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PRAESTA INSIGHTS

Knowing the Score

What we can learn about leadership from music and musicians

A Praesta Insight document

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Praesta Partners is the UK's premier firm of business coaches. We coach senior leaders including CEOs, main board directors, management team members and other key senior executives. Praesta clients comprise several hundred organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors, including FTSE 100 and 250 companies, government departments, private equity owned businesses, leading professional services firms and all areas of financial services.

All Praesta coaches have had senior level business careers – many were Board members, CEOs, partners or managing directors of major organisations in their first careers. Thorough training, continual professional development and regular supervision are integral to maintaining high standards. As well as one to one coaching, Praesta coaches work with teams, conduct board effectiveness reviews and are leaders in working with executive women.

Praesta Insights pull together thought and experience about topical leadership issues in an accessible and digestible way. We work closely with leaders in different spheres on thought leadership. This publication has been researched and written by Peter Shaw, a partner at Praesta Partners, and Ken Thomson, a director-general in the Scottish Government, writing here in a personal capacity.

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1. Music, work and leadership

Organisations are complex. Leadership is challenging.

One way to approach the challenge of leadership is to learn from other fields. Often, those are sports grounds or battlefields. We watch and learn from the skill and concentration of a golfer or the competitive edge of a great football team. We hear how generals use leadership to create a sense of purpose and shared commitment in pursuit of a campaign strategy.

Work is about more than winning games or battles. In the following pages, we focus on leadership as helping people perform together, creatively.

Seen in that way, music *is* what work can be: a challenge to be competent and then excellent; to combine our efforts with those of others; to create something together that we could not do alone; to contribute and get something back; to communicate with our audiences; and to feel part of something bigger.

We see leadership, like music, as a discipline: as a contribution, and not a position in a hierarchy. Both leadership and music demand skill, knowledge and engagement. Both are developed through practice. Both can be performed in private and in public, in small groups, on large stages, and for a wider public. Both demand of us that we “know the score”.

We consider **conductors, orchestras and leadership**, and make the case for leadership as enabling as well as directive. The best conductors do more than choose the work and set the tempo: they create a space in which every player contributes to a greater whole.

We discuss parallels between **self-organising teams and chamber music** and what leaders can learn from how string quartets and other chamber musicians work together: that it requires good listening as well as playing your own part well.

We reflect on **rehearsal and performance**, and how leaders can work with teams to prepare them to do their best work together.

We consider **the part played by the audience:** those beyond the organisation, affected by its work, who influence it – including, often, by paying for it.

Finally, we reflect on **"wrong notes": things that get in the way of performing well**, and what leaders can learn from how musicians deal with them.

We illustrate each of these themes with examples drawn from "classical" music, because that is the music-making we know best; and we offer questions to help you see and reflect on parallels between the work of musicians and your practice and performance as a leader.

We hope leaders of all kinds will find something relevant and useful here, whether your work is paid or voluntary, and whether as the head of an organisation or a team, or as someone who wants to create something new by influencing a few people close to them or in much wider systems.

All of us can appreciate and learn from the skill, teamwork and creativity of musicians.

2. Leadership and music as disciplines

Leadership is creative. Leaders contribute and influence others to create something that did not exist, or encourage people to work and relate to each other in new ways, for new ends.

Leadership is a discipline, not a position in a hierarchy. Leaders acquire skill and experience through practice. Like music, leadership happens in private as well as in public, and in small teams as well as larger organisations. Both music and leadership demand of us that we "know the score", and bring it to life.

We start our reflection on the parallels between leadership and music by considering music as another creative discipline. Perhaps you remember the first time you held an instrument, picked out a tune on a keyboard or set out to learn a song: the challenge of getting the notes right, and the feelings evoked by the music.

For some, that first encounter with music-making is the start of a lifetime of practicing and performing, as professional musicians. For others, music-making becomes a recreation: a way of re-creating not only sounds, but ourselves.

Similarly, you perhaps remember the first time you took the lead in your dealings with others, whether at work or in other activities. Nearly all of us lead sometimes, whether or not we are formally described as leaders.

Leadership, like music, is something we can practice and bring to our relationships with others, at work and in other parts of our lives. As leaders, whether or not we are active musicians, we can learn

from music as a discipline: from how musicians learn their craft, and how they work with others.

Musicians learn from teachers, from instruction books, by listening to and watching better players, and, above all, by practicing. They understand the point made by Malcolm Gladwell and others, that mastery comes from hours of practice – as many as 10,000 hours.

Practice makes perfect

Learning an instrument, or learning to sing well, demands commitment, study and dedicated practice. A subtle musicians' joke makes the point:

"Can you play the violin?"
"I don't know; I've never tried."

Like actors and athletes, musicians perform with their bodies as well as their minds. They learn the movements that produce a good sound, and the co-ordination of left hand with right, or breath, tongue and fingers.

By practicing, what seemed impossible becomes possible. Scales and arpeggios help musicians learn their way around the instrument or the vocal range. Working on studies, they train fingers, brains, and breath in the techniques and patterns demanded by composers. They develop muscle memory that allows them to focus on continuous refinement. Musicians work on a hard passage over and over again until they can play it right; or, for professionals, until they trust themselves never to play it wrong.

Musicians call these skills, "technique". Leaders, too, learn techniques: for example, how to communicate influentially with individuals and groups of people and how to work with others to bring about change. These aspects of leadership involve technical skills we can practise. Improving them gives credibility and effectiveness to our leadership.

Musical development doesn't stop when the piece lies under the fingers. Musicians continue to grow by learning to listen, bringing their minds to bear on what they are doing and how they could do it differently or better.

Similarly, as leaders, we learn to reflect on our own performance and development and to learn from our peers and from coaches and mentors.

As well as learning by doing, musicians learn the principles and history of their art and craft. Why do some chords sound as though they bring a piece to a close, while others open the music up? Where do the different styles of music come from, and how did they develop, one from another?

Musicians and leaders both benefit from understanding how best they learn. Some prefer to be hands on, to learn by doing. Others want to understand the underlying principles and theory first.

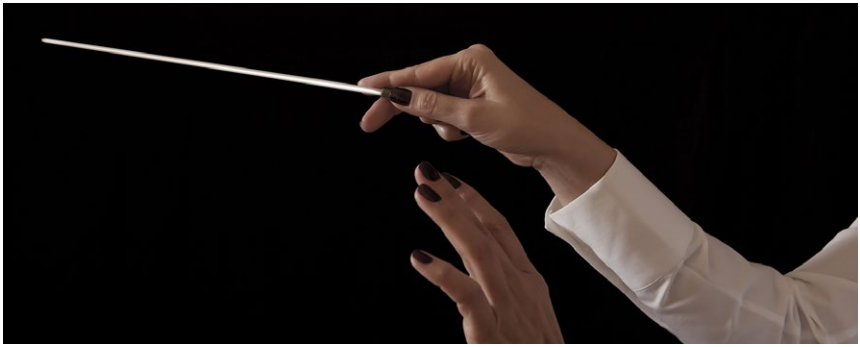
Whichever approach to learning musicians prefer, music-making is about more than hitting the right notes and reading the right books. Musicians learn to put meaning and feeling into what they play: to put heart and soul into the music. They are engaged with their emotions as well as their technical capabilities. Leaders too need to put heart and soul into their work if they are to engage and influence others convincingly. Leaders can only truly lead if people choose to follow.

Musicians can learn technique and theory on their own, through practice and lessons. Like leadership, however, music is not a solitary discipline. Just as leaders work with others to create something new, musicians combine their technical skills to make music *together*: to listen to and co-ordinate with others, attending to what musicians call "ensemble" as well as technique.

In the following sections, we turn to music as a collective discipline. First, we offer some points to help leaders reflect on what they can learn from music as a creative discipline.

Points for reflection:

- How do we learn and practise new skills as leaders?
- Who are our teachers? Who gives us feedback on our performance? Whose performances show us ways to develop our own skill?
- How can we practise leadership more effectively in order to maintain and develop our skills?
- Do we practise enough, or are we getting by on sight-reading?
- Can we develop our understanding of the theory and principles of our work, as well as its daily practice?
- What can we learn from the history of our organisation or profession that will enable us to contribute more fully?
- What is the best blend for us of learning from writers and teachers and learning by doing?
- Do we put heart and soul into leadership, as well as knowledge and technique?



3. Conductors, orchestras and leadership

When we think of parallels between music and leadership, perhaps the first image to come to mind is that of the conductor holding a baton in front of an orchestra.

Those used to large organisations will recognise the structure and hierarchy in an orchestra. The different specialist players form sections, each with a leader responsible for quality and co-ordination. There are first violins and seconds, front desks and back.

Like members of other organisations, the individual players in an orchestra contribute their skill and expertise to create a whole greater than the sum of the parts.

How does a conductor lead these creative, skilled, individuals? There are as many ways to lead and conduct as there are leaders and conductors. Most conductors combine, in different ways, the ability to give direction with the capacity to enable others to contribute well.

Each of the conductors considered by Itay Talgam (see the box on page 8) drew great performances from his orchestras. Each found a leadership style authentic to himself as a musician. All of them carried authority and exercised power in taking decisions, whether over the membership of the orchestra, the interpretation of the music or in the simple act of summoning sound out of silence. Whether you agree with Talgam that conductors get the very best performance from musicians they treat as creative partners, it is worth reflecting how, as a leader, you combine giving direction and opening a space for contributions in how you lead.

Conductors: directive and enabling

In a fascinating and engaging 2009 TED talk, *Lead like the great conductors*, Itay Talgam describes the leadership styles of five well-known conductors. Talgam argues for the importance of enabling and engaging the players as creative partners, not simply giving them instructions. He compares:

- Riccardo Muti, impassively commanding, treating the players as "instruments, not partners";
- Richard Strauss, composer and conductor, demanding strict execution of the detailed instructions in his scores, with little room for individual creativity;
- Herbert von Karajan, his eyes closed, his gestures deliberately imprecise, demanding that his players read his mind to discover his vision of the music;
- Carlos Kleiber, "opening a space for skilled, autonomous players to add a layer of interpretation" so that "control is no longer a zero-sum game";
- and Talgam's own teacher, Leonard Bernstein, starting from the meaning, enabling the players to become the storytellers and thus to share in leading the interpretation of the music.

You might like to watch Itay Talgam's TED talk and ask yourself which leaders in your organisation come to mind as he describes and illustrates these conducting styles.

The musician and writer Benjamin Zander acknowledged during his conducting career that the conductor is the only person on the stage who doesn't make a sound. Whatever their style, all conductors depend on the players, as well as the players on the conductor. We suggested earlier that leadership is a discipline, not a position in a hierarchy, In an orchestra, and in an office, Zander suggests there can be leadership "from any chair". There needs to be ownership at every chair of the purpose and quality of the overall performance.

"Leading from any chair"

In *The Art of Possibility*, Benjamin Zander describes how he came to see the importance for him as a professional conductor of enabling his players to "lead from any chair".

I had been conducting for nearly twenty years when it suddenly dawned on me that the conductor of an orchestra does not make a sound. His picture may appear on the cover of the CD in various dramatic poses, but his true power derives from his ability to make other people powerful. I began to ask myself questions like "What makes a group lively and engaged?" instead of "How good am I?" [...] I began to shift my attention to how effective I was at enabling the musicians to play each phrase as beautifully as they were capable.

Zander found this approach led to better performance. Leaders in other fields often ask themselves "How good am I?" We might also want to reflect on how well we are enabling those we lead to contribute to the organisation's performance. We might get better results from a more lively and engaged team.

Conductors, and other leaders, need to give direction in order to set standards, maintain focus and ensure results. To get the best results, they also need to engage those they lead, rather than simply requiring them to obey.

From this combination, leaders and conductors create the conditions in which those they lead can bring together their knowledge and skills to create something together they could not do on their own. By giving direction along with freedom, and by creating that sense of contributing to a larger whole, conductors and leaders earn the respect, support and loyalty of players and followers.

"The Music Paradigm"

After becoming curious about how organisational development issues could be brought to life with parallels in orchestras, conductor Roger Nierenberg developed "The Music Paradigm", described at musicparadigm.com and in his book *Maestro: a surprising story about leading by listening*.

Among the points brought out in a series of short videos on the website are the effects on professional musicians of a conductor micromanaging and giving mixed messages, and the positive effect of giving good directions and trusting professionals to act on them.

Something of the quality of the relationship between an orchestra and its conductor can be seen in how they communicate while performing. Some concert halls and TV broadcasts give the audience a player's eye view of the conductor, and of the gestures, expressions and moments of connection in the music-making. A conductor's eyebrows can be as important as the baton!

Points for reflection

- What are the "conducting styles" of your organisation's leaders? How do the "players" respond?
- As a leader, what is *your* conducting style? How do you combine giving direction with opening a space for people to contribute?
- Is your conducting style authentic to you? Does it get the best possible performance from your teams?
- How are you going to enable team members to perform at their best?
- What type of conductor of teams are you going to be in the future?
- If an audience could see you "conduct" your organisation, what would they learn about you as a leader?

4. Self-organising teams and chamber music

Often, leadership involves creating and working in small, self-organising teams: for example, to generate ideas, make decisions or work to bring about change. This creates challenges and the opportunities paralleling those musicians experience in chamber music.

Chamber musicians play without a conductor and one-to-a-part. Chamber groups are usually self-organising. Each player *is* a voice in the music and *has* a voice in decisions about how the music will be played. That isn't always an easy experience. David Waterman, the cellist of the Endellion Quartet, says that "the communal nature of decision-making is often more testing than the decisions themselves".

Similarly, there are times in other work when *how* we take decisions is as much of a challenge as the substance of the issues. Listening is always important.

The ego-busting art of listening

In *Together: the rituals, pleasures and politics of co-operation*, the sociologist and author Richard Sennett draws on his own experience as a professional musician to describe what happens when skilled individuals work together.

Young musical hotshots are often brought up short when they begin playing chamber music; nothing has prepared them to attend to others. (I was like that, aged ten.) Though they may know their own part perfectly, in rehearsal they have to learn the ego-busting art of listening, turning outward. It's sometimes thought that the result moves to the opposite extreme, the musician blending in, submerging his or her ego in a larger whole. But sheer homogeneity is no recipe for making music together – or rather, a very dull recipe. Musical character appears instead through little dramas of deference and assertion; in chamber music, particularly, we need to hear individuals speaking in different voices which sometimes conflict, as in bowing or string colour. Weaving together these differences is like conducting a rich conversation.

People in organisations have the same challenge: how to combine their individual skills and expertise in a way that creates something greater than the sum of the parts, encouraging creativity and not imposing homogeneity.

When it works, chamber playing creates a special experience for players and listeners alike. Each player is a voice in a dialogue: sometimes leading, sometimes supporting, sometimes challenging or contrasting, sometimes commenting. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Can we learn something about leadership from how that special quality of experience emerges from the individual contributions in chamber music?

Teamwork can be creative, not just people mechanically "playing their parts". Even for musicians who know each other well, playing a piece they've played dozens of times before, each time is a new co-creation. Like the script of a play, the notes on the page are not themselves the music; they are the bones of the music, fleshed out anew by each performance.

In other fields of work, similar tasks and projects come round again. Leaders can help those playing their parts to come to each performance afresh.

All teamwork needs communication and co-ordination among the team players. Good chamber-music playing takes this to a high level. Though musicians discuss the music and its interpretation as they prepare their performance, communication in the act of performing is mostly non-verbal. Studying string quartets, psychologists Vivienne Young and Andrew Colman observed that the players' "mode of interaction involves a degree of intimacy and subtlety possibly not equaled by any other kind of group."

This kind of non-verbal communication, the ability to respond almost instinctively to what others are doing, marks high-performing teams in other kinds of work. Leaders can look to develop this skill themselves, and in others.

Teamwork is enhanced when team members respect each other's contributions and are open to others' ideas and feedback. As the author and playwright Alan Bennett observed of chamber musicians, "it results in them doing a better job".

"… it results in them doing a better job."

Alan Bennett writes in his diary of the experience of working with a string quartet on incidental music for a film:

Striking about the musicians is their total absence of self-importance. They play a passage, listen to it back, then give each other notes, and run over sections again […] And the musicians nod and listen, try out a few bars here and there, then settle down and have another go. Now one could never do this with actors. No actor would tolerate a fellow performer who ventured to comment on what he or she was doing – comment of that sort coming solely from the director, and even then it has to be carefully packaged and seasoned with plenty of love and appreciation. Whereas these players, all of them first-class, seem happy to listen to the views of anyone if it results in them doing a better job.

Leaders can learn from chamber musicians how to create the conditions for good teamwork: teams that organise themselves well, reach good decisions, communicate and co-ordinate as they perform, are open to each other's ideas on how to improve and, together, create something not possible by working alone.

Points for reflection:

- In the work you lead, what can people do as a team, that they cannot on their own?
- How are decisions taken in teams you work in or lead?
- When does the team's work feel creative, when repetitive?
- How do members of the team communicate as they work together at their best?
- How might you enable, influence and support team members, including yourself, to bring the best out of each other?

5. Rehearsal and performance

Rehearsal is different from practice, and from performance. This is as true for leaders and organisations as for musicians; we can perform better with good preparation, and we can learn from how musicians prepare to perform.

Practice helps musicians learn new skills and keep them up to the mark. Where practice is solitary work on technique, rehearsal is collective and co-creative: it is the work the team does in order to be ready to perform for an audience.

"Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse."

Martin Elliot is Co-Medical Director at Great Ormond Street Hospital and one of the world's leading paediatric cardiothoracic surgeons. He is a musician, and has operated with Mozart or Miles Davis playing in the operating theatre. He brings to life his presentations on leadership and improvement in surgical teams by showing how they have learned from other high-performing teams whose work demands speed, accuracy and co-ordination: Formula 1 racing teams, the Red Arrows and the dancers of the Royal Ballet. He sums up much of this learning in a single phrase: "rehearse, rehearse, rehearse".

What effect does rehearsal have on people in a team? Having observed string quartets and others in action, psychologists Vivienne Young and Andrew Colman suggest that the presence of other players or an audience enhances the execution of well-learned skills, but holds back the learning of new skills and the execution of imperfectly learned skills. If the individual players have sufficiently mastered their instruments and their parts, rehearsal and performance may well take the music to a new level. If not, the players might benefit from practice: rehearsal and performance may hold them back.

There are parallels in other work. We should be confident about the part we shall play so that we contribute well as the team prepares to perform. We should prepare together to perform well: “rehearse, rehearse, rehearse”.

What can other teams learn from what musicians do in rehearsal? Once again, it seems that listening is as important as playing. By listening in rehearsal, musicians find and develop relationships among their parts: who will take the lead and who will follow. Not all orchestral co-ordination comes from the tip of the conductor’s baton. Ensemble emerges from the understanding the musicians develop in rehearsal of how their part interacts with others in a larger whole.

Similarly in other work, watching and listening is as important as what we say and do. In preparing teams to perform well, leaders are not simply issuing instructions; they are helping team members find how best to fit their contributions to each other.

Listening well

The sociologist and musician Richard Sennett on rehearsing:

Rehearsals are the foundation for making music; when rehearsing music, listening skills become vitally important, and in listening well, the musician becomes a more cooperative creature.

Leaders do more than co-ordinate activity. They create a sense of shared vision and purpose. Again, leaders can learn from how musicians do the same.

Most musicians come to a rehearsal already knowing the notes. Professionals will usually have played the piece dozens of times before. Conductors and players use the rehearsal to create the music anew together, developing a shared vision of how they want it to sound, what impression they want it to leave and what feelings they want it to evoke. No two performances are the same.

Orchestral musicians value the skill of a good conductor in making rehearsals creative, purposeful and engaging. By communicating a vision of the performance to the players, a conductor helps them think differently about the music. It might be done by describing technical effects or details of speed and dynamics; or it might be done through imagery, inviting a creative response from the players.

Rehearsal time is usually limited, and needs to be used well. The musicians may decide to focus on key passages, or on establishing the tempo and mood for each movement. They may deliberately leave some passages alone, so that they will be fresh in performance.

Similarly, other teams may decide, as they prepare to perform, what they want to commit to in advance and where they want to be able to respond to events and each other as the work unfolds.

A good rehearsal builds rapport and understanding between conductor and players, and among players. Together they seek to bring the music alive. In a good rehearsal, the musicians are challenged and engaged through clarity of instruction and creative dialogue. They feel valued and want to give of their best. They feel part of something bigger and are ready to perform to a wider audience. They are mindful of the contribution of their colleagues and how each depends on the others.

For musicians working well together, rehearsal is more than technical preparation. It can be fulfilling in itself, creating the sense of being part of a skilled, creative team in pursuit of a shared vision. Leaders can aspire to create the same experience for those they lead, as they prepare to perform.

Points for reflection

- As a leader, how do you ensure that people acquire the skills they need in order to play their part well as members of a team?
- How do you prepare teams to perform: that is, how do you rehearse?
- As they prepare to perform, how do you ensure that people listen to each other, as well as have their say?
- How do you create and share a sense of vision and purpose for those preparing to perform?
- Do you ensure your team or organisation makes the best use of preparation time?
- Does preparation time build rapport? Do people enjoy it?
- Why would anyone want to rehearse with you?

6. The part played by the audience

Few of us, musicians or not, do our work without an audience of some kind, whether in the room or further afield. For most of us there are many audiences. Our work is influenced by and acquires meaning from its relationship with those for whom we perform.

Musicians play before many audiences, in the concert hall and beyond. The paying customers have committed time and money to be present. They want to be uplifted and entertained. They want to go away having felt their time and money has been well spent.

"A performance cannot take place without an audience."

In *A Musician's Alphabet*, the concert pianist Susan Tomes devotes the letter A to the Audience. She writes about the relationship between performers and those who come to hear them:

A performance cannot take place without an audience, and to make the performance feel like an event depends on the willing collaboration of the listeners [...] though listeners don't participate in the performance, their close attention certainly contributes to, indeed largely brings about, a shared concentration which enables transcendental things to happen.

Similarly, commercial organisations perform to their customers; governments to their citizens; charities to their members and clients; and so on.

Musicians will be anticipating where an audience will be coming from and what is likely to “strike a chord” with them. They will be judging the mood in an auditorium and deciding how best to respond.

Similarly, those involved in customer relations and marketing gauge the mood and views of the audience for other kinds of performance.

The very presence of an audience can enhance the musicians’ performance, or give them nerves and stage-fright, or even do both at the same time.

Among the audience in the hall may be music critics with a column to fill. They bring assumptions and expectations about what makes a good “live” performance, something with a bit more in-the-moment edge and excitement than a studio recording; yet their reviews will be read and repeated well beyond the moment of the concert. The critical audience demands of performers that they balance risk and spontaneity with longer-term reputation. Critics demand much the same of organisations and their leaders.

Organisations and their leaders have a relationship with their critics, too. As for musicians, the relationship can be a challenging one.

Musicians play for other musicians. What will attract the best players to join this orchestra, or the best soloists to perform with it? How can performing with others enable musicians to develop their capabilities and reputation? Similarly, one audience for an organisation’s work is those people who might be attracted, or not, to work for it.

Creating rapport

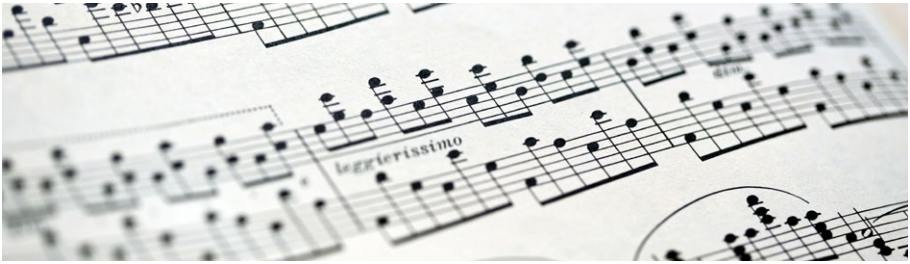
Reflecting further on the relationship between musicians and audience, Susan Tomes describes how she creates rapport with the audience even before stepping onto the concert platform.

I sometimes sit in the dressing room between rehearsal and concert and make myself think about our listeners hurrying to finish up work, ironing clothes, instructing babysitters, preparing early or late suppers, making arrangements for transport and parking, how to meet friends. Imagining all this makes me realise how much care the audience puts into a concert. They think they are coming to spend an evening listening to me, but equally, I am preparing to spend an evening in their company.

Taking the time to put ourselves in the shoes of those who experience our performance helps create rapport and a good relationship with the audience for our work. It may also help us discern what we can learn from what might feel like indifferent or hostile responses from our audiences.

Points for reflection:

- What audiences are interested in what we do as leaders and in organisations?
- How do our audiences affect and shape our work?
- How do we combine pushing ourselves and taking risks with protecting and enhancing our reputation?
- What work do we want to do, for which audiences?
- How can we best create rapport with those who experience our work?



7. “Wrong notes”: things that get in the way of performing well

This section explores five challenges musicians face and how they respond. The same challenges arise in work contexts beyond music.

Background noise

Musicians are inevitably sensitive to background noise. Passing traffic, the gurgle of heating pipes, even the hum of lights, disturb the still of the music-room and the calm of the musicians. Distractions outside can produce inner tension and erode concentration. A musician’s practice can affect others, as anyone who has lived with a trumpeter or a drummer will know!

Sometimes, distractions can be removed or avoided. At other times, musicians need to be able to filter out the background noise, to maintain the quality of their concentration and their performance. Musicians who learn their craft in front of noisy crowds, or busking in the street, or in noisy blocks of practice rooms, develop strong powers of attention and focus. They can communicate and influence through the background noise.

Dealing with background noise

- Can you recognise distractions and remove them or learn to block them out?
- Can you develop ways of engaging people's attention whatever may be happening in the background?
- How could you practice communicating with and influencing others in “noisy” environments?

Being present

Preparing to perform, musicians tune more than their instruments: they tune in to their own mood and readiness and those of their colleagues.

They may be conscious of conditions in the auditorium. Often, the arrival of the audience changes the room's acoustics and the temperature—emotionally as well as physically.

They will be mindful of the work they did in rehearsal and how to bring it to bear on the performance to come. They will be aware of the audience's expectation of a satisfying, perhaps outstanding, performance. They prepare to engage with the musicians around them.

Musicians develop the ability to be mindful of inner and outer states in preparing both musically and emotionally. They may develop routines to help them be, like athletes, "in the zone". These may include concert-day rituals and reflective or meditative techniques.

Being in touch with one's self and one's surroundings before a performance – for example, a speech, or an important meeting – can be useful for leaders, as for musicians. For both, even a few deep breaths before performing can make a big difference.

Being present

- As a leader, do you take time to tune in to your surroundings and to other people?
- Are you mindful of your own thoughts, feelings and physical state and how they affect your performance?
- Do you have, or might you develop, routines to help bring relaxed focus to how you perform?

Learning, development and growth

Musicians may be used to a way of playing that works for them. They have built up a repertoire and can play pieces well without undue effort. Everyday life and the demands of performance crowd in on time for practice, reflection and development, but there is always more to learn: new repertoire, better technique, deeper interpretation. Musicians need to ensure that they continue to learn and develop, combining command of what they already know with stretch and growth; neither over-reaching their abilities nor accepting self-limiting beliefs about what is possible for them.

For musicians and for leaders, learning and development may come from working on new challenges or with new colleagues. It also comes from self-awareness and reflection on the journey of the musician or the leader: where am I now, what brought me here, what possibilities lie ahead?

Growing through our leadership

- Do you take time to reflect on how you continue to learn and develop as a leader, recognising what you and others do well and being willing to travel further?
- Do you identify and seek out those whose encouragement and challenge can enable you to extend your capabilities?
- Are you honest with yourself about self-limiting beliefs and how they might be holding you back?

Relationships

Musicians are human. Inevitably, differences and tensions arise in their relationships with their colleagues.

Sometimes, these can be creative and generative, opening up new possibilities for individuals and the group; at other times, they can be corrosive. Individual and "tribe" preferences can lead to conflict. As in any group of people working together, there can be rivalries and conflict as well as collaboration. Relationships within the orchestra and between the players and the conductor are subject to many pressures. There may be a growing feeling that some players, even though they are trying hard, are holding back the ensemble as a whole.

Part of leadership, for musicians and in other contexts, is to surface and discuss different expectations and intentions early so that they don't harden into resentment.

Getting the best from relationships

- Do you encourage openness about expectations and differences in work relationships?
- In your work, do you and others name issues and expect people to talk about them in a grown-up way?
- Do your work relationships create space for both competition and cooperation in pursuit of a shared purpose?

Performance appraisal and feedback

If the last performance went well, the players can be "on a high" and might be a little complacent entering the next performance. If the last performance went less well, the players may carry some unease, frustration or even a desire to blame and recriminate. After a sequence of indifferent performances, players may feel stuck in a rut, and a loss of energy and a sense of creative adventure. When musicians carry their emotional reactions around with them, it can inhibit them from being at their best in future performances.

It can take an act of leadership – from any of the players, not necessarily the conductor or the person "in charge" – to recognise what a group is carrying and persuade, inspire or cajole its members to shift to a different way of thinking, feeling or being.

Learning from performances

- In your work, are you able to assess each performance, learn from it, then draw a line and move on?
- Are you mindful of your emotional reaction to your last performance and aware that these feelings can stay with us, sometimes without us realising?
- How might you be less captured by emotional reactions of frustration and disappointment?
- Do you stay aware of the risk of complacency after success, and dissatisfaction and a feeling of being stuck when things have not been so good?

8. Music, work and leadership

Introducing these reflections, we suggested that music *is* what work can be: a challenge to be competent and then excellent; to combine our efforts with those of others; to create something together that we could not do alone; to contribute and get something back; to communicate with our audiences; and to feel part of something bigger.

We hope the material here has helped you reflect on parallels between the work you lead and how musicians engage each other and their work, and that your reflection stimulates you to lead, engage and influence others in fresh ways. We wish you well as you embark on future performances, ready to lead creatively and "knowing the score".

Reflecting on work and music:

- What skills are you developing through competence to excellence?
- How well do you combine your skills and creativity with those of others?
- As a leader, how do you provide direction and create space for others to work well together?
- What in your work speaks to a wider audience?
- Are you part of something bigger, contributing your leadership to a higher purpose?

9. Sources and further reading

Here is a selection of further reading relevant to the theme of leadership and music and, more widely, leadership seen as encouraging and creating space for people to create together what they could not do alone.

This list includes references for the authors mentioned or quoted earlier, not all of whom are principally concerned with music or leadership. It includes some other writing, not mentioned earlier, which may be useful for those wishing to explore this perspective on leadership further.

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Praesta Insights pull together thought and experience of topical leadership issues in an accessible and digestible way. We work closely with leaders in different spheres on thought leadership. This publication has been researched and written by Peter Shaw, a partner at Praesta Partners, and Ken Thomson, a director-general in the Scottish Government, writing here in a personal capacity.

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