still the conducting stick remains the most important factor”. An interested, but non-musician, artist is less likely to be aware of this technical preference, and more apt to produce an image which is based on the most interesting visual representation of the conductor. The writers’ expectations are a filter through which they view the conductor’s gestures. The artist is more likely to be motivated by artistic and formalistic concerns regarding the final published image.

Critic August Wilhelm Ambros was less precise in his description, but like Boult and Morrow, recognised Richter’s hands and eyes as important facets of his communication with the players:

> He conducts with spirit and with a deep understanding. He does not seem to thrash around as if with an unseen opponent, as several other enthusiasts do when beating time. On the other hand he is not one who lets things happen on their own, whose conducting is like grinding a coffee mill. It is very engaging to watch Herr Richter, how he seemed to be everywhere at once with his glance and his hand movements.

Louis Engel also emphasised the importance of Richter’s hand movements, connecting certain movements with particular musical responses or effects and suggesting that he used his left hand to indicate phrasing and articulation:

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... firm and short as is his beat in ordinary progress of movement, it lengthens in
crescendos and slackens in diminuendos, his left hand continually indicating
smoothing passages, or with an eloquence of rare ability the way of attacking the
instrument to obtain the effect at the moment desired. 34

In a later review, Engel suggests his movements anticipate the music to come, a crucial
aspect of modern conducting technique:

As to Richter, people never weary [sic] looking at him and wondering how every
coming passage casts its shadow beforehand – by his arm, his head, his hand – for
he has a whole dictionary of phrases to communicate to his orchestra without ever
speaking…. People often, when Richter leads, pay all attention to the phenomenal
concentration of power in his own hands – Those hands that give the whole palette
of tints, from pianissimo to fortissimo, so clearly, that the public learn to
understand it as well as the band …. And he actually plays the orchestra with his
hand, as a man would play a stringed instrument. 35

Engel elaborated on the way in which Richter’s gestures were viewed by many as an index
to the inner meaning of the piece being performed. Again, this was not entirely new.
Jullien, for instance was often referred to in terms relating to pantomime, display and
physical embodiment of musical meaning. 36 The difference between the two conductors


36 Of his conducting style and efficacy we learn early in his time in London that Jullien conducted with a
"necromantic baton and his vigorous flourish, marshalling and supermarshalling his euphonious colleagues in
a style productive of great effects, and most eminently satisfactory to all beholders" (The Musical World,
1842), that his conducting gesture was "entertaining to the eye of the spectator" (The Musical World, 1844)
and that his movements "while working up a climax, dallying with a diminuendo, or enunciating a staccato,
were as explanatory as words, and infinitely more prompt" (The Morning Herald, 1850). The previous year,
1849, The Illustrated London News had reported that when “the promenade conductor turns around with
vehement gesture to animate his adroit executants of the parchment and brass, his pantomime is most intense
and insinuating. He typifies a crescendo, or a crash, with astounding vigour – his stick rolling spasmodically
lies in the manner of communication, and a change in the audience’s expectations of how
the message is to be received. While it was Jullien’s demonstrative, dance-like gestures
which helped his audience to listen to the music, Richter’s audience recognised his lack of
theatricality as a stripping away of artifice to reveal the true musical content. This was at
the heart of Wagner’s conducting theory. Even more significant is the articulation that
Richter’s movements preempted the music to come. It is proof that a conductor’s gesture
was no longer expected to passively express or illustrate the music being played, but acted
as a catalyst for the music, granting the conductor’s physical technique more authority and
effectiveness in the music-making process.

Despite this increased importance, many reviews of Richter’s conducting note his lack of
unnecessary body movement, and that he used “a minimum of gesticulation that conveys a
maximum of expressiveness”. That his minimalist gesture style was commented upon so
often, not only by players but also by critics, was at least partly due to the fact that it was
quite unusual. Jullien was one of Richter’s most significant predecessors in England, and
as the previous chapter established, one of the most common adjectives used in reference
to his conducting was “demonstrative”. Furthermore, it is clear from press reviews and
memoirs that even the more conservative leading English conductors of the generation
preceding Richter possessed gesture styles usually distinguished by a large, regimented
beat in an effort to maintain metronomic regularity and control the massive orchestral and

and his body writhing convulsively. Nothing can be more exhilarating than this action of Jullien while
embodying, as it were, the composition under weigh” (The Illustrated London News, 1849). All quoted in:
Carse, The Life of Jullien, 112-13. For further discussion of the conductor’s role as a visual cipher for
audiences, see: John Spitzer et al., “Conducting,” in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2nd

37 Herbert Thompson, review of a performance of Beethoven’s Choral Symphony in Newcastle. Yorkshire
Post, 25 November 1899, page unknown.
choral forces popular in the nineteenth century. Or else they favoured a flowery, theatrical gesture which responded to the music, rather than led it.\(^{38}\)

The smaller size of Richter’s beat was new to his audience’s eyes, and, importantly, the audience’s eyes were informed by a developing knowledge and understanding of music and greater sophistication in their expectations of a performer. Of course, a smaller beat was, in technical terms, only possible if teamed with an improvement in performance standards, ensemble playing and players’ knowledge of the score. The greatest factors in aiding this improvement were the long overdue eradication of player substitution and longer rehearsal periods. Richter contributed to these changes in a major way.\(^{39}\) It also relied upon the conductor’s ability to rehearse efficiently, a point Neville Cardus raised in relation to Richter, who, he said, “had no unnecessary gestures ... [He] did his work so thoroughly at rehearsal that on the night he could afford to hold himself in impressive reserve.”\(^{40}\)

Moreover, his impassive style intersected with a concurrent conceptual shift in thought regarding the nature of a conductor’s activity. The days of metronomic time-keeping and theatrical dramatisation were nearly at an end as people began to regard conducting less as a form of manual labour – an almost purely physical task – and more as an intellectual one. One of the chief proponents in articulating this new mindset was Wagner, who published several pieces of writing about conducting theory, \textit{Über das Dirigiren}(1869), the essays

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\(^{39}\) Various conductors in London, from Mendelssohn, through Michael Costa to Sir Henry Wood, have been credited with finally bringing an end to deputisation and insufficient rehearsal time. It is most likely that reputable conductors collectively contributed to the demise of these unmourned traditions.

“Über die Aufführung des *Tannhäuser*” (1852), “Glucks Ouvertüre zu *Iphigènie in Aulis*” (1854) and “Zum Vortrag der neunten Symphonie Beethovens” (1872). ⁴¹

Comments from orchestral players regarding Richter’s conducting in rehearsal and performance provide a gauge of how his less demonstrative beat could achieve greater authority. The descriptions are reminiscent of descriptions of Liszt’s conducting and teaching practices, in that Richter’s principal communicative power was evidently achieved through facial expression and bodily gesture, while the use and effectiveness of spoken language was limited:

> Very little is said by the conductor; his gestures, though never obtrusive, speak louder than words. Perhaps there is a little want of attention. A sudden cessation of the beating, and the conductor’s arms are folded. His dignified pose meets the eyes of the players as they discover that the baton is motionless. Not a word is uttered; the statuesque attitude is eloquent to a degree; and after a brief silent pause the baton is raised and the movement is re-started. ⁴²

Furthermore, descriptions of his rehearsal manner lead to certain conducting behaviours assuming associations with non-musical traits such as humility. Most commonly, Richter is described as a vessel for the composer’s music, without allowing his own ego to supersede the rehearsal and performance process. Cardus’s observation is typical:

> His interpretations were beautifully graded; he had no use for flashy contrasts of tone, or for a virtuoso display of instrumentation. He was there to unfold the

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⁴² “Hans Richter,” 446.
music’s beauties. It was his desire to achieve this without seeming to place himself between the audience and the composer.\textsuperscript{43}

A review in \textit{The Musical Times} supports this:

His baton speaks the intentions of the composer whose work he is interpreting with an eloquence which at once attracts and fascinates to the end, both executive artists and audience alike. His individual reading, for the impress of his individuality upon his orchestra, as may be inferred, is most marked, has in it nothing eccentric or obtrusive, while his manner is entirely free from the ecstatic and ostentatious ways of some modern conductors.\textsuperscript{44}

Walter Morrow’s reflections on playing in Richter’s orchestra for the entirety of its existence included descriptions of his manner and technique, and were consistent with the image evoked thus far. He stated that the esteem in which Richter was held by the players was mirrored by the conductor’s esteem for the band, which, Morrow noted, was an important facet of orchestral management.\textsuperscript{45} When asked to elaborate on Richter’s “grand qualities” he responded:

\begin{quote}
It is difficult to enumerate them; they are felt, but cannot be adequately described. He has an imposing presence; a generous, genial manner; a wonderful self command; a prodigious memory; a profound knowledge of scores; a practical knowledge of orchestral instruments, particularly the horn and trumpet – the technical difficulties of these two tender instruments are rarely understood. The players know how kindly and sympathetically Dr. Richter nurses them; at the same time he gets everything possible out of them. . . . I know no conductor who can get
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{44} “Orchestral Festival Concerts” in \textit{The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular}, vol. 20, issue 436 (June 1879): 310.

\textsuperscript{45} “Hans Richter,” 447.
so much out of orchestral players. At rehearsals he gets through a large amount of work, but there is never any friction, never any irritability or irritation. He stops a great number of times, but always for a satisfactory and well explained reason, and these explanations are often very amusing. At the end of a three hours’ rehearsal we disperse with the feeling that a great deal has been taken out of us, but that the operation has been pleasant and agreeable. At the close of a concert we realize that the strain has been very great; but the artistic renderings of the master works under Dr. Richter’s baton, and the kind appreciative words he never fails to address to his orchestral players always arouse feelings of the greatest admiration and esteem for the greatest living conductor.46

Two silhouettes (Figures 19 and 20) further illustrate elements of Richter’s conducting technique and the humility that these observers noted in his podium manner.

![Image of silhouettes]


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Figure 20. Anon., Richter conducting at the Vienna court opera (date unknown). Reproduced in Fifield, True Artist and True Friend, 365

Silhouettes do not purport to provide realistic, 3-dimensional depictions of a sitter, as they lack the capacity to indicate depth and contour. They tend to convey information about the sitter through a focus on body shape and movement, rather than facial expression. Although different from the sketches in this regard, Figures 19 and 20 nonetheless contain similar pictorial elements, confirming the information about Richter’s conducting which can be inferred from Figures 15-18. The Richter silhouettes are comparatively static from the waist down, and although both silhouettes depict Richter using broad arm gestures, his head facing straight forward or directly in line with his hands. The lack of bodily movement in these images is most obvious when they are compared with another silhouette by Böhler, of Eduard Strauss.

47 The art form carries the name of Étienne de Silhouette, the French finance minister who enjoyed making cut paper portraits. Silhouettes were a quick and extremely cheap form of portraiture at a time when the depressed economy demanded cutting back on luxury items. Frank McLynn, 1759: The Year Britain Became Master of the World (London: Random House, 2004), 64-65.
In Figure 19, Böhler uses the three bottom silhouettes to depict Richter’s acknowledgement of Bruckner, his stately descent from the podium (turning away from the applause Bruckner directs at him), and finally the way in which he turns his head away from the audience, inclining it downward while Bruckner holds a laurel wreath. This series of images depicts Richter as a performer not moved by accolades. Filson Young confirms this, suggesting that Richter was unaware of, or indifferent to, the effect he had on the audience:

He is utterly indifferent to applause; at the end of a great performance of the Ring he will step down from his desk and look up at a house shouting with enthusiasm for him alone, with a countenance no more expressive of emotion than that of a cow looking over a fence.  

Certain aspects of Richter’s performance behaviour contributed to his reputation for humility. For instance, he habitually refrained from taking a curtain call in opera

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performances in the Bayreuth tradition.\textsuperscript{49} Furthermore, he reportedly stopped the scherzo of Beethoven’s ‘Eroica’ at the Lower Rhine Music Festival in 1887 after a few bars because a sound in the auditorium had spoilt it, demonstrating for those present his respect for the music being performed, and indicating that he expected the audience to display similar reverence.\textsuperscript{50}

In Figure 20, the bottom silhouette of Richter’s acknowledgement of applause includes the raised arms and faces of the audience. Richter, in comparison, stands looking forward to the viewer, with no bodily expression. The artist further draws the attention away from Richter’s body, and causes the viewer to ponder Richter’s thoughts at such an ovation, by cutting his eyes into the silhouette. This also serves to make it clear to the viewer in which direction he is facing, which an outline alone cannot achieve.

Further evidence of Richter’s perceived humility as a conductor can be ascertained by his request to Thompson to publish an erratum after he wrongly cued the basses and put them off in a concert on 2 November 1909.\textsuperscript{51} This aspect of his personality was also noted by his friend, artist Herbert Herkomer who wrote “I do not believe that any conductor who ever lived so completely carried out a self-effacement as you did. It was a curious feeling; I heard only music, I saw no conductor and saw no players. That, I think, is the highest compliment I can pay you.”\textsuperscript{52} The reputation he gained for respectful interpretations of musical works reflects the admiration he earned for adhering to the written instructions, a process which garnered esteem within wider changes regarding public veneration for the canon.

According to all the evidence collected above, Richter’s beat was calm and focused, and involved his entire arm, particularly in louder passages. Great importance was attached to his eye contact, and he was noted to use very little body movement. He did not utilise

\textsuperscript{49} Fifield, \textit{True Artist and True Friend}, 362-63.


\textsuperscript{51} Fifield, \textit{True Artist and True Friend}, 423.

\textsuperscript{52} H. Herkomer to Hans Richter, 20 November 1903. Translated in Fifield, \textit{True Artist and True Friend}, 284.
dramatic changes in tempi but kept a steady momentum throughout, and divided the duties of time indication and expression between his right and left hands respectively.

Warren Bebbington establishes a clear picture of Wagner’s conducting through analysis of imagery and written accounts. He notes several distinctive features of Wagner’s technique and interpretation. Like Richter, Wagner used a small focused beat, and although his “beat-field was high and away from his body, his gestures came from the wrist and were small”. Caricatures and portraits of him conducting clearly indicate not only the height of his gesture, but also the dislocation at the wrist to indicate the beat. Richter’s beat, on the other hand, appears as an extension of his arm, the gesture originating at the shoulder joint and the wrist generally maintaining its natural alignment. The connection between the two, therefore, was not based on commonalities in stick technique.

On the other hand, the potency of both conductors’ gestures was attributed, in part, to their eye contact with the players. Morrow attributed Richter’s connection with the players to his sustained eye contact, stating that he seemed “to have every individual member of the band in his eye; he misses nothing, and we do not seem able to escape from the influence of that eye for a single moment.” Among others, Wagner’s son Siegfried recalled that Richard “used his eyes above all else, and repeatedly referred to them as the most important means of communicating the conductors’ wishes ... It was his eyes that electrified.” Anton Seidl, the Hungarian conductor, and Wagner’s student and assistant in 1872, described his body as being “motionless, but his eyes glittered, glowed, pierced”.

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53 Bebbington, “The Orchestral Conducting Practice of Richard Wagner”, 305.

54 “Hans Richter,” 447.


56 Henry Theophilus Finck, ed., Anton Seidl, a Memorial by His Friends (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1899), 239.
“an aesthetic one for the audience, without any of the exaggerated gesticulation which is so popular nowadays [1923] and creates the impression that the ultimate object of the music is the conductor, and the work being performed is incidental.”

He saw a connection between a more focused gesture and eye contact and an approach to conducting that prioritised the work over the performer. This was a visual relationship that Siegfried assumed audiences would also recognise and understand.

If some aspects of their gesture and eye contact were analogous, Wagner and Richter’s approaches to tempi were certainly not. Contemporary accounts characterise Richter’s performances as being steady and lacking in rubato, Boult noting that “[e]verything had a steady rhythm and pulse.”

Bebbington found that Wagner took the opposite approach to tempo, his gesture “emphasizing tempo rubato and nuance: his beat had never been continuous or irregular”. This disparity provides some background to Wagner’s reported disagreements with Richter over tempi at Bayreuth.

It is clear that there were audible, and visible, barriers between the two men which the English audience either did not deem important, or even notice. That Richter could be regarded as “the type of the true Wagnerian” despite the significant differences between the conducting techniques and approaches of the two men is puzzling at first glance. It implies that the conceptual link between them was based upon non-physical characteristics, and that the means by which one attained status as a Wagnerian conductor were not necessarily attached to compliance with Wagner’s conducting practices, but rather to an innate comprehension and appreciation of his music.

Wagner’s ideal was of a conductor whose primary aim was to understand and transmit the inner meaning or poetic intent of the work. This being accomplished, the technical aspects of the performance would fall into place. The emotional and intellectual were prioritised in

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Wagner’s theory, changing what was a primarily technical activity into an internal, private cognitive activity. Richter’s minimal gesture and undemonstrative podium manner reflected this, consciously or not, and the contrasting energy which players noticed in his eyes would have reinforced the shift from manual task to cognitive. In this way, Richter’s conducting style was intrinsically Wagnerian, despite the disparities in surface elements between the two conductors.

Beyond his connections to Wagner, Richter gained respect for other aspects of his contribution to English musical life. Many, like Parker, espoused the improvements to conducting technique, musical education and taste that Richter had achieved in England. At the beginning of his time in England, The Athenæum predicted that “If the coming of Herr Richter has no other artistic result than a reform in the method of conducting that prevails in this country it will have been most beneficial.”

By the end of his time in England, Sir Adrian Boult indicated that those hopes had been realised, recalling Richter as “a general piece of English furniture. He taught English orchestras a tremendous lot.”

The conductor’s pedagogical responsibility is a familiar trope: Jullien’s programming policy exhibited a progressive inculcation of ‘serious’ repertoire alongside the more popular quadrilles and songs. It was a necessary tactic for any conductor who valued music which differed from the public’s taste and reveals that the motivation behind their efforts was the belief that they knew better than the audience, and that their own musical choices could make that audience more sophisticated. Beethoven and Wagner were superior composers in the eyes of conductors such as Jullien and, after him, Richter: the audience should be listening to the music, even if it was not initially popular. The perception that Richter was obliged to develop public taste and musical understanding had obvious implications in the construction of the canon and the motivations behind his repertoire choices. It also grants the conductor heightened authority by virtue of his superior knowledge and musical taste.

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61 BBC Radio 3, Collectors’ Corner Sound Archives, 8 April 1980, and Christopher Dyment’s interview with Sir Adrian Boult, 18 September 1972. Quoted in Fifield, True Artist and True Friend, 463-64.
Programming was not the only area in which Richter was thought to spur improvement. It was at first hoped, and later confirmed, that Richter’s superior conducting skills would have a positive effect over apparently inferior native conductors, and improve playing standards. The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular reflected on the superiority of his conducting thus:

We cannot appraise it, but we can feel the influence of Richter’s supreme mastery, of his all-embracing coup d’oeil, of his perfect resource, and, not less, the confidence with which he must inspire his followers. Hans Richter is a “conductor” of a verity, and we are glad to have him amongst us as an example. Many of our own conductors have been sitting at his feet this week, and we trust the fidgety among them will fidget less; the convulsive become calmer; the uncertain more assured; the feeble stronger; and, we had almost said, the led ones themselves take the lead, though that would, perhaps, be a change for the worse.  

Sir Charles Stanford recalled Richter’s contribution to the Birmingham Festival:

[He] remodeled the orchestra, rectified the balance of strings and wind, and made the programmes of the evening concerts, which had mostly consisted of a farrago of operatic airs and selections, as artistically interesting as those of the morning. This festival set an example of sufficient rehearsal and preparation, and of the selection throughout of worthy music, which has since been followed by all other gatherings of the kind.

W. Kuhe also recognised the heightened status of the conductor as a corollary of Richter’s influence:


63 C. V. Stanford, Pages from an Unwritten Diary (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1914), 248.
But enough is it for me to lay emphasis on the wondrous change wrought in England of recent years . . . thanks to such men as Hans Richter. For whereas in former years no sort of concert in London attracted a large gathering unless it brought to the platform a vocal or instrumental star; distinguished in the musical firmament, we now behold the spectacle of an audience, crowded, alert, and expectant, drawn only by the magic name of a Richter or a Mottl.\textsuperscript{64}

Richter’s image as a musical educator and improver of taste was most commonly related to his performances of Wagner’s and Beethoven’s works. An anonymous writer for \textit{The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular} cited both areas of authority:

As respects Herr Richter’s reading of Wagner’s music, nothing need be said after the experience of the “Wagner Festival,” and, with reference to his treatment of Beethoven, we have chiefly to praise the discretion which avoids all forced interpretation. He brings out into fuller relief that which is obvious in the score, but he does not treat the great master’s music as an obscure text given him for annotation and emendation. This is one of the Viennese conductor’s greatest recommendations to us conservative English.\textsuperscript{65}

Audience members and critics were not the only contemporaries to articulate the belief that Richter’s conducting style and knowledge was in some way superior, or at least differentiated from, native conductors. Accounts of the players’ view of Richter give an indication of the esteem in which they held him. In a laudatory biographical article in the July 1899 issue, by an anonymous writer for \textit{The Musical Times}, much is made of the respect in which Richter is held by his musicians, indicated by the attentive silence of the orchestra “before a start or re-start is made. These significant silences, while the baton is held aloft, act as most effective thought-concentrators.”\textsuperscript{66}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{64} Kuhe, \textit{My Musical Recollections}, 279.
  \item \textsuperscript{65} “Hans Richter,” 445.
  \item \textsuperscript{66} “Hans Richter” in \textit{The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular}, vol 40, issue 677 (July 1899): 8.
\end{itemize}
prohibition of spectators at rehearsals, previously a popular feature of London musical life further produced the sanctity of the rehearsal room.

Granville Humphrey made a further connection between the respect in which Richter was held and his knowledge, his observations also confirming Richter’s economical use of body and movement:

His profound knowledge ensures respect for every word he utters, and effectually represses any tendency to ‘talk back’, even in the most irrepressible and self-opinionated performer. Then he is master of the technique of conducting, a detail some much less eminent conductors seem to think unworthy of serious attention … Here are no unnecessary movements, no Sousaisms, every gesture is significant and full of expression. … The right uses of wrist and forearm, and shoulder movements are continually exemplified. The left hand and arm are properly retained to indicate the more important entries and grades of expression. The beat is firm and clear. There is no sawing of the air with the baton, and the doctor uses his feet to stand on simply, not to raise dust. Energy is conserved both in respect of gesture and language.67

Other commentators were less precise in defining the cause of players’ esteem for Richter, drawing instead upon more general terms of respect and greatness, and again referencing Richter’s eye contact and reserved nature as key points. A typical example is H. Plunket Greene’s description of Richter from the point of view of fellow musicians and singers:

Anyone who has played or sung under Richter will recall the spell which that great man threw upon those who followed his beat. Massive, leonine, tranquil, he held them with the fire of his eye.68


Writer Arnold Bennet, having sat between the kettle drums and sidedrums at a rehearsal of Tchaikovsky’s Pathétique Symphony, reflected that Richter had “the air of a great man. He seems to exist in an inner world of his own, from which, however, he can recall himself instantly at will.” 69

Plunket Greene compared Richter’s reserved manner to that of his contemporaries, implying that it contributed to his superior musicality:

These were the days before conductors had acquired prima donna status; to Richter his music was all in all. Manns, fiery, with gloved hands and slightly effeminate beat useless to those unaccustomed to it, and Hallé, scholarly, gentle, and uninspiring, were supposed to be his only rivals. But Richter stood unrivalled. His very reserve breathed confidence and filled the air with inspiration. 70

The literature contains further information which deals more specifically with the process of conducting and speculation as to the source of his power. Engel’s comments that Richter “plays the orchestra as a pianist sits down and plays his instrument” echoed characteristic observations of two of the founders of modern conducting, Berlioz and Liszt. 71 The idea that a conductor “played” the orchestra like a soloist upon an instrument reflected a shift in approach to orchestral performance which Bebbington traces to Wagner’s conducting practices. He notes that although “tempo modifications and dynamic nuances became quite fashionable among solo instrumentalists of Hummel’s generation ... [a]mong conductors ...


71 “[He] plays the orchestra as a pianist sits down and plays his instrument, or, like a violinist, he places his left hand on the fingerboard called the band, and, with his baton as bow, overcomes all difficulties, sings all cantilenas, accelerating or retarding, increasing or diminishing the force from the utmost sonority to a whisper, the like of which was never head in St. James’s Hall”. Louis Engel, World, 14 May 1879. Quoted in: Fifield, True Artist and True Friend, 145. Engel was to repeat this observation in other reviews. See, for instance, “And he actually plays the orchestra with his hand, as a man would play a stringed instrument.” Louis Engel, World, 2 June 1880, page unknown. Quoted in: Fifield, True Artist and True Friend, 152.
these practices were almost unknown.” Wagner’s theoretical writings apply to conducting for the first time the principles of allegro-adagio distinction, dynamic nuance and tempo modification, which were commonplace practices in solo and vocal performance practice. Observations that he, and his theoretical descendants such as Richter, played the orchestra like an instrument can, therefore, be taken quite literally. It is evidence that the conductor now had sufficient control over the orchestra to use rubato and successfully negotiate tempo changes. More importantly, it reveals that the conductor could choose to do so, the rise in the status of orchestral music allowing it to be treated with the same aesthetics of phrasing and nuance as vocal and solo instrumental music. In articulating links between the conductor’s role and the performance practices of virtuosic soloists such as Liszt and Hummel, the conductor is raised to the status of the Romantic virtuoso, reflecting their newfound importance in the concert world.

Engel also linked the players’ esteem for Richter to his prodigious memory:

He led, moreover, all these scores by heart, never erring as to the entry of any instrument. This extraordinarily great feat of memory and ability fills the band with that respect so necessary to produce discipline; it is the combination of his grand conception of the masters, his indomitable energy which carries the band with him, and his unshakeable calm when he wishes to check their entrain; it is the conviction that he is their master ... which makes the orchestra attend to every movement and every degree of movement of Hans Richter.  

Critic and friend Hermann Klein thought Richter’s memorisation of scores contributed directly to his success in England, saying of Richter’s first concerts in London that his “feat of conducting not only Wagnerian fragments but Beethoven symphonies entirely from memory furnished an absolute novelty and created quite a sensation. Thenceforth, Hans

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Richter’s popularity in England was assured, and his concerts, given once, and sometimes twice, every year, became a regular feature in the economy of London musical life.\(^\text{75}\)

While there are certain practical considerations, both positive and negative, associated with this – the freeing up of eye contact versus the risk of memory lapses for instance – the act of memorisation was particularly significant for Richter in relation to Wagner. His feat of memorising Wagner’s opera scores from very early in his career is probably linked to his time working as Wagner’s copyist. He was able to perform the score from memory, not because he learnt it by rote, but because he was a close observer in the act of creation.\(^\text{76}\) The public’s admiration of his memory is puzzling, however, as the man whose music he championed was censured for conducting without a score, critic Davison calling Wagner’s decision to conduct from memory “dangerous” in the mid-1850s.\(^\text{77}\)

A large shift occurred in the space of two decades: by the time Richter took to the English podium without a score, the performance of music from memory was seen to enact the internal, cognitive nature of the late nineteenth century conductor’s role. Although many conductors before Richter were accused of charlatanism or showing off by performing from memory, it afforded Richter even greater esteem because it symbolised not showy audience-pleasing tactics, but deep knowledge and understanding of the music as a work beyond the written score.\(^\text{78}\) Or in more Wagnerian terms, his comprehension of the inner

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\(^\text{75}\) Hermann Klein, *Thirty Years of Musical Life in London, 1870-1900* (New York: Century, 1903), 106. Despite the plethora references to Richter’s feats of memorisation in the press, scholarly accounts are nonetheless inconsistent. Galkin’s *A History of Orchestral Conducting in Theory and Practice* states that “late nineteenth-century conductors such as Hans Richter ... continued to conduct from music most of the time” on page 523, but on page 615 reports that Richter “often conducted from memory, and in England, in 1877, directed all of Beethoven’s symphonies without score”. Galkin, *A History of Orchestral Conducting in Theory and Practice*, 523, 615.

\(^\text{76}\) “Wagner and Richter,” *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, vol. 34, issue 602 (1893): 209


\(^\text{78}\) Although conducting from memory is presently not uncommon, particularly in the performing of standard repertoire, its reception as a performance tradition throughout the history of modern conducting is varied. Two of Richter’s most influential predecessors, Berlioz and Mendelssohn preferred to conduct with a score,
poetic content was so complete in the minds of his audiences, that the score as a text was no longer strictly necessary.

In this sense it also contributed to the construction of Richter’s public image as an intellectual, whose work involves thought and knowledge, rather than physical skills. In addition, the act of memorisation, particularly of Wagner’s music, denoted his authority. It is in part through this process of authority born of apparent intuitive knowledge and understanding that the phenomenon of “interpretations” came about. It was no longer Wagner’s Die Meistersinger, but Richter’s Die Meistersinger which, due to his connection with the composer, demonstration of inherent knowledge and understanding through memorisation and the continued public personification of him as Wagnerian, came to be considered as the bench mark for correct interpretations of this work.\(^79\)

It is clear that Richter’s connection with Wagner exerted a considerable influence on the public’s visual reception of him. This had ramifications for his reception as a performer, his status as Wagner’s conduit granting his performances perceived authority and authenticity. The connection between the two men was reiterated consistently in written material and was referenced in portraits of Richter conducting, but the influence of this connection in non-conducting portraits of the conductor is less clear.

The public gained access to Richter through the medium of commercially available portraits, which generally portray him as being impassive and reserved. An undated portrait (Figure 22), from the Macnutt Album of Cartes-des-Visites, is typical of Richter’s photographic portraits.

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\(^{79}\) The subject of authority, in terms of infallible knowledge, was at the centre of Wagner’s conducting theory. Wagner himself used personal connections to back up his interpretations as a conductor, citing his relationship with influential singer and actress Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient, who performed the role of Leonore from Fidelio in the presence of Beethoven, as a claim to his own authority in interpreting a particular scene.
The portrait is posed simply, with Richter’s torso square to the viewer, his head turned in half-profile to the left. He is wearing a coat, underneath which is visible the collar of a shirt, and spectacles. His facial expression is neutral and impassive and, in stark contrast to the typical photographic portraits of twenty to thirty years earlier there are no additional props or attributes. While he wears a different style of coat to Jullien earlier in the century, it serves the same purpose: to represent the sitter’s status as a gentleman, and one, moreover, who conducts his business in the public eye.

Figure 22. *Hans Richter*, Carte-de-visite (enlarged). Macnutt Album (ca. Early 1880s), held by Royal College of Music (1994.3.30/30)

To modern eyes, the barren setting of the photograph is startling, as it gives the impression of there being nothing behind him. Moreover, the lack of clues, other than the jacket and the very fact that he is sitting for his portrait, give no obvious indication as to Richter’s social position, profession or vocation, or cultural background. He is disembodied in the
frame by the lack of referential material: not grounded physically by a visible chair, pillar or floor, and not grounded symbolically by an instrument, book, globe or other attribute. The overall impression is stark, but more than that, it is unbalancing for the viewer after the abundance and repetition of visual symbolism utilised in the photographic portraits of the previous generation. However, this was a normal trait of the carte-de-visite, due to the medium’s small size, which was best served by an uncluttered composition.

The simple construction of the portrait belies its significance, however, and this portrait might also serve as a prototype for a concurrent variation in other media. In photographic portraits with similar compositions to the carte-de-visite above, in which size was not necessarily a factor, the lack of symbolism is in itself defining of status. The sitter has sufficient status on his own that, unlike the myriad middle-class portrait subjects of his and the previous generation, he requires no attributes as proof thereof. The barren portrait setting can now be regarded not as something which is lacking in content, but rather a respectful setting with which to highlight the real content, the esteemed sitter. McCauley notes, however, that while this is a common trait in oil portraiture, the blank backgrounds of photographs were also influenced by the increasing uniformity of printed portraiture.80 Richter’s acknowledged fame and status as a sitter may have meant identification through attributes was unnecessary, but the pictorial style was also influenced by the medium itself.81

Secondly, the simplicity of the portrait and construction of the sitter within the frame draws attention directly to the sitter’s face. In this case Richter’s head is turned away from the viewer in the direction of his eye-line. Richter appears to be gazing thoughtfully into the distance and there is a subtle message of distance between the sitter and the viewer activated less by the angle of the head and more by the eye-line itself. The impression is that the sitter is unaware of the viewer, or perhaps indifferent to the attention, and possibly even unaware that his portrait is being taken, although we know that is not the case and


81 See also: Davison, “Studies in the Iconography of Franz Liszt,” 176.
that this pose is self-consciously adopted. His averted, yet direct eye-line informs us that, in mind at least, the sitter is elsewhere, and in the case of the Richter portrait, as there is no clue given as to where his thoughts may be, we must assume it is somewhere inaccessible to us.

Alan Davison notes that in the photographic portraits of Franz Liszt, the portraitists use established elements of the “artistic type” genre, including the sitter’s lack of engagement with the viewer, posed with a thoughtful gaze into the distance. In particular, he notes that in the absence of specific artistic attributes, such as a music score or instrument, these postural indicators are sufficient visual cues to communicate that the sitter is a creative type.\(^{82}\) It is through this evasion of connection with the viewer that portraits such as the carte-de-visite of Richter (Figure 22) find their potency and significance, and despite the simplicity, even crudeness, of the photograph, it is connected thematically and structurally to some of the most significant portraits of artistic personages of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The picture evokes not only the impression of aversion, a conscious act, but also of the unintentional act of unawareness. If we take as a general theme the premise that the sitter’s portrait is being taken in spite of his activity, whether he is aware of it or just indifferent, the unifying element between the two possibilities becomes apparent. The portraitist, and the viewer through him, captures the sense of a private activity. We are watching him think, and there are no clues for the layman viewer as to what his thoughts might contain.

Printmaker and painter (1859-1921) William Strang travelled to Bayreuth to draw Richter. On the back of Strang’s letter of confirmation, Richter wrote: “after a not quite successful attempt on 21 July, Mr Strang drew a good picture in a day, on 23 July 1912; In all it took him perhaps somewhat more than three hours.” An etching of it was issued in December 1912; limited editions of 75 signed proofs were sold at 6 guineas each (half price to Wagner society members).\(^{83}\)


\(^{83}\) Fifield, True Artist and True Friend, 442.
The contrast Strang achieves between the detail of Richter’s head and the very lightly sketched torso, which fades to nothing, is striking. The viewer’s eye is drawn to Richter’s face, and deeply furrowed brow. A comparison with a photographic portrait by H. H. Hay Cameron (Figure 24), which shows the same profile of Richter’s face with no furrow evident, strongly suggests his forehead was line free when at rest. The furrow Strang depicts therefore implies intense concentration or thought. Although the torso is indistinct, the lapel of the jacket, and upturned shirt collar indicate that Strang has drawn Richter in concert dress. The level of concentration evident on his face, and subsequent focus on his cerebral activity therefore becomes an element of his performance activity.
In addition to reading cultural and racial information from Richter’s appearance and behaviour, some accounts make a connection between Richter’s appearance and idealised personality traits. Granville Humphrey, writing for The Musical Herald in 1906 found Richter’s appearance symbolised his authority, noting in particular that “(h)is leonine head indicates great power.”  

Richter’s thoughts, which we can assume were probably musical given our knowledge from other sources of his activities and reason for fame, are not portrayed as the ecstasy of creative endeavour, but rather as calm, intellectual contemplation. This endorses the image of Richter as an idealised Wagnerian type, as it is consistent with the dominant rhetoric regarding the authoritative, interpretive role of conductors which evolved from the theories of Berlioz, Wagner and Liszt.  

physical characteristics and a more generalised European authoritative figure. Richter’s purported stolidity is often matched with descriptions of his broad back, solid shoulders and stocky body. Consider the following extract from an interview with music writer Filson Young in *Saturday Review*, 30 October 1909.\(^85\)

> There is a massive plebeian impassiveness in the very round of his back that suggests the peace and security, not only of the individual, but of a whole race of men. One might find grander terms for it, and yet do him less justice than by describing his principal attitude as an immense stolidity; stolidity allied to a prodigious slow momentum or power of going unsensitively [*sic*] on to the goal he has in view.\(^86\)

The word ‘Barbarossa’, meaning ‘red beard’, recurs throughout Richter’s reception and clearly derives from Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, a leader of the Crusades in the twelfth century. It was not uncommon for conductors to be likened to legendary leaders, although usually in the nineteenth century it was Napoleon or Nelson who attracted such metaphors, and it was most often their leadership qualities which initiated the comparison. The public’s association between Richter and Frederick Barbarossa was at least partially due to their Germanic background, but also to their physical verisimilitude. This description of Frederick could well be referring to Richter:

> His hair is golden, curling a little above his forehead ... His eyes are sharp and piercing, his beard reddish, his lips delicate ... Modesty rather than anger causes him to blush frequently. His shoulders are rather broad, and he is strongly built.\(^87\)

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\(^85\) Filson Young was variously a social commentator, music writer, photographer, novelist, war correspondent, musician and soldier.

\(^86\) Filson Young, *Saturday Review*, 30 October 1909.

Richter’s Germanic qualities dominated public perceptions of his cultural background, despite the fact he was Hungarian by birth. But he also developed a more generally continental image: his reported trustworthiness, authority and leadership skills also led to his reputation as a Greek “Olympian”\textsuperscript{88}, an Italian “Generalissimo”\textsuperscript{89} and “a fair-haired Viking”.\textsuperscript{90}

The superimposition of European, and particularly Germanic stereotypes was a corollary of Richter’s podium behaviour and conducting gesture. His performances of Beethoven, for instance, were thought to be “solid German, absolutely consistent, and only \textit{just} dramatic enough to be exciting” according to Sir Adrian Boult, establishing a perceived link between Richter’s impassive gesture and stolid physicality on the one hand, and an authentically German approach to music making on the other.\textsuperscript{91} A reason for this association between Richter’s conducting and stereotypically Germanic qualities may be that his conducting style and philosophy bore the trademark signs of the Austro-German conducting tradition, which was influenced by Wagner’s conducting theory, and which broadened the focus of the audience’s respect for the score to include the conductor as the intermediary between composer and audience.

The linking of an overarching musical style and understanding with the German national spirit was largely politically influenced, but also reflective of the fact that the Austro-German compositional output had been both immense in size and influence for roughly two hundred years. The unique intellectualism of German music had been noted before the modern conception of nationalism had been formulated, notably by the English writer

\textsuperscript{88} Charles Graves, \textit{Spectator}, 29 November 1902, page unknown.


\textsuperscript{90} Stanford, \textit{Pages from an Unwritten Diary}, 169.

Charles Burney in the 1770s.\textsuperscript{92} In 1811 Weber wrote of Bach’s keyboard works, for at the time he would have had little evidence of any other of that composer’s works, “Sebastian Bach’s characteristic attitude, in spite of its rigidity, was clearly romantic and fundamentally German.”\textsuperscript{93} “Nationalism in German music” Raynor states, “was never a conscious effort to find a national voice, for the national voice already existed.”\textsuperscript{94} In the mid-nineteenth century music was seen as the “outward and audible sign of the essential cultural unity of the German people.”\textsuperscript{95}

Conductors of the Austro-Germanic tradition, and Richter was England’s primary example, were revered because of their supposed comprehension of a creative process beyond the average musician or concert-goer, and were judged on the proximity of their performances to the composer’s intentions. Their reputation as authoritative interpreters afforded them a status closer to the original composer than their time-beating predecessors and this increase in stature and public attention instigated an interest in conductors as unique and admired individuals, positing them within the boundaries of creative genius, rather than the more lowly ranks of time-beater. By Richter’s generation, the role of the conductor embodied both co-creative and re-creative aspects. Conducting was now a specialised profession undertaken by non-composers, and valued the authentic reproduction of the score. However, one conductor’s interpretation could be recognised as better than another’s, and numerous testimonies suggested that this respectful re-creation was most successful when it incorporated the conductor’s own spirit and musicality.

The progressiveness and long-term dominance of the Austro-German conductors who followed Wagner, such as Richter, can be accounted for in various ways and it is likely that


\textsuperscript{94} Raynor, \textit{Music and Society since 1815}, 131.

\textsuperscript{95} Raynor, \textit{Music and Society since 1815}, 133.
their conducting style was unique within Europe and the British Isles. Raymond Holden, in *The Virtuoso Conductors* (2005), attests that central European conductors’ “homogeneity of approach, their sense of purpose and their unique relationship with the music that they performed set them apart from the other schools of conducting that emerged during the same period” due to the fact that their conducting tradition “grew out of the music itself”. As most of them were successful or aspirational composers, they “saw the recreative process as a direct consequence of their creative activities.”

This was manifest in a way similar to the pragmatic conducting doctrine Berlioz espoused, which related more closely to the defence of his compositions than to a more general view of conducting practices. In other words, the techniques and mindsets of many conductors may have been most influenced by a wish to control and improve the performances of their own works in particular.

The tension in creative power between composer and conductor caused by the split of conducting and composing duties directly affected the rise in conductors’ authority, as the widening gap in duties between composers and performers granting unprecedented significance to the written score as a textual artefact. This is because the disengagement of composers from the rehearsal and performance process led to a greater need for more detailed and specific instructions. Bowen locates the conception of the fixed, immutable work in the nineteenth century, stating that during that period, the “model for a musical work . . . was based upon Beethoven’s “finished” scores and the letzter Hand concept: the idea that an artist creates a final fixed and immortal text.”

However, he recognises that the inception of such an ideology was pragmatic, as Beethoven and his contemporaries “lived at a time when composers were first learning to protect themselves from performers

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who freely changed the score. Emphasizing the ‘text’ was an antidote to the virtuoso excesses of the bel canto era.”

For conductors charged with reading the score and bringing it to performance, their role changed partly to one of re-creation. The quest for authoritative interpretations was evidence of a perceived hierarchy of versions of the score, which took precedence over the conductor’s personal taste and the audience’s entertainment. In Wagner’s theory, however, he makes it clear that in order to produce the most authoritative interpretation, the conductor must think as the composer; he advocates that the conductor perform his duties as a co-creator.

Bebbington concurs with Holden that the conductors who actively re-created or co-created the scores they conducted usually had aspirations as composers. Those he cites include Wagner, Von Bülow, Mottl, Strauss, Mahler, Liszt and Weingartner, who are known to have created their own editions of existing works, including making transcriptions, rescoring, and altering parts. “For these men,” he contends, “the end of composition and the beginning of performance were not easily separated.”

Arthur Nikisch, one of the next generation of Wagnerian disciples following Richter, wrote that the modern conductor “must create anew and therein lies the independent and creative nature of his art. . . . Once I have made a piece of music part of me, I can only build it up again from the beginning – but I must follow my own conviction, otherwise it will not be a reconstruction of integrity.”

Adding sound effects and augmenting the orchestration à la Jullien and his contemporaries was no longer a respectable option, but in seeking the truth of the text, it was felt that the conductor must reconceive it as a composer, not just read the surface elements of the score.

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Richter was in the vanguard of a new type of conductor: musicians whose sole professional outlet was conducting and who had technical mastery of an instrument, in Richter’s case, the french horn. He never expressed any desire to be a composer, although he did on occasion alter parts for reasons of balance, weak performers or in accordance with his memory of Wagner’s original wishes, which were often misrepresented in poor copies.  

In this way Richter would not have had many of the obvious ideological impulses which plagued Berlioz and Wagner’s conducting and which appear to have influenced their conducting careers and theories so decisively. His approach to a score was closer to that espoused by Eduard Hanslick who considered a composition to be “a finished work of art, irrespective of its performance.” However, the spirit of ‘interpretation’ as a concept involving both an understanding of the composer’s intentions and an innate sense of musical style was at the centre of the Wagnerian conducting of which Richter was a disciple. Moreover, Wagner believed that pan-German conductors were the rightful inheritors, by virtue of their ethnicity, of the maintenance and transmission of the mainly Austro-German canon.

For conductors in this milieu – and composers conducting their own works – the emphasis, and indeed responsibility, naturally fell to bringing out that particular Austro-German spirit, which they believed characterised the music. For Wagner, the ability of foreign conductors like Frenchman François Antoine Habeneck (1781-1849), whose performances he was surprised to enjoy, to perform great German works was not based entirely on accuracy and fidelity. The performances he attended of Beethoven’s symphonies by Habeneck and the Conservatoire Concerts Society Orchestra in Paris, 1839, were of a high quality and expressed something of what he recognised as the German spirit, “[y]et when one listens to this or that enthusiast airing the various opinions, ideas and conceits which a symphony has suggested to him, one realises at once that the German genius is very far

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102 On 14 February 1879, for instance, Richter conducted a cut version of Götterdämmerung in Vienna. Fifeild reports that the cuts were provided by Wagner due to his understanding of the difficulties in performing the full work outside of Bayreuth. Fifleid, True Artist and True Friend, 140.

from being completely grasped.”

Far more than fidelity to the score was required, in Wagner’s opinion: only a truly German conductor could attain an understanding of the German spirit within the music. But Richter was Hungarian-born, and had no aspirations to be a composer. Nonetheless, when a young Igor Stravinsky saw Richter conducting, he later recalled that Richter “belonged to that rare type of conductor whose sole ambition is to penetrate the spirit and the aim of the composer, and to submerge himself in the score.”

Writers for The Musical Times and Musical Standard granted him quasi-divine status as a musical progenitor, stating, respectively, that “[t]he manner in which every point . . . seemed instinct with a new life under the conductor’s baton will not be easily forgotten by the spellbound listeners” and that “[u]nder the baton of a conductor such as Richter a work grows before one’s very eyes.”

The Musical Times writers were of a similar opinion. One writer’s comment was indicative of the creative responsibility attributed to Richter as a conductor:

> It may safely be said that never was the meaning of Wagner so clearly revealed in the choral portions of Lohengrin as on this occasion, and never were the hearers so deeply impressed with its poetical significance.... Every shade of colour was so minutely attended to that it appeared as if we were listening to a new work.... We have the satisfaction of knowing that Wagner’s own intentions were in every case

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fully realised, and cannot but be gratified that Herr Richter was resolved to assert his independence.\textsuperscript{108}

It has already been shown above that Richter was regarded by the English as quintessentially Germanic, and may have thought of himself as German given that he left Hungary at the age of 10. It was through his purportedly Germanic qualities, authoritative manner and exemplary conducting technique that Richter gained a reputation as a consummate interpreter. Accordingly, his performances of the works of the two most popular German composers of the time, Beethoven and Wagner, came to be considered as authoritative interpretations, as his personal and racial qualities afforded him greater insight into the composers’ intentions. In a review of the 1888 Birmingham Festival, Herbert Thompson called Richter “the greatest of living Beethoven conductors”:

...we have never heard so magnificent and perfect a performance even under Herr Richter’s baton . . . . all rendered with that complete insight into the composer’s meaning, which is the great secret of Herr Richter’s wonderful success in his interpretation of the Bonn master’s works.\textsuperscript{109}

But it was Richter’s Wagnerian interpretation in particular that drew the greatest praise from audience members and critics, citing perfection, accuracy and realisation of intention as the areas in which his performances were distinguished. The following, from the \textit{Sunday Times}, is typical:

There is only one great, one incomparable Wagnerian conductor in the world, and his name is Hans Richter. Give him the right material, with the time to mould it in, and he will bring you forth a model that shall reproduce and interpret the ideas of

\textsuperscript{108} “Her Majesty’s Theatre” in \textit{The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular}, vol 21, issue 449 (1 July 1880): 340

the master more closely, more accurately, more amazingly than that of any other surviving discipline of the original school.¹¹⁰

Richter arrived in England at a time during which the role of the conductor was in the process of redefinition in Europe. As one of the first Austro-German conductors to decisively make his mark upon the English concert scene, he came to be representative of that school of conducting and its associated ideologies. In particular, he became a Wagnerian icon in England due, in varying degrees, to his continuous programming of Wagner’s works, his perceived adherence to many Wagnerian principles of conducting and his personal involvement with the composer.

Much of the written material relating to Richter focuses on, or is significantly influenced by, his personal connection with Wagner, particularly the time he spent in residence with the composer’s family in Tribschen working as a copyist from October 1866. The significance of this period in his life goes much further than the ensuing friendship with Wagner, and Wagner’s trust in him as a conductor.¹¹¹ Firstly, Richter’s authoritative conducting of Wagner’s operas, Die Meistersinger in particular, and his prodigious memory of Wagner’s scores later in his career are directly linked to his Tribschen period and the work he completed there as Wagner’s copyist. Moreover, the painstaking accuracy of his copies would no doubt have instilled a reverence for the score. It is highly likely that through his friendship with the Wagner family he absorbed many of the theoretical bases upon which Wagner’s music was founded. If in some ways the two actually differed, the domestic proximity to Wagner that Richter enjoyed established a conceptual link between

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¹¹⁰ *Sunday Times*, 10 May 1903, page unknown.

¹¹¹ In 1868, while working as Hans von Bülow’s assistant for *Die Meistersinger* in Munich, Richter was able to demonstrate his knowledge of the work and efficiency in performing under duress when he volunteered to replace an ailing singer at the last moment. Wagner was both appreciative of Richter’s initiative and impressed by his knowledgeable performance, though not in the least bit surprised that Richter was able to accomplish such a feat, stating that “astonishing a deed as it was, it did not surprise me in the least for I know that in your place I would have done exactly the same”. Richard Wagner to Hans Richter, 21 July 1868. Translated in: Fifield, *True Artist and True Friend*, 27.
them in the public imagination. This ensured that Richter’s interpretations of Wagner’s music were received as unarguably authoritative.

Many critics and musicians believed Richter acted as Wagner’s conduit, revealing not only the strong conceptual link between the two men in the public imagination, but also an integral aspect of contemporary conceptions regarding the role of the conductor. In addition to the plethora of references to Wagner, his ideologies, music and conducting technique, the imagery of Richter incorporates pictorial elements and themes which reaffirm the connection between the two men.

Wagner’s writing on conducting reflects many of the changes which were happening at the time in continental Europe and which Richter conclusively made a reality in England. Key Wagnerian concepts recur throughout the Richter literature: that a good conductor’s interpretations are right rather than unique or entertaining; that previous performances lacked connection to, and conception of, the music as a distinct work, inhibiting their ability to reveal the truth of the music; and that it was his intimate knowledge of Wagner the man that informed Richter’s interpretations, implying that no amount of study by a stranger to Wagner could produce such correct results.

Wagner’s significance in relation to Richter goes far beyond Richter’s adherence to a specific school of conducting, however. The connection between the two men, and the underlying principles outlined in Wagner’s conducting theory permeate almost every aspect of the conductor’s visuality. Contemporary anecdotes are evidence that for many English audience members, critics and musicians, Richter and Wagner were almost inseparable in the mind’s eye. Richter’s portraits are saturated with pictorialisms indicative of the Wagnerian conception of the role of the conductor. The technical and physical aspects of Richter’s visuality expressed through his portraiture and reception, when taken together, contribute to his perceived role as a conductor, and reinforce the public perception of Richter as the “type of the true Wagnerian”.
5. The self-conscious patriot: Henry Wood (1869-1944)

Henry Joseph Wood (3 March 1869 – 19 August 1944) was the first conductor since Jullien to maintain a Promenade Season for an extended period of time.¹ His reign at the promenades, (1895-1944), was so considerable that his name remained attached to the series after his death. Moreover, the period during which Wood conducted the Promenade concerts is significant, as his tenure included five monarchs and spanned the South African war and both world wars. In addition to his contract with the Promenades, Wood maintained a demanding schedule with Saturday afternoon concerts, Sunday concerts and various regional festivals, and was the first English conductor to tour extensively overseas.

Several facets of Wood’s highly successful career are significant, not least the fact that he was the first English-born career conductor. This was an immense achievement given the bias toward foreign conductors in preceding generations and the lack of any formal training establishments for conductors in England during his youth.² Moreover, Wood came from a lower-middle class home with only an amateur interest in music-making. Henry Wood senior was an Oxford Street pawnbroker. His wife, Martha Morris, was the daughter of a farming family in Montgomeryshire. Both enjoyed amateur music-making, he as a singer and cellist and she as a singer³ His early musical proclivity, therefore, manifested itself independently of opportunity borne of wealth or family connections in the professional music world. After a long period of low musical regard internationally, England found in Wood its first native conductor of international renown. Favourable reviews by foreign critics such as Otto Lessmann (1844-1918) noted that, in conjunction with Elgar, he represented a renaissance of musical productivity and talent in England:

¹ He was knighted in 1911, and was known thenceforth as Sir Henry Wood.
³ Jacobs, Henry J. Wood, 4-5.
In Mr Wood the English capital has now found a young native conductor who carries his vocation considerably beyond the late Sir Arthur Sullivan. If he is sometimes more animated in his movements than seems necessary when he has a well-trained orchestra before him, still he communicates a truly artistic spirit to the players, and by the help of his strong musical perception carries the band along with him, so that they follow wheresoever he leads, drawn, as it were, by the spell of his will and desire. Here we have a born conductor, a man with sensitive and vibrating nerves, who has made an intimate study of each work he performs, and breathes into them all a new tone-life ... Two personalities now represent a new epoch in English musical life – Edward Elgar as composer and Henry J. Wood as conductor.4

Literature by contemporaries about Wood at the end of his career affirms his status as one of the preeminent English conductors of his generation, and highlights his apparently quintessential English personality traits. Veteran critic Ernest Newman cites Wood’s time at the helm of the Promenades as a particularly significant achievement, and notes that he “first made orchestral conducting a whole-time occupation for a British-born musician, and by concentrating on that art paved the way for others to distinguish themselves in it ... He may safely be described as the most popular musical figure of his time.”5 Newman’s obituary of Wood in the Sunday Times remembered his pedagogical contribution as “a great teacher of music” who had “raised the whole musical taste of his country by bringing great music to the people.” An obituary in The Musical Times by W. R. A. closed with the seemingly simple statement that Wood “was a great Englishman.”6

In England, the patriotic spirit attached to Wood’s public persona was undoubtedly influenced by his connection with the Promenade concerts, and the characteristic features which they adopted under his reign. English musical taste and concert behaviour, among


other things, was influenced by a projection of national identity in the early part of the
twentieth century. Lawrence Poston notes that “[t]he Proms, even when they did not
feature Victorian or even British music, constituted a distinctive and lasting ritual of
British Victorian musical culture.” Poston goes on to suggest that Wood’s choice of
repertoire was less influential in this regard than the concert format itself, which was “a
source of national pride for the democratic form of their musical consumption rather than
for the music that Wood chose to emphasize.”

The distinction is significant, as Wood’s programming policy often elicited controversy,
due to a perceived marginalisation of English compositions. Those that he programmed
were usually smaller works, fell under the diminutive category of novelties, or “appealed to
an earlier Shakespearean or semi-mythical Merrie England.” Wood’s preference for
lighter English music was not necessarily a sign of un-patriotic sentiment, however. Wood
and Newman were well aware that the success of the Promenades rested on their
accessible, popular nature, and this programming trend was probably in aid of survival in a
market hostile to local music, rather than evidence of a strong personal indisposition.
Moreover, Wood intentionally limited local content early in his career, adding it by degrees
as the audience became more receptive to new music. Poston argues that an investigation
of the programming sheds light on “the understanding of English music Wood’s attitudes
tended to inculcate in his audiences.” He also recognises that such a study requires
examination of much broader problems, in particular the role of “nationality, gender,

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11 Poston, “Henry Wood,” 413.
economics, and the cultivation of musical taste” in the decision-making, and how the Promenade programming compares with Wood’s repertoire for other concert series.\(^\text{12}\)

If any repertoire bias did exist throughout Wood’s career, it was his regular programming of Russian music, although he recognised that this repertoire required a sophisticated audience. In a letter to Rosa Newmarch, Wood’s friend, colleague and early biographer, dated 2 July 1897, he responded to her suggestion of some Russian repertoire:

> I have had those works mentioned kindly in your letter for some time in my mind, and I shall certainly do them, but I don’t care to do too much Russian music just yet, as I am afraid my audiences are not quite educated up to it, but give time and I shall do so, and I think if we are to have originality in music, I don’t know where else to go for it, as I consider it very original and always splendidly orchestrated.\(^\text{13}\)

Newmarch contested that Wood’s sometimes controversial programming was entirely governed by his estimation for composers’ work; if the piece merited a first, second or even third hearing, then he would give it. Conversely, if after performing a piece he deemed it unworthy of his audience, he would not maintain it in his repertoire, even if there was pressure placed upon him to do so for reasons of national sentiment.\(^\text{14}\)

Wood and the impresario Robert Newman maintained some existing Promenade traditions, and established some of their own, to further popularise the concert series. For instance, the customary inclusion of elaborate greenery and water fountains, and the availability of refreshments, established as early as Louis Jullien, continued during Wood’s time at the helm. Like Jullien, Wood (and Newman) understood the importance of the concert as a sight, as well as a site. A concert notice for the first concerts over which Wood presided, advertised the inclusion of “[h]andsome palms and shrubs, with tasteful arrangements of electrical fairy lights” to enhance the visual appeal of the performance space, as well as

\(^{12}\) Poston, “Henry Wood,” 403.

\(^{13}\) Poston, “Henry Wood,” 407.

\(^{14}\) Newmarch, Henry J. Wood, 31-33.
allowing the social lubricants of smoking and walking. At some performances, moving pictures were shown in an adjoining hall during the interval (for an extra fee), extending the earlier tradition of spectacle and entertainment, albeit by way of more modern technology.

Under Wood, the Promenade concerts underwent substantial changes in programming and character. In 1838, *The Musical World* had noted that the primary source of the Promenades’ popularity lay “in the elegant perambulators themselves, who wander in pairs, finished by the Stultz and the St. James Street Milliners, and arranged to orchestral accompaniments by Strauss and Musard.” However, towards the end of the century, “promenade concerts became less a venue for social display than an attempt to bring concert music within the range of the pocketbooks of the middle classes.” It was not merely the aim of bringing music to the masses that motivated Wood, but more precisely, bringing good music to them. Thomas Burke, after a lifetime of Promenade attendance under Wood, surmised that “[h]e cleverly led us on by degrees so that, speaking for myself, I would not today turn out to hear the programme I heard with such delight at the first of my Promenades in 1901”.

The musical press also noticed a change in the content and atmosphere of the concerts. An article in the *Monthly Musical Record* on 1 November 1895, remarked that under Wood, the “concerts have been as thoroughly respectable as (say) a [Hans] Richter or a [Felix] Möttl Concert, though there may not have been so many persons of a high social position there.” Later still, Promenaders came to enjoy the relaxed atmosphere of the concerts, the

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15 Jacobs, *Henry J. Wood,* 38. The first Promenade concert Wood conducted was held on Saturday 10 August, 1895 at 8pm, in the Queen’s Hall.


philosopher C. E. M. Joad recalling, “[y]ou could go in shorts and an open-necked shirt, you could go in sandals and bare legs, you could go complete with rucksack – I often did – you could eat and drink and you could smoke; the Proms, indeed, were made glorious by their absence of restrictions and taboos.”

Joad’s observations mirror the noted change in atmosphere from one of social display to democratic musical consumption, both being evidence of a larger shift in English society away from the social etiquette of the Victorian era. The history of England’s national identification is characterised by rifts which cut through cultures, geographies and social strata. The question of precisely who is English, as opposed to British, remains problematic. Due to the onset of world war, the early twentieth century enabled a boundary-crossing sense of patriotism and camaraderie in the British Isles, during which the idea of an English national spirit is considered to have been at its peak. The careful cultivation through World War I propaganda of the English as “little men, not John Bulls, essentially human-scale, kind and likeable, their patriotism contrasted to national bluster” contrasted with earlier stereotypes of valour. Furthermore, George Santayana, in his Soliloquies, wrote that “if we had to admire [England] only for its conquering commerce, its pompous noblemen, or its parliamentary government ... There is, or was, a beautifully healthy England hidden from most foreigners; the England of the countryside and of the poets, domestic, sporting, gallant, boyish, of a sure and delicate heart.” The relaxed


23 Mandler, The English National Character, x. This is, of course, a generalised view. Ireland and Scotland’s problematic relationship with England did not resolve itself during the war years, and persists for many people still.

24 Mandler, The English National Character, 188.

atmosphere experienced by Promenade concert patrons reflected this, and Wood’s reception as a jovial, gently patriotic artisan fitted perfectly within this trope.

The salient facets of his visuality almost exclusively pertain to his personal character and nationality. Wood was not only the first English career conductor; he was more specifically the first English conductor to be celebrated domestically. His Englishness became a pivotal part of his public persona, contributing to, and reflecting, contemporary ideologies about the English national identity, particularly in the war years. With this in mind, one would assume that Wood’s iconographic legacy would project a sense of patriotism and a clear sense of nationhood. A photographic portrait from late in his life seems to affirm this conclusion.

Figure 25. Unknown photographer, *Sir Henry Wood in the ruins of the bombed Queen’s Hall*, (May 1941). BBC Photo Library

The wartime image shows Wood standing atop the rubble of the bombed Queen’s Hall, home of the Promenade concerts, in May 1941. Jenny Doctor and David Wright’s “The Proms: a New History” states the bombing occurred on the night of 10-11 May 1941, and that “the photographic image of Henry Wood standing in the ruins became a powerful
symbol of defiant survival.”26 Wood’s most recent biographer, Arthur Jacobs concurs that the “photograph which shows the bare-headed Wood inspecting the ruins ... became famous and emblematic. He was himself the incarnation of musical survival.”27 His pose is relaxed, his eye line raised and directed toward the light source. He is positioned at the centre of the portrait in a full-length profile, at the point of intersection between various lines, angles and geometric shapes, created by the assortment of debris and upright remains. As noted by a music critic at the time, the ruins resembled a Roman amphitheatre. As the central focus of the image, Wood resembles a heroic actor on a stage, the wall behind acting as a backdrop, the rubble under his feet a dramatic set, and the light hitting his face producing the effect of a spotlight.

It certainly makes for compelling viewing: the English-born figurehead of the most democratic, well-attended, and widely broadcast concert series in the Commonwealth, standing atop the destruction of war in a courageous attitude of defiance. However, the image is more complex than this surface reading suggests. Moreover, when viewed in conjunction with other of Wood’s portraits, his patriotic public persona becomes more equivocal.

The first thing to consider when viewing the image is that it had been drastically altered from the original. The original photograph included two BBC officials, John Gough, BBC Pacific Programmes Organiser, on the right, and Hubert Clifford, BBC Empire Music Director, on the left (Figure 26). Regrettably, the BBC has no record of the circumstances surrounding the airbrushing of the original photograph. Nor, despite several biographers and historians claiming that the image of Wood on the ruins was an iconic image of wartime hope and defiance, is there any record of the photograph’s reproduction. For this reason, we can only speculate as to why Gough and Clifford were erased.

It seems a potent and potentially controversial editing move, perhaps illustrating the reality of Wood’s unstable relationship with the BBC, who by this point owned the rights to the


Promenade concerts and negotiated the terms of Wood’s BBC-based work. It could, therefore, have been the BBC’s attempt to pacify Wood’s ego, which had recently taken some substantial blows from men like Gough and Clifford themselves who sought to limit his activities. Alternatively, Wood may have had some part in the decision to alter the image. He had, after all, kept the Proms going throughout the war without the BBC’s support, relying instead on an independent financial source when the BBC temporarily retracted its funding. The image could well have been a symbolic act of defiance on Wood’s part against the broadcaster. A third possibility is that a newspaper or magazine made the change to produce a more eloquent image for propaganda purposes. Bramwell Tovey suggests the plausibility of this in his discussion of the image in *The Cambridge Companion to Conducting*, although without evidence of the image’s reproduction in the media, this is impossible to verify.  

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 26.** Unknown photographer, Sir Henry Wood (centre) with John Gough (right, BBC Pacific Programmes Organiser) and Hubert Clifford (left, BBC Empire Music Director) in the ruins of the bombed Queen’s Hall, (May 1941). BBC Photo Library

If the circumstances and function of the image are not easily defined, its form and content are. It falls within the larger genre of war photographs and, even more specifically, 

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photographs of London during the World War II Blitz. The Blitz images deviate from general war photographs in some important ways. Firstly, war photographs are generally taken by a correspondent in the battle field, and sent back to civilian territory for dissemination. The Blitz photographs differ from this primarily through the fact that they are taken on home soil, for local viewing. They do not show the battlefield from a safe distance: The Luftwaffe’s technology, and in particular its use of light on the underbelly of its planes in a way analogous to a camera flash, brought warfare to civilian territory. The Blitz photographs recorded that atrocity for the eyes of those in the midst of it, and were a potent form of propaganda. Retrospectively, they function as one of the first comprehensive pictorial records of a war.

Although England, and in particular the Ministry of Information, produced a large amount of propaganda during both wars, many people were uncomfortable about its use, not least because it was strongly identified as a typically German tactic.29 As a result of this, and of the fact that in this war, as opposed to World War I, there was no shortage of recruits, the propaganda produced for the people at home idealised the “people’s war”, and attempted to inspire a spirit of tenacity and salt-of-the-earth courage. This was achieved mainly through the press, photographic imagery, and the film industry.30 The figurehead for many of these efforts, in spirit if not in person, was Winston Churchill who is seen in a typical image during this period of the war, inspecting the ruins of the Guildhall (Figure 27).31

The form of these images is consistent: they present scenes of devastation, where once a well-loved or renowned building or buildings stood. The theatricality of the images comes


about through the distinction of the horizontal and vertical planes created by the flattened building in the foreground and the upright remains surrounding them. It creates the effect of a stage with backdrop and sometimes even a proscenium arch. The recent view at the site of the former New York Trade Center produces the same effect visually and, particularly for New Yorkers, emotionally.\textsuperscript{32}

![Figure 27. Unknown photographer, Winston and Clementine Churchill visiting the smoking remains of the Guildhall following a night of German bombing of the City of London, (Dec 1940). © IWM](image)

The other dominant element in Blitz photographs, particularly those involving people, is the blithe disregard for the surrounding devastation. Churchill inspects the Guildhall ruins with mild curiosity, the people around him looking more excited than distraught. The press reiterated this idea, instilling optimism, and appealing to the English national character to go on with life as normally as possible, often with an element of humour, publishing photographs provided by the British War Office such as the iconic image of a milkman.

cheerily making his daily delivery while firemen extinguish flames in the rubble behind him.

Wood’s photograph in the ruins of the Queen’s Hall conforms to this pictorial type in form and content. The construction of the image highlights the rubble of the destroyed building, and his upturned head, hand on hip and confident stance in partial profile communicate temerity in the face of loss. Furthermore, he was already a potent wartime symbol in London, having made a significant and widely publicised stand against the changes to daily life brought about by war, by insisting that the Promenade concerts persevere, with or without BBC support. Many reminiscences from concertgoers recall blackouts mid-performance, and the often light-hearted, improvised performances under Wood’s direction, which kept them entertained until they could safely leave the following morning. Millie Panter-Downes, a journalist for the New Yorker, recalled a black-out affected concert on 26 August 1940, at the end of which, “members of the symphony orchestra obliged with solos and the indefatigable audience filled in with community singing and amateur talent until the all-clear came, around three.”

In terms of the image’s subject, Sir Henry Wood, the image and the patriotic sentiment it portrays, prove problematic when placed in the context of Wood’s entire iconographic representation. A photographic portrait by E. W. Histed (Figure 28) dates from around the turn of the century and the particular print reproduced here is inscribed “Faithfully Yours, Henry J Wood.” It shows Wood in a half length profile, with his left side facing the camera. He wears a suit jacket with a large, spotted neckerchief made of silk. His facial hair is worn in a style often associated with a conductor for whom he had the highest regard, Arthur Nikisch, as well as other European figures such as Tsar Nikolaj II. The background is indistinct and slightly mottled, with no visible props or furnishings.

33 Quoted in: Jacobs, Henry J. Wood, 350.

A signed photographic portrait (Figure 29) taken in 1902 at the Sheffield Festival and a photograph by Hollyer, published in the frontispiece of Newmarch’s biography in 1904 (Figure 30), feature the same spotted neckerchief and slightly unruly hair, with the addition of a satirical musical reference in the Sheffield portrait.

Figure 30. Frederick Hollyer, Henry Wood, Photograph reproduced in Newmarch, *Henry J. Wood*, (1904), frontispiece.
Wood projected the same image, including identical clothing, in his earliest posed podium portrait (Figure 31). There is a more obvious suggestion of the practical component of Wood’s position in this image than in the other early portraits, as it is posed in situ, rather than in a studio and clearly shows the details of his (deserted) surroundings. He is posed simply, without the common affectation of assuming a conducting pose for the camera or portraitist.

![Figure 31. Unknown photographer, Henry Wood, Queens Hall podium, (1903). Originally published in The Tatler. Reproduced in Jacobs, Henry J. Wood: Maker of the Proms, no page number](image)

Contemporary descriptions confirm that the image presented in these, and nearly every other early portrait of Wood, is an accurate depiction of him at this time in his life. The wavy hair, pointed beard and large, spotted tie recur throughout every facet of Wood’s early iconography, including the caricatures. This publicly disseminated image differs
considerably from contemporary portraits of his colleagues, in which they were generally depicted as conservatively dressed businessmen or academics, with distinct props and scenery to affect the interior of an office or study.

Wood’s stylised facial hair and hairstyle provoked numerous comparisons to Arthur Nikisch by a wide range of commentators. Wood was an admirer of Nikisch’s conducting, stating that “no other conductor has ever been so endowed with musical gifts as he.”

But it is simplistic to assume that Wood’s personal style was merely a shallow impersonation of a respected colleague. His choices of attire are significant, not so much as links to Nikisch in particular, but as more subtly continental elements, differentiating him from his English colleagues.

The sum effect of these pictorial elements is that Wood appears conspicuously foreign-looking, an impression confirmed by countless comments from friends, colleagues and critics throughout this early period. Queen Victoria herself most famously articulated the effect of Wood’s appearance on his contemporaries when she asked him “Are you quite English, Mr Wood?”

Wood’s noticeably foreign appearance fell within broader discussions of his “Slavonic spirit”, strengthened by his frequent, and unprecedented, programming of Russian repertoire. Newmarch was one of the first to articulate this conception of Wood’s visuality. She noted that his “mother was of Welsh origin. To this Celtic strain he probably owes his striking physiognomy – the warm, dusky colouring, the vivacious play of feature and vehemence of gesture which distinguish him from the average type of Englishman.”

However, she also recognised a more general adoption of the Slavonic spirit in his character and programming:

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35 The conversation allegedly took place after a private concert at Windsor Castle, at which Wood conducted a predominantly Wagnerian programme at the Queen’s invitation on 24 November 1898. Wood, *My Life of Music*, 123; See also: Jacobs, *Henry J. Wood*, 62.

There is no more interesting feature in Mr Wood’s career than the way in which he has assimilated the Slavonic spirit in music and given to the compositions of the New Russian School interpretations which breathe the very atmosphere and aroma of nationality. In his sympathy with this school, in his perfect comprehension of the emotional realism which lies at the heart of all Russian art and literature, he is at least as Russian as the Russians themselves.

His very external appearance is far more Slavonic than English. We may see his counterpart in the concert-rooms, laboratories, or university class-rooms of Moscow and Petersburg; wherever, in fact, the youthful and enthusiastic “intelligentsia” are gathered together, you will find a younger brother of Henry J. Wood among them.37

In her opinion, therefore, Wood’s connections with Russia went beyond a predilection for Russian repertoire; that was an outcome of a deeper empathy for Slavonic culture.

Those writers who did not articulate a specifically Russian or Slavonic association, nonetheless frequently found other foreign elements in Wood’s appearance and manner. In particular, he was often compared with the Hungarian Arthur Nikisch. Descriptions of his unique appearance highlight his unruly hair, dark features and unique choices in dress. Often these observations precede generalisations about his musical proclivity, the link between the two being left implicit. Regular concert-goer J. P. O’Callaghan reasoned, in the early 1940s, that Wood’s dramatic appearance and behaviour contributed directly to his success and was a direct factor in the loyalty of his audience:

Wood was always a striking figure and a great draw. He had an unruly mane of black hair, which frequently fell over his forehead and was pushed back with a characteristic gesture of the left hand. His conducting mannerisms were more pronounced – the baton raised high above his head for the brass; his emphatic double nod to the strings in unison passages; his sensitive withdrawal, as if he had

37 Newmarch, Henry J. Wood, 61.
been stabbed, when a pianissimo was not pianissimo enough; there were more in
evidence than they are now. There is no doubt that his dramatization of the music
in this way excited people and made them come again.38

Descriptions of Wood in American publications concur. Jacobs provides the following
unattributed quote:

Mr Wood by no means corresponds to the conventional figure of an Englishman.
Short, sallow, with a shock of black hair and a black pointed beard, he has grace
and elegance of manner, and in his motions before his orchestra these are united in
a certain sinuosity, in graceful sweeps of the right arm and in a caressing fall of the
left hand from the wrist. Yet his presence is authoritative, and he had full sway over
the men in front of him – and, it might be said, over the women behind him in the
audience. It would be unfair, however, to lay too much stress on the latter: for Mr
Wood is clearly a musician of vigorous fibre, deep feeling, and independent, robust,
intellectual powers.39

A description from a review in New York’s Musical Courier, after a concert on 8 January
1904 also focuses on Wood’s unusual appearance and Slavonic interests:

The name of Henry Wood has come to us across the seas from time to time as that
of an evangel [sic] honored in his own country because of his teaching of things
both new and great. . . . It was proclaimed that Wood was serving strange musical
deities, men of Russia who made music with their souls rather than with their pens.
. . . And the man, this Henry J. Wood, who helped to change the musical taste of
his countrymen, who fed them iron in place of pap and blood instead of water, is
himself something a world apart from every accepted standard of an English

38 J. P. O’Callaghan. Quoted in: Jacobs, Henry J. Wood, 55.

musician. . . . The English leader looks like Nikisch – which means that Henry Wood is a man of good and graceful figure, with dark wavy hear and full black beard, that his gestures are sweeping, incisive and picturesque, and that he is a master of dynamics, a lover of the unexpected and of that piquancy without which no performance of Russian music is properly seasoned.40

On 26 April 1932, Zurich critic Fritz Gysi wrote in the Tages-Anzeiger that Wood was “to some extent an English Nikisch, but with a more masculine attack”, further contributing to the ongoing association between the two conductors.41

As Jacobs suggests, the “striking individuality” of Wood’s appearance invited depiction by both serious and satirical artists.42 Descriptions of Wood’s unique visuality and pronounced continental image constitute a large portion of the descriptive and critical literature and portraiture from the earlier part of his career. Often the image or description implies a connection between these foreign visual elements and Wood’s status as a musician, either by direct associations, more subtle implications or simply through the prioritisation of these elements over other factors common in the receptions of other conductors, such as education, innate musicality or interpretative genius, although all of these elements, and many others, also appear to varying degrees.

The transition from this early continental image to the patriotic, humble Englishman projected in the latter half of his career was considerable, and was manifest in his visuality very suddenly. Jacobs pinpoints the year 1919 as the point in time at which Wood’s visually projected self changed, although he notes that he still did not entirely fit the type of the “British country solicitor or retired army officer” which his compatriots Stanford, Elgar, Edward German and Sir Dan Godfrey projected.43

42 Jacobs, Henry J. Wood, 92-93.
One of the advantages in studying Wood is the vast amount of literature that he wrote about conducting technique and about his personal and professional life. A comparison between these literary works and the numerous extant portraits of him confirms the changes to Wood’s visuality, and also reveal contradictions between written word and reality, statement and image. These irregularities invite investigation, particularly as his status as England’s first native career conductor and his longevity at the helm of the Promenade concerts made him a public figure for English musical life in the first half of the twentieth century.

In the prefatory note to Wood’s posthumously published book, About Conducting, Hubert Foss recalled that Wood “was an inveterate note-taker.”

He would not rely on his memory for details, but quickly put them down on paper, so as to give his mind ample scope for contemplation of the larger aspects. On every possible occasion, on inconceivable pieces of paper of every size — folio note-books, backs of envelopes and letters, the laundry’s stiffening cards, or whatever was handy — Wood would scribble at great speed and with an imperative urgency a thought that was passing through his head. It might be a detail of rough playing at rehearsal to watch over at the performance, it might be a philosophical truth about the nature of art — down it all went in that large, firm virile hand, the very size of which would not allow his fingers to keep pace with his nimble brain. In these rough notes, there are words left out in the hurry of his expressive mind; the spelling is Elizabethan in its ready irregularities, sentences tail off as the meaning, already intelligible, needs a verb or a noun to complete its pattern.44

Wood’s About Conducting, Foss suggests, is an accumulation of thoughts and observations gathered together after the fact. Their original motivation and function was not the instruction of aspiring conductors. For this reason, the book is, at times, disjointed and repetitious. Nonetheless, Foss noted that Wood was entitled to publish his opinions and

44 Prefatory note by Hubert Foss, Wood, About Conducting, 7-8.
experience, not least because “no Englishman has ever lived better qualified to do so.”

Foss recognised something special in the way Wood shared his professional knowledge, calling him “the field naturalist of orchestra music” and a “craftsman” who allows us “into his studio, and talks to us of the secrets of his craft, of the right order and the proper sequence, of preparing the material, moulding it, and finally laying the patina on the perfected piece.”

A review of About Conducting appeared in Music and Letters, in which the reviewer, M. C., granted Wood the authority to write about the subject given that he was “a man who devoted a lifetime to conducting”.

... who as the undaunted pioneer of orchestral music in this country, was in the unique position of laying the foundation-stone for the modern professional English orchestras, and was fortunate to see them grow from rather haphazard affairs to permanent institutions of international repute ... A craftsman of the first order, he packs his book with keen observations and shrewd advice, some of which I have seen in print here for the first time.

Although he notes that the book is “discursive, repetitive, somewhat careless in style and grammar”, it is nonetheless a valuable opportunity to gain an insight “into the workshop of a first-rate craftsman.” The simile of the master craftsman was also applied in a review of the book for The Musical Times, in which Wood was regaled as a “salty, cheerful, honest craftsman”.

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45 Prefatory note by Hubert Foss, Wood, About Conducting, 7.

46 Prefatory note by Hubert Foss, Wood, About Conducting, 9.


48 M.C. “Review of About Conducting”, 119.

Wood’s writings about his personal life, published in 1938 in My Life of Music, are more problematic, littered with inconsistencies and possible fabrications. The task of separating truth from fiction is complicated by the fact that many contemporary and posthumous biographies considered My Life of Music as an infallible primary source, and therefore re-published various half-truths. Arthur Jacobs’s 1994 biography, Henry J. Wood: Maker of the Proms assiduously tackles the inconsistencies in Wood’s account of his life, without minimising the conductor’s contributions to the music profession and concert life in London. It functions, in many ways, as a more authoritative biographical source for this study than Wood’s autobiography. This is not to underestimate the importance of My Life of Music, but its value, like so many autobiographies, is tied to Wood’s own image-building motivations more than the trustworthiness of his memory.

Jacobs discusses at length Wood’s cultivation of the myth that his first wife was a Russian princess. In My Life of Music, he recalls his “greatest private venture of my life: my marriage with Princess Olga Ouroussoff.” Newmarch corroborates Wood’s story to an extent, noting that in “July 1898 he married Olga, the only daughter of the late Princess Sofie Ouroussov (née Narashkin), of Emilovka, Podolia.” Newmarch’s careful wording of Olga’s details is telling; Olga’s maiden name, as recorded on her wedding certificate, was Michailoff (Mikhailov), not Ouroussov (Urisov), suggesting that although the Princess may have been her mother, Prince Grigory Alexandrovich Urusov was almost certainly not her father. It is possible that she was an illegitimate daughter of the Princess, and therefore not entitled to any title. Wood’s imagining of his wife’s royal status heightened his own, and suggests that he hoped to establish a biographical connection with a culture for which

Wood, My Life of Music.

Jacobs, Henry J. Wood.

Wood, My Life of Music, 117. Olga first established a connection with Wood as a vocal student in the mid 1890s, and they married in 1898.

Newmarch, Henry J. Wood, 9.
he had much admiration. But the premise was ultimately fictitious, as Newmarch implies and later Jacobs more decisively demonstrates.54

Jacobs also challenges Wood’s accounts of his childhood travels to “Germany, Bavaria, France, Belgium, and America” to hear the world’s great orchestras.55 Jacobs demonstrates that they were created retrospectively to introduce the Romantic theme of a prodigious childhood yearning for a career as a conductor, not unlike the Sketch’s portrayal of Jullien’s childhood. He notes that “[s]uch accounts of travel must now be seen as Wood’s retrospective fantasy – serving a desire, in the autobiography of 1938, to trace a pre-destination to a conductor’s career.”56 Yet, in a census for the year 1891, Jacobs finds evidence that Wood still did not think of himself as a conductor, listing himself as a “‘music’composer”.57

Most bizarrely, Wood literally eradicates all trace of his second wife, Muriel Greatrex, and their two daughters, Tatania and Avril. The many international journeys Wood had made with her were reported in My Life of Music as being solo trips. The re-writing of his personal life could have been influenced by the unnamed co-author of My Life of Music, Wood’s life partner Jessie Linton (née de Levante), who performed under her mother’s maiden name, Goldsack, and who changed her name by deed-poll to Lady Jessie Wood (Lady was her assumed Christian name) in an effort to normalise their extra-marital affair.58 Wood’s eradication of Muriel and their children cannot be seen as a simple case of erasing his romantic history, as his marriage to Olga is fondly accounted for in the book. The marriage to Muriel was known to be an unhappy one, and Muriel herself did little to raise his status as a conductor and had little interest in his musical activities.

54 Jacobs, Henry J. Wood, 59.
55 Jacobs, Henry J. Wood, 38.
56 Jacobs, Henry J. Wood, 14.
57 Jacobs, Henry J. Wood, 16.
58 Woods’ second wife refused to grant him a divorce.
In order to understand the inconsistencies in Wood’s autobiography, it is helpful to remember the book’s function and, indeed, that of early biographies which were often closely, if not officially, edited by Wood himself, again echoing the circumstances surrounding Jullien’s biographical constructions. The more personal omissions and changes, which no amount of disorganisation could account for, not to mention the fabrication of blatant untruths, must be viewed not as deceits on Wood’s part, but as evidence of his willingness to rewrite facets of his past to better represent himself as a musician, constructing an alternative personal narrative. Jacobs’ research supports this theory, concluding that “[t]he fantasies tend to reinforce self-esteem, as if to compensate for perceived social disadvantages – a humble background, an inadequate general education, a lack of cultural breadth and fluency, the spoken accent of a London tradesman rather than of the English public schoolboy ... It is as though Henry J. Wood were conducting a life, presenting a core of facts ‘creatively’ embellished.”

Wood’s greatest literary dupe was an anonymous press cutting, penned by Wood himself before the Promenades.60 The early article serves to highlight the lengths to which Wood was prepared to go in his efforts for self-promotion:

Mr Henry J. Wood is a conductor ‘to the manner born’ whose capabilities managers have recognized; his skill in this office has brought him rapidly to the front, although he had been earlier known as a composer of originality and refined taste, shown in opera, oratorio, and in songs full of charm and melody ... Forty-six different operas, grand and comic, he has already conducted in public, and it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the whole repertoire of the lyric stage is at his finger’s ends, so that he is in readiness to take the baton at an hour’s notice for any known opera. Consequently, singers who have heard of him from their comrades, upon offer of and acceptance of engagements, fly to him for training in their respective parts. His popularity with the profession ‘goes without saying’ for he is a

60 More famously, Wood performed arrangements under the pseudonym “Paul Klenovsky”, only revealing himself as the true author in 1934. Jacobs, Henry J. Wood, 232.
hard worker, devoted to his pupils, sparing no pains on their behalf; no less is he popular and held in esteem by bands under his control.\textsuperscript{61}

In light of these fallacies, Wood’s early portraiture and reported appearance in real life can be seen as contributing to a larger mission of idealisation: Wood’s attempt to validate his authority and esteem as a conductor. It is unsurprising that he would feel the need to do this, given the status of English music and musicians at the time he began his career. Foreign musicians had dominated England’s musical scene in the century leading up to Wood’s career, with native performers and composers generally held in less regard. Furthermore, The nineteenth-century English focus on improvement, self control and piety had rendered the performing arts an ambiguous activity in which to engage, a moralising activity for the lower classes and largely restricted to the domestic sphere for the middle classes.

Due to the social constraints operating on professional music making, and the concurrent association with femininity, many Englishmen avoided public performance. Foreigners had the opportunity to make the most of this restriction imposed by English sensibility, as it had less of an effect on their social status. The nationalist fibre of England was socially constructed through assertions of masculinity and the positive differentiation of an Englishman from foreign elements. Therefore, for an Englishman to engage in an activity so closely associated with foreigners and domesticity was still unthinkable for many at the turn of the century. Those, like Hubert Parry (1848-1914) and Charles Stanford (1852-1924), who worked as performers, were primarily listed in encyclopaedias and biographical publications as composers or academics.

Furthermore, the acknowledged masters of conducting on English soil were all from continental Europe, and conductors such as Hans Richter had firmly established the prototype for the Austro-German interpretive conductor. The Englishman’s self-conscious differentiation from foreigners, such an important part of England’s nationalism, conversely limited English musicians’ access to Romantic, interpretive stereotypes. Wood risked his identity as an Englishman to establish a self image which more closely

\textsuperscript{61} Henry Wood, anonymous article. Quoted in: Jacobs, Henry J. Wood, 35.
resembled that of an ideal musician, which was, necessarily, foreign. Had he not projected such an idealised image early in his career, his success within England may well have been inhibited as he would have been detrimentally classed with his native contemporaries. In this way, Wood differentiated himself from negative associations with practising musicians in England, thus allowing his status to be potentially heightened. Furthermore, through his creatively embellished biography he distanced himself from a lower-income family background about which he maintained discomfort for most of his life.

The portraits produced during the latter part of Wood’s career differ considerably from the trend discussed above. Interestingly, they are substantially more varied in pose, style and content, suggesting less control of the images on Wood’s part, perhaps as his fame was more secure by this point. Figure 8 is typical of a group of portraits in the style mentioned above in connection with other English conductors, with Wood pictured at a table or desk in what looks like a comfortable and prosperous domestic setting. His left index finger is marking a page in the score whilst the thumb of that hand lifts the page to display its content to the viewer. His head rests pensively on his right hand and his gaze, directed above and to the side of the viewer indicates thoughtfulness. The image is constructed to suggest we are watching Wood in the act of musical contemplation of a score that he is about to conduct, and that he is unaware of the viewer watching him. In this regard it bears some thematic resemblance to the photographic portraits of Richter discussed in Chapter four.
In contrast, a second group of portraits from this period depict Wood as a confident businessman. These images generally show Wood’s torso, and he is dressed in a business or dinner suit. He is sometimes pictured holding a cigar and often looks directly at the viewer. Even when he is in partial profile, with his eye-line at an angle to the viewer, his facial expression intimates confidence and awareness of his position as a sitter in a portrait, and is devoid of the romanticised upward gaze that was typical of the earlier portraits.
This was a common pictorial type for portraits of conductors in the first half of the twentieth century, epitomized by Wood’s rival, Thomas Beecham, who was often depicted in a jovial, relaxed pose in suit or smoking jacket with cigar in hand.

In this late stage in his career, Wood was depicted as an academic, the portrait (Figure 34) embellished with the status-enhancing attributes of that role. Wood had joined the Royal Academy of Music as a professor in 1923, but his work in that capacity was ironic, as he had earlier stated that there were too few opportunities for students at university level, and that a lecture room was of no help to the aspiring conductor.  

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62 Wood, *About Conducting*, 97. His legendary student orchestra sessions set a precedent for the current model of institutional conducting tuition, wherein the student conductor practises on an orchestra made up of fellow students.
Finally, a fourth group of portraits depicts Wood in the process of conducting either live in rehearsal or performance or posed on the concert podium or in a studio.

Figure 35. Sir Henry Wood posed with his baton. Black and white photograph, ca. 1930s. Held by the Royal Academy of Music. Accession no, 2005.618
In this rather contrived form of depiction, the conductor knowingly simulates the performance environment in an artificial studio setting, to give the impression, if not the reality, of the sight of the conductor at work. It is similar, in some ways, to the watercolour of Jullien and the prints which followed, discussed in Chapter 3. The idealised body and unrealistic arm placement of the mid-nineteenth century portraits, contrived to depict the quasi-spiritual effects of Jullien’s magnetic influence, are missing in the portrait of Wood and are replaced with a refreshingly realistic likeness of the aging conductor. The greying and thinning of his hair and beard contribute considerably to a dulling of the physical resemblance to Nikisch, although contemporary accounts suggest that something of Nikisch’s influence remained in his gesture.63

These groups of images, although varied in style, are analogous to those of his English contemporaries, suggesting that late in life Wood either no longer wished, or needed, to cultivate his ‘foreign’ image to such an extent. This suggests either that his success was sufficiently entrenched to negate the stereotype of the inferior English musician, or that perhaps such pejorative stereotypes no longer existed. The effects of the political aftermath of WWI and resulting WWII on the careers of English musicians ought not to be underestimated either. England, which had been under threat during the Great War for the first time since Waterloo, was fertile soil for nationalist pride, and the long established dominance of Austro-German conductors was seriously undermined by anti-German sentiment. Many Germanic conductors returned to Europe, some severing links with English friends, colleagues and associations.64 Their absence opened the door for native musicians to gain influential positions, and hostility towards the Germans promoted a new found pride in, and promotion of, English musicians.65 In the wake of a simultaneous exodus of prominent musicians and renewed English patriotism, not to mention the natural

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63 On 26 April 1932, Zurich critic Fritz Gysi wrote in Die Tages-Anzeiger that Wood was “to some extent an English Nikisch, but with a more masculine attack”. Translated in: Jacobs, Henry J. Wood, 241.

64 Richter’s departure from England, for instance, and the renunciation of his honorary doctorate was precipitated by pre-World War I hostility towards Germans. Fifield, True Artist and True Friend, 450.

cementing of his own reputation, the stylistic changes in Wood’s portraits are not only understandable but could well be more evidence of Wood’s manipulation of his public persona according to his understanding of public sentiment.

The other dominant element in the visuality of Henry Wood is his technique, which was well-documented by himself and others. In contrast to the literature about Jullien and Richter, there is little evidence of critics or the public imaginatively conceiving, or re-conceiving, the nature of the Wood’s role as a conductor or how he achieved it, apart from a small number of comments related to the military. This could indicate greater familiarity with the technical means and ends of the conductor’s role due to a higher level of public music knowledge thanks, largely, to the criticism published in widely-circulated periodicals such as The Musical Times. The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians notes that “[a]fter a lull in the 1860s and 70s, the British musical press exploded in the 80s and 90s”.66 The early twentieth century provided even greater public access to music criticism and musicological debate and the rigid Germanic approach to discussions about music lost its stronghold in Britain after World War I.67 As the canon became entrenched, reviews of standard repertoire ceased to discuss the merits of the music itself, and instead focused on the quality of the performance. This placed the conductor’s practical skills under greater scrutiny. A gradual standardisation of technique and gesture was inevitable, particularly as conductors became more mobile and increasingly performed as guest conductors in foreign countries.

There are several accounts of Wood’s technique; some of them describe it in a generalised way, others describe a particular concert or rehearsal and show evidence of the effect of external circumstances on the viewer’s reception of his gesture and manner. Equally significant is Wood’s own writing about conducting. He focuses on the practicalities of professional conducting. His comments on technique and gesture prioritise efficient and humble adherence to the score, and his use of the term ‘interpretation’ is mostly in relation to the conductor’s right to subtly vary the tempo.


Wood bases his discussion in *About Conducting* on eight points, which he considers to be prerequisites for a career in conducting:

A Conductor must have a complete general knowledge of music.

He must have a *more than slight* acquaintance with every instrument of the orchestra, and if possible have had some intensive study of a stringed instrument, preferably the violin.

He must play the piano well.

He must have an impeccably sensitive ear, as well as rhythmic and interpretative sense.

He must be unafraid of the art of gesture.

He must be a perfect sight-reader and sound musician.

He must study the art of singing.

He must have a good physique, a good temper, and a strong sense of discipline. ⁶⁸

The eight points are largely practical in nature, which the ensuing discussion reinforces. However, Wood states from the outset that he does not intend to write a conducting handbook, as in his opinion “the art of conducting cannot be taught by private tuition, diagrams, or the written word, and I am convinced that the art of conducting cannot be taught unless the student can face a complete orchestra, with an experienced conductor by his side *to watch every movement of the baton and gesture*, and to tell him why certain things do not come off.” ⁶⁹

Even the justifications behind some of the points are practical. For instance, with regard to point two, Wood considers it important to “[l]earn to play passages on every instrument of

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the orchestra, for in this way you will be able to judge the tempi of your passages for wind
instruments and strings.” He reiterates the point on pages 18-19, stating that tempi should
be determined by a practical knowledge of wind articulation, making no mention of
Wagner’s theory of melos, the importance of the overall architecture of the music defining
tempi, and simply following the tempo indication given in the score. He stresses the
importance of sight-reading ability, not only to aid the conductor’s ability to learn scores
quickly and detect mistakes in rehearsal, but also as a means of not letting players discover
“the rift in his armour”.

His advice for the ideal orchestral seating arrangement is, likewise, governed by practical
considerations: uniformity of tone from the first and second violins by having their sound
holes directed to the audience, and ease of cuing by having like-instruments grouped
together. Although it is the seating plan most often found today (all violins to the
conductor’s left, violas directly in front of the conductor’s podium, and cellos and basses
opposite the first violins to the conductor’s right), his contemporaries still preferred the
older plan of first and second violins seated either side of the conductor.

A letter to Adrian Boult, after reading the manuscript of his *Handbook of Conducting*,
reveals that Wood was aware of the effect of his appearance when conducting on orchestra
and audience, and its implications for their understanding or enjoyment of the music (and
for the conductor’s comfort):

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72 Wood, *About Conducting*, 126-27. See the arrangement of the *Orchestre National*, from Desiré
Inghelbrecht, *Le Chef d’orchestre et son équipe*, (Paris: Juillard, 1949), 136; the seating plans of the Berlin
Philharmonic under Nikisch, derived from Peter Muck, *Einhundert Jahre Berliner Philharmonisches
Orchester*, 1 (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1982), 278; and the plan for the NBC Symphony under Toscanini,
from Samuel Antek, *This was Toscanini*, (New York: Vanguard, 1963), 18, all reproduced in: Galkin, *A
my experience is that very few British conductors, even after years of experience, are able to cure themselves of that abominable habit of ‘giving’ at the knees. Of course this causes the head and body to bob up and down with the first beat of the bar, and the scissors-like opening which generally accompanies this action is certainly not graceful to watch or helpful to the players.

Another point which I think ought to be carefully watched is that of getting on the toes, because of this becomes a habit and you conduct several hours a day, it leads to cramp. Personally I am in favour of the heels being pressed on the platform, as it gives a central pose to the body, and with a little practice the body can be swung round as on a pivot without moving the feet position, and I found this personally to be of great benefit, as in the provinces I have often had to conduct even big choral performances standing on a champagne box! [A]nd it gives the audience a feeling of confidence if they see that the conductor does not step forward or backward on his platform.73

He acknowledges the importance of eye contact with the orchestra as an authoritative and motivational tool, stating that “...the conductor has got to be “the big man,” and a look from his eye should inspire and help to give musical feeling even to tired and fatigued players.”74 Moreover, he indicates that the conductor’s close attention to his appearance can aid his work in other respects:

I may add, too, that in keeping a definite wardrobe for your professional work, you are ready at any moment to face your orchestra smartly and properly attired, which in itself gives a personal sense of well-being, as well as offering a compliment to your orchestra in appearing before them in trim, disciplined fashion.75

73 Reproduced in: Jacobs, Henry J. Wood, 168.

74 Wood, About Conducting, 41.

75 Wood, About Conducting, 50.
The conductor’s general appearance and grooming, and in particular their “air of poise and deportment”, naturally affected the audience.

I deplore, too, the lack of style in artists these days ... When such artists walked on to the platform there was an air of confidence which at once commanded attention; there was an air of pose and deportment – everything [sic]: “I have come to play to you, and you have got to listen!” This deportment is today regrettably rare and should be studied very carefully.76

Overall, he suggested that making use of any strategy “which goes to the equipment of the professional life you hope to achieve, is helpful in creating that atmosphere of detachment and preparedness so essential.”

Such an attitude is to be commended in any career, but it is much more so, and far more necessary, in that of a professional conductor whose very work is apt to create a bohemian, happy-go-lucky spirit.77

Wood apparently recognised a link between his profession and a stereotypical personality type, a point which takes on greater significance in connection with his portraits. His comments also reveal that he considered the appearance or atmosphere of preparedness to be just as important, if not more so, than actual preparedness. This casts his reputation for ruthless preparation of works new to his repertoire into some doubt, as he may well have merely perfected the art of “creating that atmosphere of detachment and preparedness”. But it is neither provable nor important; far more significant was his awareness of the importance that such preparedness was noticed by others, whether it was warranted or not.

Elsewhere, he reveals a similar awareness of being within the audience’s sight while conducting, and stresses the importance of such self-consciousness given modern audiences’ knowledge and expectations:

76 Wood, About Conducting, 99-100.

77 Wood, About Conducting, 50-51.
Your baton must be visible not only to your orchestra, but to the public, who are now so orchestrally-minded, I am thankful to say, and who are quite wise to the art of gesture and so intelligent critics of results attained.78

However, despite his attention to his own appearance, and evident awareness of its affect on others, he insists that the conductor “must never be conscious of an audience.”79 He cautions that “the flashy conductor who ‘conducts’ for the gallery is soon discovered and known for what he is worth!”80 Moreover, he distinguishes between conductors “who direct for the “ears” of their public and those who direct for the “eyes” of the public”, noting that the popularity of the wireless may lead to audiences no longer needing to attend live performance to hear music, merely going “to see the conductor, and put aside the greater asset of listening.”81

His comments on gestural style and technique indicate that he advocated an efficient and understated style, without unnecessary use of the left hand. Movements of both arms should be guided by and incorporate the conductor’s interpretation; and paramount to the conductor’s choice of gesture is the response it will evoke from the orchestra:

[U]nless your gesture is the spontaneous and natural outcome of your personal interpretative sense, it gets you nowhere with the orchestra, and merely looks awkward, self-conscious, and unnatural to your audience ... Beware of vague and useless gesticulation with the left hand; yet every gesture that receives the right answer from an orchestra is legitimate.82

78 Wood, About Conducting, 69.

79 Wood, About Conducting, 33.

80 Wood, About Conducting, 69.


82 Wood, About Conducting, 32.
Aside from stipulating that the beat must be “decisive and utterly clear”, he declines to give instruction on the shapes of beat patterns, or specific physical guidelines, concentrating instead on the impetus behind a conductor’s gesture and stating of his own approach that he “paint[s] the picture” with his baton.83

Wood prints the specifications for his baton, which featured a particularly large handle and long stick, adopted after advice from Hans Richter about how to avoid cramp and “neuritis”. He also states that its size aids with visibility when conducting large groups, and reduces the arm movement required to produce a wide beat, as the length of the stick greatly magnifies the scope of the gesture.84

The beating arm should incorporate interpretative elements, while also functioning as a time keeping instrument and cueing aid.85 Like Richter and his Wagnerian contemporaries, Wood believed that the gesture of the beating arm should be entirely governed by interpretative decisions:

[A]ll the nuance, all the story is in your hands (literally) to express.

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84 Wood, About Conducting, 67-70. “Here is the specification of my batons as expressed in a letter from Messrs. Palmer, Ltd.: -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specification</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WEIGHT</td>
<td>Slightly under 1 ounce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LENGTH of exposed Shaft</td>
<td>19 inches</td>
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<tr>
<td>of handle</td>
<td>5 ″</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL LENGTH</td>
<td>24 ″</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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SHAFT made of seasoned straight-grain poplar wood, carefully rived by hand to ensure that the grain runs straight. Painted white with two coats of water paint. The shaft runs right through the handle.

HANDLE of cork 5 inches long, diameter at base 1 ¼ inches, diameter at shaft end 1 1/8 inch.

85 Wood, About Conducting, 72.
Don’t confuse my meaning. I distinctly adjure you never, never, never make a gesture that has no legitimate intention, instruction, or request behind it.\(^{86}\)

The underlying motivation for the gesture, therefore, must come from the conductor’s interpretation. Wood’s use of that term, however, requires scrutiny. His comments imply that he sees interpretation as the imposition of human will. He considers music to be “a lifeless thing written down; it requires interpretation to give it life.”\(^{87}\) Moreover, his remarks suggest that interpretative conducting is less about adherence to the composer’s intentions, and more a matter of keeping music entertaining and pleasurable, and allowing freedom of tempo. In support of this, he quoted Nikisch and Strauss:

That great virtuoso conductor, Arthur Nikisch, once said to me when I told him how some people criticised my use of rubato, “my dear Wood, music is a dead thing without interpretation: we all feel things differently. A metronome can keep a four-square indication if they like it that way, but never forget that you should make every performance a grand improvisation even though you direct the same work every day of the year!” Richard Strauss held, and still holds, I am sure, the same views regarding the interpretative artist. “Do what you like,” he said, “but never be dull.”\(^{88}\)

However, Wood recognised that the expressivity required of the interpretive conductor was at odds with the perceived reserved nature of the British, and that this must be overcome.

We are a shy people, timorous and afraid of what we call an “exhibition of temperament,” and yet I assert that no conductor excels unless he is gifted with the physical ability to impose a literal translation of temperament through his gestures.

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of his interpretative sense and will ... The outstanding point is, don’t be afraid to try to impart your innermost feelings through gesture. That reserve associated with us is a much-to-be-desired virtue in every work-a-day life, but musical thought is just that which takes us to realms and places not so near this earth, and so worthy of finding a means whereby we can spread this glorious message through lovely sounds.89

His advice that the beating arm should incorporate interpretative elements within the time-keeping gesture is a departure from Richter’s observed technique of separating the interpretative and technical elements into left and right hand functions, respectively. The theoretical, and practical, precedent for this all-inclusive approach to conducting occurred almost two generations earlier in the conducting of Franz Liszt, who confessed to having “an inner conviction”, which would not allow him “to sink to the level of a time-keeper”.90 His conducting practice and theory mirrored that of his piano playing, the expression of the spirit of the work being essential to the performance.91 This meant that Liszt broke many established rules of gesture: he was apt to cue with either hand and often swapped the baton between his hands.92 The reception of his conducting with orchestras and audiences was varied, but Karl Krueger claimed that he “was misjudged as a conductor because he was largely misunderstood”:

[M]ost of those who belittled his conducting had no idea of the import of his performance ideal. That ideal stemmed from the Renaissance principle, that a

89 Wood, About Conducting, 31-32.


composition should be performed according to its effect, its content, but Liszt vastly extended the application of that principle.\textsuperscript{93}

Wood evidently respected this approach, though it is doubtful that he attributed its inception to Liszt. His instructions, of course, are Wood’s musings on an idealised vision of (himself as) a conductor. While they provide an invaluable account of how he endeavoured to work and what were his motivations, there is no guarantee that his conducting actually conformed to them. Contemporary accounts, therefore, are invaluable in indicating to what extent his practice was aligned with his theory.

An anonymous description by ‘F’ in the \textit{Pall Mall Gazette} on 8 October 1903 suggests Wood’s conducting was far removed from the ideals stated in \textit{About Conducting}:

\begin{quote}
Wagner made two classes: conductors and time-beaters. Mr Wood is an admirable, energetic time-beater. Look at him as he works – muscles, elbows, head in movement, everything gesticulates. The more noise and exertion required, the more gymnastically he moves. He assumes that his men will not respond save to the crack of the whip; like a muleteer, who at the foot of a hill rushes along beside his cattle, prodding, shouting, and whipping them up till they reach the top. Mr Wood has a special up-and-down movement of his elbow. Of his baton he makes a scourge.\textsuperscript{94}
\end{quote}

Wood’s first biographer, Rosa Newmarch, disagreed, interpreting his movements as being “the reflection of his quick and glowing temperament”:

\begin{quote}
It is just because they are natural that they strike us as rather freer and more vehement than those of the average Englishman. A man less naturally agile and alert could certainly not copy Mr Wood’s style with impunity. It would be like the efforts of the clown to follow the graceful athlete through the hoop. That this agility
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{93} Krueger, \textit{The Way of the Conductor: His Origins, Purpose and Procedures}, 140-41.

\textsuperscript{94} Reproduced in: Jacobs, \textit{Henry J. Wood}, 94.
is perfectly natural and easy to him no one can doubt who has watched his ways of doing other things.

He does not pose as “dignified” or “magnetic,” and is always amused at the layman’s belief that “the conductor’s eye in a fine frenzy rolling” counts for much in the interpretation of a masterpiece. Far from being self-conscious, he would unhesitatingly sacrifice elegance to effectiveness if necessary. He has discovered for himself the best way of playing on his instrument, and nothing else concerns him.95

Many of the reported effects of his conducting confirm her praise. Critics praised his discipline, thoroughness and work ethic. A review of a performance of *The Messiah* in *The Musical Times* is typical, admiring “the precision and sensitive modelling of the expression”, which was “a triumph of discipline.”96 Ferruccio Bonavio, music critic for the *Daily Telegraph*, wrote in 1944 of Wood’s precision in conducting the Ride of the Valkyries and the fine effect it achieved. Bonavio’s words echoed Wood’s earlier admission that he endeavoured to “paint the picture” with his baton, when he observed that “[e]ach strand stood out sharply outlined giving a picture finished to the last detail. [In the Brandenburg Concerto he] had taken pains to ensure that every woof and web should get its due, realizing every aspect of the composition, its dignity and elegance, intimacy and bewitching charm.”97

In the memoirs and accounts of fellow musicians, Wood’s exacting self-discipline and supportive approach when accompanying soloists are recurring factors. The leader of the Queen’s Hall viola section at the time that the orchestra split from the Queen’s Hall Orchestra in 1904, Lionel Tertis, estimated that he “learnt from him what good phrasing was, the accurate value of notes and rests, and many another detail of help to musicianship,


not to speak of discipline and punctuality. . . He was a martinet, as he had need to be to get through all the enterprises he undertook.”98

Liverpudlian contralto Marguerite d’Alvarez’s description of Wood in her memoirs, Forsaken Altars (1954) was more effusive, but communicated her related experience:

He was a simple, intelligent man, modest and jovial, and the hardest worker one could possibly meet. He managed to be erudite in his work and constructive towards the artist he was conducting. Like a lover, he breathed one’s phrases with one and looked anxiously to see if one was at ease with his tempo. To sing Bach under his guidance was a prayer, and made me feel so elevated that I thought God might one day pull me up through a hole in the roof to Heaven just as I was, without having to experience the agonies of death.99

Wood’s advice pertaining to moments when an orchestral player struggles with a solo part, or plays it without care, reveals the attention he gave to his professional colleagues. In such an instance, he advises “Take your own time, my friend, I am here to accompany you; play it as the artist you are”, showing his approach to the rehearsal process to be one of support and coaching, rather than the dictatorial role valued by Wagner and displayed by his descendants in varying degrees.100

Ernest Newman, in an obituary for The Sunday Times, praised Wood’s “thorough mastery of the whole language of music and the whole praxis of conducting, his amazing capacity for work, his conscientiousness, that made him, as a matter of course, do his best for whatever new work fell to him to introduce, and that insatiable interest in the musical activities of all countries, all periods, that for half a century kept his audiences abreast of all that was being done in every country.”101

98 Quoted in: Jacobs, Henry J. Wood, 100.
99 Quoted in: Jacobs, Henry J. Wood, 170.
100 Wood, About Conducting, 22.
101 Quoted in: Jacobs, Henry J. Wood, 409.
Yehudi Menuhin, in a BBC interview in 1969, associated those qualities with the quintessentially British music culture in which Wood’s career had developed:

[O]ur association at that time was soldered, as it were, by this tremendous vigour that I found in him and this unashamed quality of being himself, being absolutely himself. Later I learned how very characteristic he was of the people to whom he belonged, especially his musical career, which like the career of many great English musicians was based solidly on the organ, the choir and the English opera, Gilbert and Sullivan and later on Wagner and Tchaikovsky. It just proves how important it is for a very great conductor to have a broad base. And I can’t imagine anyone who had a broader base, and that came through not only in talking to him but simply by his presence, he was a broad man, he was a man who spread space and strength about him.102

Like many others, however, Menuhin considered Wood to be essentially continental in his musical taste and approach.

The strongest impression I have of Sir Henry is of an ebullient, vigorous, and if I might say, Continental quality in relation at least to music. At that time I didn’t realize his close association with the Russian musical literature, but being of Russian origin myself, although born in New York, I must have instinctively found in this typical Englishman an approach to music which rhymed with my own childish instinctive feeling about Tchaikovsky and the rather heavier, more garishly coloured music which at that time I particularly favoured.103

William Glock, writing in The Observer a month before Wood’s death, discerned a distinction between the extent of Wood’s interpretative approach, and that of other

102 Quoted in: Jacobs, Henry J. Wood, 242-43.
103 Quoted in: Jacobs, Henry J. Wood, 242-43.
Sir Henry is never over-in-love with the music, as [Bruno] Walter can be; nor does he preoccupy himself to Beecham’s extent with problems of ‘interpretation’. He is not one of those through whom music, if it happens to be the right music, pours as through its own private and appropriate channel. Rather its greatness is expressed in his general bearing, whilst his thoughts and energies are given to technical details; and those who have played under him would probably agree that one feels neither a conflict nor an identity of musical aim, but rather that one’s path is made extraordinarily clear. This dualism of noble character and masterly technique falls short of genius, but rises above mannerism, and is an absolute condition both of Henry Wood’s enormous repertoire and of the public’s unaltering belief in him.¹⁰⁴

Two other articles, which compare Wood’s conducting to military action, merit discussion. Writing in 1912 about Wood’s controversial programming of Arnold Schoenberg’s *Five Orchestral Pieces* Op. 16, the difficulty of which “necessitated three consecutive rehearsals of an hour each (an unprecedented amount of time to be expended on a new work) before it was considered fit for presentation”, Eugene Goossens recalled the vision of “Wood, cutting, thrusting, parrying and dissecting with that long white baton, fighting down the thing that all conductors have to fight sooner or later in varying degrees – the hostility of an orchestra which has fatally prejudged a novelty – eventually secured order out of chaos.”¹⁰⁵ The conductor was not merely leading the troops of his orchestra through unfamiliar and (musically) hostile territory; he was engaging with them as an adversary, the movements of his baton representative of swordplay.

Two years later, on 12 December 1914, celebrated diarist Bruce Cummings (1889-1919), writing under the *nom-de-plume* Wilhelm Nero Pilate Barbellion, observed Wood conducting from behind the orchestra, granting him a different perspective of the


conductor’s relationship with the orchestra. Like Goossens, Wood’s baton appeared to him as a weapon, with which the conductor combats “hordes of invisible fiends”:

[A]s [the music] gathers force and volume, when the bows begin to dart swiftly across the fiddles and the trumpets and trombones blaze away in a conflagration, we are all expectant – and even a little fearful, to observe his sabre-like cuts. The tension grows... I hold my breath... Sir Henry snatches a second to throw back a lock of hair that has fallen limply across his forehead, then goes on in unrelenting pursuit, cutting and slashing at hordes of invisible fiends that leap howling out towards him. There is a great turmoil of combat, but the Conductor struggles on till the great explosion happens. But in spite of that, you see him still standing thro’ a cloud of great chords, quite undaunted. His sword zigzags up and down the scale – suddenly the closed fist of his left hand shoots up straight and points to the zenith – like the arm of a heathen priest appealing to Baal to bring down fire from Heaven... But the appeal avails nought and it looks as tho’ it were all up for Sir Henry. The music is just as infuriated – his body writhes with it – the melanic Messiah crucified by the inappeasable desire to express by visible gestures all that he feels in his heart. He surrenders – so you think – he opens out both arms wide and bearing his breast, dares them all to do their worst – like the picture of Moffat the missionary among the savages of the Dark Continent!

And yet he wins after all. At the very last moment he seems to summon all his remaining strength and in one final and devastating sweep mows down the orchestra rank by rank... You wake from the nightmare to discover the victor acknowledging the applause in a series of his inimitable bows.

One ought to pack one’s ears up with cotton wool at a concert where Sir Henry conducts. Otherwise, the music is apt to distract one’s attention. R[obert] L[ouis]
S[tevenson] wanted to be at the head of a cavalry charge – sword over head – but I’d rather fight an orchestra with a baton.\textsuperscript{106}

Written just after Britain had declared war, these metaphorical associations differ from similar themes in the visualities of Jullien and Richter because they do not single out the noble leadership qualities of the idealised military man, but instead utilise the language of hand to hand combat. They suggest that while military heroism remained a strong thread in the English imagination, there had been a shift in focus from the detached image of military heroes such as Nelson, Napoleon and Wellington, to the more realistic, hardworking foot soldier.

This body of writing about Wood’s conducting, whether in his own words or in the words of others, contains several recurring themes and observations. The prosaic, practical nature of Wood’s stated approach in \textit{About Conducting} evidently transferred to his practice, as nearly all of the extant reviews touch on this, albeit sometimes from a less than positive perspective. That Wood’s down-to-earth practicality and matter-of-fact approach to interpretative issues would be regarded as positive traits is remarkable. Descriptions of conductors in the previous century maligned those who excelled in the merely technical and practical aspects of their profession. George Bernard Shaw, for instance, said of the esteemed Italian conductor Michael Costa (1808-1884) that he was unable to grant to him credit for the “highest faculty of a conductor, which consists in the establishment of a magnetic influence under which an orchestra becomes as amenable to the bâton as a pianoforte to the fingers ... Instead he has the common power of making himself obeyed, and is rather the autocrat than the artist.”\textsuperscript{107} By Wood’s generation, however, there had been a discernible shift in admiration from the authority of the interpretive artist of the nineteenth century to the hardworking trustworthiness of a local artisan-conductor.

In his non-musical performance behaviour, Wood presented many unique sights for audiences, many of which are now standardised elements of orchestral concerts. His

\textsuperscript{106} Jacobs, \textit{Henry J. Wood}, 151.

preferred seating of the violins together, mentioned above, is one of them. Behind many of his onstage routines was an underlying humility and desire to share the audience’s appreciation with the other performers.\textsuperscript{108} Newmarch claims that Wood was the first conductor in England to stand the orchestra for applause, and this was supported by the \textit{Monthly Musical Record} in 1918.\textsuperscript{109} An anecdote from the \textit{Daily Telegraph} in 1944 is typical:

\begin{quote}
[W]ith one of the sly deceptions which have endeared him to audiences for 50 years and which have never really deceived anyone, Sir Henry came in . . . to conduct the Beethoven pianoforte concerto, hiding behind the broad back of Solomon. The audience were clapping both conductor and pianist, but Sir Henry pretended the cheers were only for Solomon and clapped his own hands as they walked in single file on to the platform. Everyone laughed, as they do when Sir Henry makes his famous hat, stick and coat exit at the Proms.\textsuperscript{110}
\end{quote}

In comparison to Jullien and Richter, descriptions (both musicians’ and laymen’s) of how Wood achieves his musical objectives through his body focus on practical observations of physical movements influencing tonal quality or tempo. His personal demeanour, punctiliousness and punctuality are generally regarded as contributing to the efficiency of his rehearsals and subsequent musical quality, and to the respect in which he was held. The idealised Wagnerian interpretive conductor is still present in Wood’s visuality, but it is his practical skill and hard work which were considered essential to his interpretative powers and, hence, his authority. Wood cultivated this image, stating that “[a]n artist is one because he feels intensely and knowledgeably, and should not be built of academic prudery ... We are all scholars, but some are more practical than others – thank goodness.”\textsuperscript{111}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{108} Wood, \textit{About Conducting}, 61.


\textsuperscript{110} Jacobs, \textit{Henry J. Wood}, 384.

\textsuperscript{111} Wood, \textit{About Conducting}, 107.
\end{flushleft}
Sir Henry Wood’s visuality is fraught with contradictions regarding his perceived national identity. As the first native career conductor in England, and a highly celebrated one, it would not be unreasonable to assume that he would exhibit typically English characteristics in his persona. However, his dogged construction of an idealised continental image in the earlier part of his career reveals the depth of his concern about the fragile status of a professional musician, as well as an awareness of the ideal musician as being continental. On the surface, the BBC photograph of Wood standing on the ruins of the Queen’s Hall functions as an image of patriotic wartime rhetoric and a record of the damage incurred during the Blitz, but the destruction the image depicts is far greater than the building’s structure and its role as home of the Proms for forty-six years. It symbolises not only the end of foreign dominance in performance circles, but the silencing of the instruments left in the hall overnight which were destroyed in the fire following the explosion. It also evokes the twilight years of Wood’s career and the breakdown of his relationship with the BBC, Wood’s maturation in the public eye, and a newfound acceptance of, and pride in, native musicians.¹¹²

Wood’s writing, and the reviews and memoirs of his conducting which date from the latter half of his career prioritise attributes which reflect the inter-war and wartime English spirit. His down-to-earth, humble work ethic and cheerful manner resulted in numerous comparisons with artisans and craftsmen. This was a considerable shift from the metaphorical framing of conductors in Jullien’s generation, who were compared to magicians and heroic military leaders, and from the valourising of Richter’s ‘poetic’ qualities. Wood’s later reception also reflects the change in his visuality, reviews from the first half of his career retaining elements of a romantically idealised musician. These changes are inevitably tied to the radically altered projection of Wood’s persona in the public sphere. The changing frame through which audiences and critics viewed his

¹¹² One curiosity regarding the bombing of the Queen’s Hall is worth noting. Only one article from the Queen’s Hall survived without damage: a bust of Wood, sculpted by Donald Gilbert in honour of his 50th jubilee, remained intact. To this day it is placed in the replacement home of the Proms, the Royal Albert Hall, for the duration of every Proms season.
visuality also mirrored changing values related to what it meant to be a conductor and an Englishman in the first half of the twentieth-century.
Conclusion

At the outset, I intended to examine the visualities of three iconic conductors working in London between 1840 and 1940. I aimed to make discoveries about the ways in which the public saw, discussed and understood how those particular conductors moved, dressed, behaved and conceptualised their role, both on and off stage. My expectation was that the findings would enhance our understanding of their technique and critical reception. Additionally, I hoped that it would aid our assessment of other conductors working in London and their reception in the public eye, and general attitudes to, and beliefs about, conducting during this period. At the heart of the thesis is the visual reception of conductors. How do audiences, musicians and critics describe what they see? If they conceive of a link between the sight of the conductor and the musical results in performance, how do they communicate this connection?

Louis Jullien’s career coincided with the emergence of the conductor as an important, and visibly centralised, figure in English concert life, and he attracted unprecedented attention from critics and audience members. His unique appearance and onstage behaviour elicited numerous comparisons to other leadership roles. Hans Richter played a major role in the transmission of the Austro-Hungarian conducting tradition in England, thereby introducing a different range of gestures, and a visibly new facet of direction to the concert platform and opera house. Wagner’s influence on his early training and professional life continued into his visuality and public persona. Sir Henry Wood’s conducting innovations were negligible in comparison to Jullien and Richter, but he was the first native English conductor of international stature, and like the other two, his appearance attracted much attention. His visuality changed throughout his career, early portraits and descriptions noting his continental image and later material conforming to more traditionally English stereotypes.

During the process of exploring these themes and in response to the conclusions made, multiple threads of information and inquiry have become apparent, which I hope enhance our understanding of the visuality of conductors and the world in which they worked.
These include the conscious manipulation of issues relating to visuality, the influence of
nationality on an individual’s visual reception and the influence of contemporary
conducting theory on modes of depiction and reception of images and gesture.

I did not intend this study to be an exhaustive discussion of all aspects of each man’s
visuality; the choice was made to concentrate on particularly pertinent themes and issues as
they emerged from the source material. That is to say, the weighting of various discussions
over others in this study was not arbitrarily decided, but is a reflection of that same
weighting in the conductors’ receptions and portraits. It can be assumed that this pattern
would repeat itself in the study of any conductor’s visuality, every aspect of his visuality
featuring to some degree, but certain themes and sightlines dominating the source material
and its analysis.

In all three cases, the relationship between sight and sound elicited metaphorical
descriptions: observers compared Louis Jullien to a mesmerist, magician and military hero;
Hans Richter’s role as a conductor was intellectualised, his body being seen to act as a
conduit for Wagner’s spirit, and his musical knowledge viewed as an intuitive, internal
process; and, at the end of his life, Henry Wood was celebrated as a craftsman, his hard
work, punctuality and good nature cited as integral factors in the process by which he
successfully translated the written score into sound. The conductor’s relationship with the
score was important because it represented the way in which a conductor translated written
instructions into sound. In order to be able to do so, the conductor required knowledge,
understanding and authority, but the score itself also carried information and meaning
which required understanding and translation. The depiction of this process, and its
presence in the visuality of all three conductors, simultaneously stands as a tribute to the
conductor’s knowledge and authority, and to the score’s embedded significance.

The common thread between the three cases is the audience’s need to place the process of
conducting within the frame of more familiar processes of authority, direction and
productivity. This is partly because, at the moment in history when this dissertation begins,
the sight of a conductor at the front of an orchestra was a new and abstract one for the
audience to grasp. The conductor was seen to control the players’ movements and the
sounds they produced in performance without the use of language or direct physical
manipulation. This novel and initially perplexing sight required interpretation, especially in critical literature. In order to explain the results of the conductor’s efforts, the reviewer first needed to evaluate, or at least seek to understand, the conductor’s methods. Furthermore, the sight of one figure leading a mass of people in a united endeavour resonated with many aspects of mid-nineteenth-century culture. It mimicked the relationship between the industrial capitalist and his workers, it reverberated with the spirit of improvement which pervaded the Victorian era, and in an age obsessed with military and naval valour and heroism, it conjured images of military leaders wielding their baton of command at the front of their troops. The metaphorical framing of these conductors, therefore, was both a necessity and a natural compulsion.

One conclusion to be read from the individual case studies is that there was a rapid evolution in what was expected of conductors in performance, both in their gesture and their conceptual approach. This can be deduced by taking those elements of critical reception which the writers evidently intend as specifically positive or negative comments, and comparing them across the generations. Comments which praised the demonstrativeness of Jullien’s gesture would equate to insults by the time writers were assessing Richter’s technique and praising his economy of gesture. Yet there was less than twenty years between Jullien’s final performance in London and Richter’s debut. Likewise, the deeply intellectual, cognitive conductor portrayed so positively in Richter’s written reception and portraits developed into a more pragmatic, middle-class ideal by the end of Wood’s career. This was not so much a case of the Wagnerian interpretive conductor going out of fashion, but rather that for English critics the ideal conductor could now belong to a culture outside of continental Europe. Furthermore, the changes in England brought about by the world wars meant that a local, middle-class conductor was not only welcome, but also essential, as many of the Europeans who had held a monopoly over the major English conducting posts were in geographical or artistic exile.

The rapidity with which gesture and technique changed throughout the period in question is unique to conducting – no instrument could boast such a great amount of theoretical and practical development in such a short period of time, with the possible exception of the guitar in the twentieth century. These changes occurred in response to the increasing
complexity of music and a shift toward employing larger orchestral forces on stage. Furthermore, a massive ideological shift regarding the value of the score occurred in the nineteenth century and influenced the development of conducting as composers sought to gain control of the interpretation of their music through more detailed and specific performance instructions. This was also a time of unprecedented domestic and international travel, allowing for the migration and absorption of ideas and techniques, leading to a gradual consolidation of technique throughout the western world, rather than allowing the profession to develop in isolated pockets, as had happened previously.

In taking into consideration all three of the conductors studied, it is clear that all of the various literal and metaphorical sightlines emanating from, and leading to, the conductor held some importance in contemporary assessments of their visualities, although in the individual cases some aspects predominated over others. In the cases of Jullien, Richter and Wood, certain aspects of their visuality were not only omnipresent in their reception and portraiture, but the comments of reviewers and colleagues suggest that those facets of their visualities affected how people heard the music and perceived the success of the concert overall. In some instances, the prevailing aspects of the conductors’ visualities may have superseded musical standards as a factor in audiences’ appraisals. The way that these conductors looked, moved or appeared in the public imagination arguably had the power to govern people’s perceptions to a greater degree than the actual musical results of their gestures, either positively or negatively. It is also clear, however, that an ‘image’ was not sufficient to ensure professional success: all three conductors were evidently skilled at their craft, although both written reports and portraits prove that there were significant differences in their techniques.

In all three cases, there is some reflection or representation of the conductors’ differing relationships with the score. Jullien is portrayed as an elemental figure whose body conducts the music, literally, from the score into the air. He is not shown to engage with the score through eye contact. It is more common to see his fingertips brushing the page while he gazes elsewhere. His connection with it was portrayed as super-physical, possibly super-natural, occurring almost without his conscious knowledge. Images of Richter, on the other hand, commonly feature a close relationship between his eye or head and the score,
suggesting that his link to it was intellectual, cognitive and quite deliberate. Whereas Jullien’s body was shown absorbing the score and emitted sound from the baton, Richter’s eyes were depicted as the point of contact with the score, suggesting that he digested it at an intellectual level. Written descriptions of him, however, make special note of his memory, evaluating his ability to remember scores as proof of his authority and inherent musicality. If he looked at the score more in portraits than he did in real life, then perhaps the depiction of him seeing and pondering the score was a way in which the artist could depict his cerebral connection with the music. The salient point regarding Henry Wood’s connection with the score is that it involved hard work and discipline. If the two earlier conductors absorbed or understood the score, Wood learnt it with his sleeves rolled up. His body, in this regard, was not a pseudo-scientific instrument or vessel of innate understanding, but a work horse, respected as such in a way that could not have occurred earlier in the nineteenth century, due to more pronounced class segregation and negative associations with physical labour, and a lack of receptivity to a native-born conductor.

In addition to the physical, human aspect of the conductor’s role becoming more prominent in literature on the subject over the one hundred years surveyed, the descriptions of the conductors’ gestures also became more specific and technical in nature. Jullien’s gesture was likened to mesmerism and his baton to a magical wand; Wood’s beating pattern was dissected and the dimensions of his baton recorded. As audiences became more accustomed to seeing the conductor at the front of the orchestra and more knowledgeable with regards to the conductor’s role, metaphorical explanations were less necessary, though by no means abandoned completely by the time of Wood’s career. A more realistic description of conductors’ movements and effectiveness developed, as did the publication of conducting manuals describing the ideal gesture in terms of its direction, amplitude and shape rather than its ideological motivation.

Throughout all of the contemporary literature, the common element is the means by which the conductor is seen to have power over the players. Comments which likened Jullien’s and Richter’s control over the orchestra to a pianist’s domination of the keyboard suggest that the role of the conductor was seen as an extension of the cult of the virtuoso. Bowen demonstrates that this is partly due to conductors such as Liszt applying the same virtuosic
performance principles that pianists and violinists used to their conducting. The ability to control rubato and extreme dynamic ranges, therefore, was a pianistic technique, but Liszt and those who followed him, successfully applied it to their orchestral conducting. There is also, however, a dehumanising effect on the orchestra by likening them to a piano, a music machine, that is worked by an individual rather than acknowledging the creative and authoritative efforts and responsibilities of all of the performers on stage. This bears a direct resemblance to the industrial spirit sweeping England and Europe in the nineteenth century, providing a creative mirror to man’s taming of machines and harnessing of their productivity. However, whereas the merits of industrial power were measured in capital and often benefited some more than others, the holistic effects of its musical parallel on stage were fruitful and enjoyable, presumably, for all involved. Furthermore, the measure of success was not only financial, but also, and perhaps more so, artistic.

Another commonality in the reception of the conductors’ gestures was that all three men’s bodies were considered to be indices to the music’s meaning. Two presupposed concepts pertaining to conductors underlie this belief: that they are capable of attaining, or are born with, a specialised understanding of the meaning of the abstract; and that their gestures are a physical embodiment of that meaning. This has the effect of heightening the conductor’s musical authority, as it emphasises the disparity between the conductor’s knowledge and the audience’s. It also differentiates between the nature of the conductor’s body and that of the observer’s: if it was common for the human body to be considered a physical manifestation or transmitter of obscure meaning, then the conductor’s ability to do so would presumably pass without comment.

The technological innovations of the past century have intensified the complex visual relationship between conductor and audience, as the recording studio and moving image mediate, cancel or alter the connection between sight and sound. A conductor in a recording studio, for instance, has no audience other than those involved in the recording process. Conversely, the filming of conductors in rehearsal or performance allows for an altered line of sight between the audience and conductor, granting them access to the musicians’ line of sight. The reproduction of the footage often separates image from sound, replacing the actual sound with a separately recorded soundtrack, and complicating the
relationship between sight and sound. The rapid development and expansion of the recording industry also proved to be somewhat of a double-edged sword. While it was an excellent tool for promotion, dissemination and, therefore, income, many conductors found themselves restricted to the core works of the canon as consumers were less likely to buy an album of unknown works, and recording companies vied for space in the market. Nevertheless, LPs were (and still are) powerful tools for conductors and their agents to promote their interpretation of a work. Competition between conductors, orchestras and recording companies was considerable and consumers, as their audience, could choose which interpretation to buy. Beethoven’s 9th Symphony became Furtwängler’s Beethoven 9 or Boult’s Beethoven 9.

A performative shift occurred also. Recordings changed the very nature of music from an ephemeral, real-time experience to a concrete and reviewable object. Recordings could be collected, fetishised, replayed and more easily criticised. A higher level of technical proficiency became a priority as did a rethinking of balance and structure. Operas might be recorded scene by scene in any order, making the conductors’ understanding and explication of the total architecture of the work difficult to attain. In the absence of a natural acoustic, the seating and post-production balancing of instruments was a concern also. These technological elements were of no concern to Louis Jullien, whose career long predated them, or Hans Richter, who refused to be filmed. Only Wood recorded.¹ In all three cases, however, their visual representation in mass media such as newspapers and magazines was integral to their musical success and the cultivation of their public personae. The nuances, manifestations and output of their individual visualities were tied to their surrounding culture, as their careers occurred at different moments in the trajectory of conducting as a profession.

Education is another recurring theme throughout this dissertation. The three conductors were each perceived, and saw themselves, as musical educators, innovators in repertoire development and the quality of orchestral playing, and cultivators of superior musical taste

¹ Wood’s public image was also influenced by and disseminated through mass media which post-dated Jullien and Richter, such as television, radio and vinyls, although these forms of imagery have not been discussed here, as they exceeded the scope and size of the study.
in the masses. At the end of each conductor’s career, in particular, these qualities were paramount in the veneration of their career achievements and summation of their contributions to musical life in England. Beneath the surface of such observations is a network of social assumptions and messages. It implies that the critic found the audience’s knowledge and understanding to be deficient in some way prior to the conductor’s intervention; it suggests that music is something which requires and inculcates sophisticated knowledge and appreciation, rather than an autonomous object which is merely consumed by anyone within earshot and intended only to entertain; and it also suggests that a person’s appreciation of music can be developed as a skill set, and that this is a beneficial progression. Underlying all of these threads is the belief that the full repertoire of music is ordered hierarchically, some pieces of music exhibiting greater value than others, either aesthetically, musically or educationally. In Jullien’s case, it was the dance music and quadrilles that he performed which cemented his success earlier in his career, but at the end of his career it was his gradual inclusion of Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Mozart which critics and colleagues celebrated as his greatest offering to audiences.

Richter clearly had a preference for programming German music and chapter five demonstrates that this probably reflected the market value of these works, as much as his own tastes. Wood’s repertoire was the broadest and most varied of the three, but he too was observed to gradually add more sophisticated music into his programmes during his decades on the podium.

The extent to which Jullien and Richter actively shaped their own public personas is difficult to ascertain. Information from the diverse sources suggests that although both were self-aware to some extent, Jullien was more likely to have taken an overt interest in his conceptual image than Richter. Wood, on the other hand, very clearly took an active role in the cultivation of his public image, even going so far as to adapt it as the public’s taste changed. An awareness of a conductor’s self-promotional efforts aids any iconographic analysis. In addition, the choices they made with regards to their public images carried information about the expectations that they assumed their audience would have and their own understanding of positive and negative status associations.
As one would expect, respective portraits depict particular aspects of the sitters’ appearances and, sometimes, character. They also convey more general information about the role of the conductor and the status of musicians. This is consistent with the entrenched duality of portraiture, which simultaneously aims to portray the sitter in both particular and generalised ways. Such embedded information was governed by the sitter’s and artist’s agreement. For whom was the portrait intended? Was the portrait serious or satirical? In what period, genre and medium was the artist working? The ways in which the artist responded to these questions reveal his or her own value judgements and understanding of the role of the conductor, as well as the judgements and understanding of the intended viewer of the portrait. If the artist includes large gestures, evidence of a cognitive approach or patriotic symbolism in the portrait, then it indicates their awareness of the currency of that content with the public.

The results reveal that the distinction between the serious and satirical portraits was not necessarily clear or consistent. This is mainly due to the sharing of pictorial styles and themes between the two genres. Many of the serious print portraits of Jullien are stylistically analogous to the satirical portraits, portraying his body in a stylised and effeminate manner and emphasising specific aspects of his appearance. On the other hand, some of the satirical images and caricatures studied are comparatively innocuous, particularly if they accompany a text within which the satirical content is embedded. The study has shown that portraits are not the only source material beneficial to an iconographic study. Descriptions of the conductor’s appearance and less obvious references to aspects of the conductor’s visuality in other written material are equally valuable and contribute to our understanding of the sitter’s career, biography and reception. This invites further debate as to the limits and potential of music iconography, the extension of which would have methodological repercussions. This is not to discourage such engagement, as it is arguably overdue, but to warn the intrepid researcher of the challenges and rewards of such debate. The main problem with extending the source material available to the music iconographer lies in the methodological negotiations required. I hope that this dissertation provides a successful theoretical model and methodological approach, and that it will serve as a starting point from which to continue
the debate about the merits and disadvantages of extending the application of music iconography.

The exploration of these initial questions, and the conclusions drawn, reveal additional lines of inquiry which invite investigation and which, if explored, would enhance our understanding of the visuality of conductors even further. Gender identity and display was a consistent issue throughout the research, either undermined as a derogatory indicator of foreignness, or heightened in an attempt to boost the status of the musician. The changing periods under investigation exhibit different idealisations of masculinity, but the aspiration of masculinism remains consistent throughout. Gender in the visuality of conductors deserves ongoing attention, particularly during recent decades in which women have joined the ranks of the world’s foremost conductors. Marin Alsop’s admission that she consciously seeks to appear androgynous when conducting would be an appropriate and stimulating point of departure.\(^2\) The influence of film on conducting gesture is another issue deserving of further attention, in particular the influence that this technology had on a conductor’s self-awareness. The audience could see the conductor from the players’ perspective, the conductor’s gesture could be reviewed and compared with others’, and the connection between gesture and sound was severed by the editing process which superimposed a separately recorded soundtrack onto the film reel.

The dissertation also raises questions about the status of native English musicians in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century. It is a field of research which has received much attention in the past decade, but the place of conductors within the musical life in England remains largely, and surprisingly, untouched. The value of exploring the subject of native English nineteenth-century conductors lies partly in the complexity of that profession’s relationship with continental Europe. Austro-Germans dominated the conducting profession and were the driving force behind its development. England favoured foreign musicians in general, and conductors were no different. Furthermore, it was difficult for Englishmen to contemplate a career in music, as it was considered a low status profession for the aristocratic and upper middle classes. This bias toward foreign conductors would

influence a number of other musical issues, including the development of the canon, and the ongoing propagation of an idealised image of the foreign conductor.

The findings of this dissertation are geographically and periodically specific; Louis Jullien would, most likely, not have displayed the same podium behaviour, nor cultivated the same public persona, had he been born fifty years later. Conversely, the Englishman Henry Wood’s career probably would have been entirely different, impossible even, had he been born earlier in the nineteenth century. Hans Richter’s sedate, placid manner would have struggled to compete with the dynamic personalities of mid-nineteenth century conductors and undeveloped musical tastes of the concert-going public. Moreover, a study of contemporaneous conductors in other locales, or of conductors in England during a different period, would yield different results again.

It can be assumed, however, that some similar conclusions would be drawn from such a study, namely that there is a pervasive relationship between the public’s reception of conductors and their role, and non-musical social factors. So while the specific metaphorical descriptions and value-based observations might vary according to time and place, comments about aspects of visuality are likely to be universal. Given the ongoing importance of visual culture throughout all western cultures from the period in question until the present day, it is also likely that the visuality of conductors was, and remains, universally influential in their reception.
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