

# Score Study for Everyday Conductors

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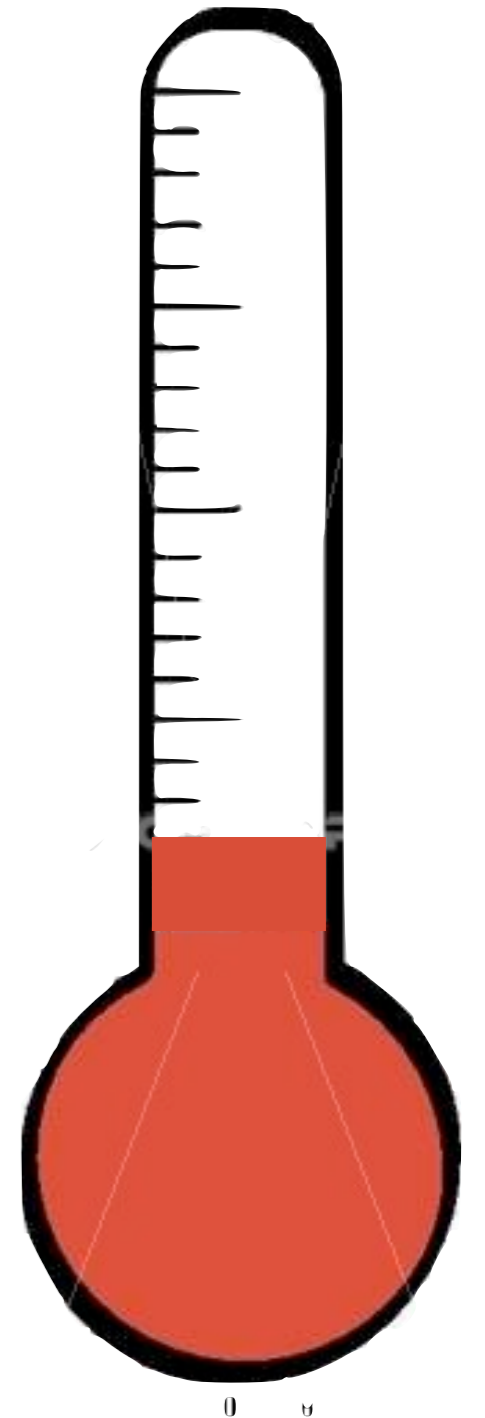
# Avoidance Tactics

- *I am a really, really busy school music director.*
- *I spend at least 60 hours a week doing my administration and teaching.*
- *With the upcoming fundraisers and tour, make that 80!*
- *I know that I need to do better by studying my scores more...but how?*
- *Perhaps I can gain inspiration from the great conductors...*

# George Solti

He had an unorthodox method of score study. He simply would start at the beginning and completely ingest only a page or two each day, learning absolutely every note and how it related to others horizontally and vertically. The next day he would go on and do the same with the next page or two.

My  
Despairometer

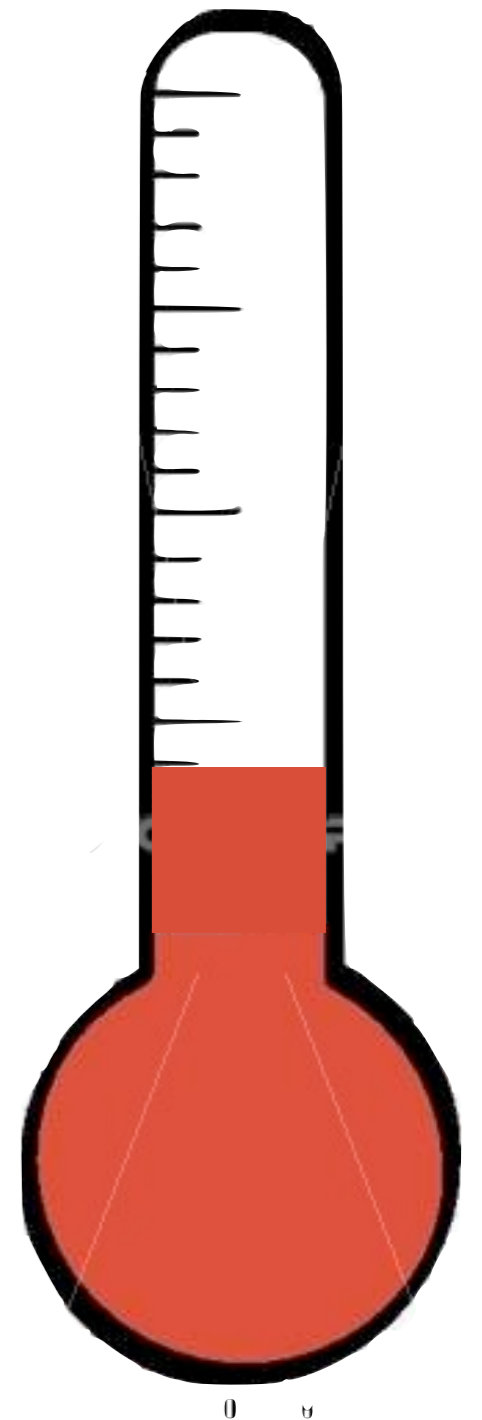


# Arnold Gabriel

My  
Despairometer

His major points about score study:

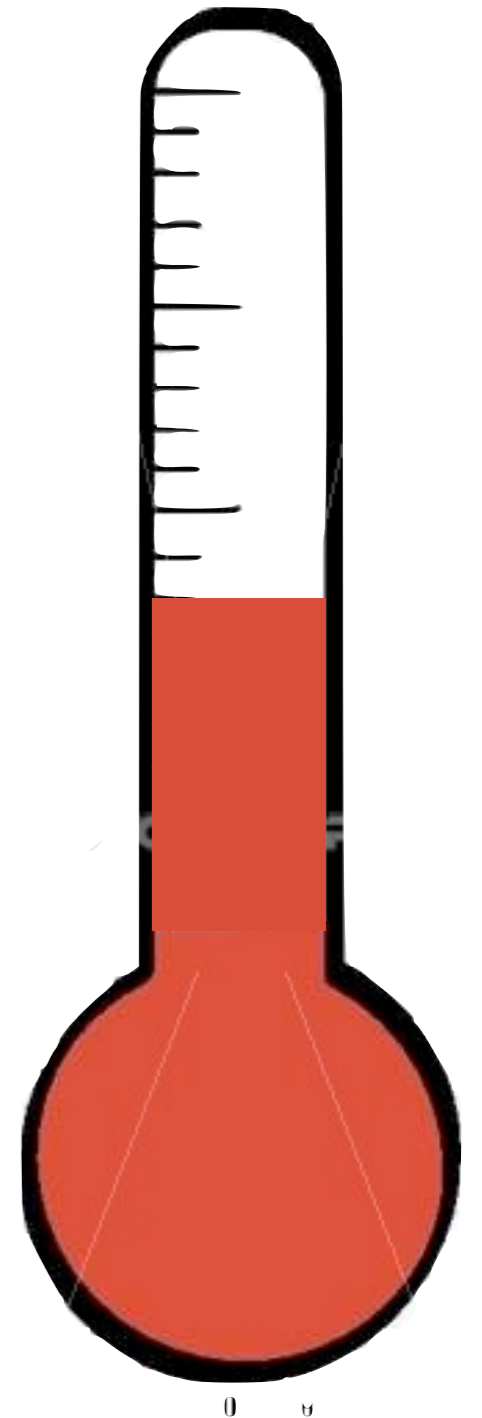
- Find the high and low points of the piece, dynamically, harmonically, melodically.
- Think in terms of grammar-  
phrases, sentences, paragraphs,  
commas, etc.



# Herbert von Karajan

My  
Despairometer

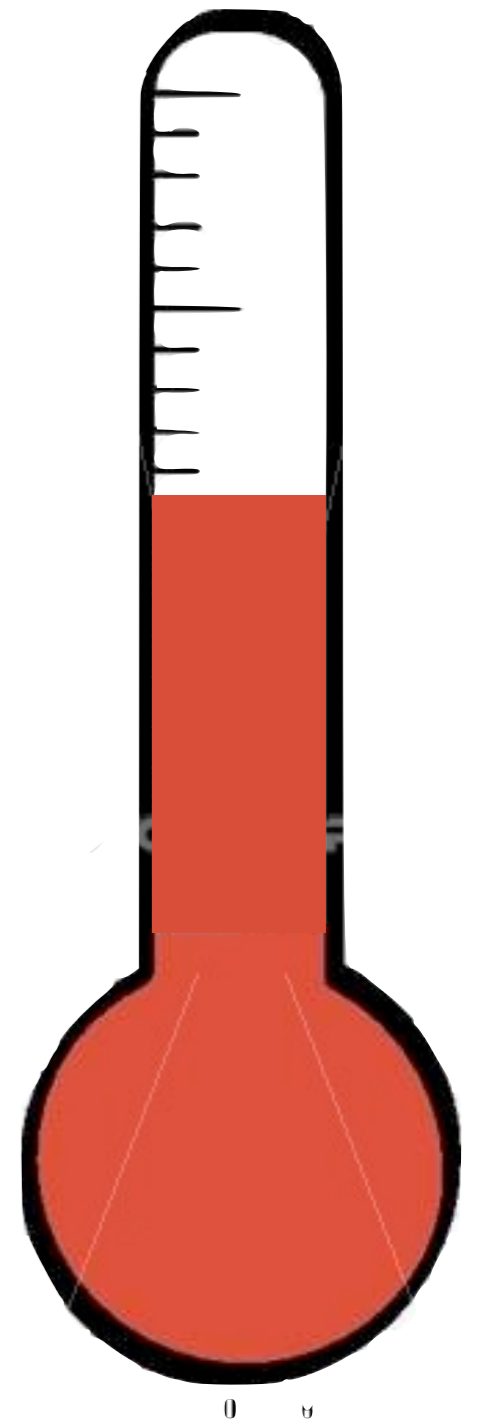
One person who saw him studying a new score said that he resembled a cat curled up on the floor...motionless and simply taking every part of the score into his being. His scores were perfectly clean, without a mark in them since he didn't need to use them when conducting.



# Margaret Hillis

*I decide whether the harmony functions as a tonic or a substitute tonic, subdominant or dominant; whether a Neapolitan 6th is a substitute subdominant or has a dominant function. This helps a great deal in preparing choruses because then you always know where your leading tones are and they always have to be reasonably high.*

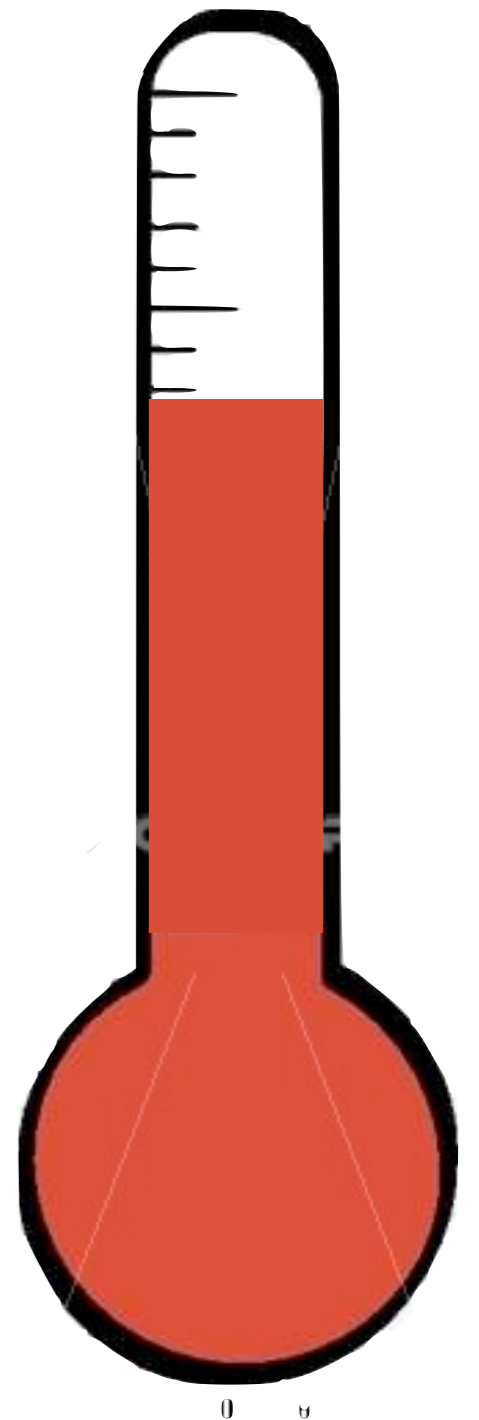
My  
Despairometer



# Gunter Herbig

*I read through each instrumental line horizontally. I start reading the double-basses for a length of perhaps 32 measures.... Then I go to the cellos: I see what they are doing with the double basses; I read everything, every dot on the notes, every little accent as if I am playing the line very slowly. I go through the entire score in this manner.*

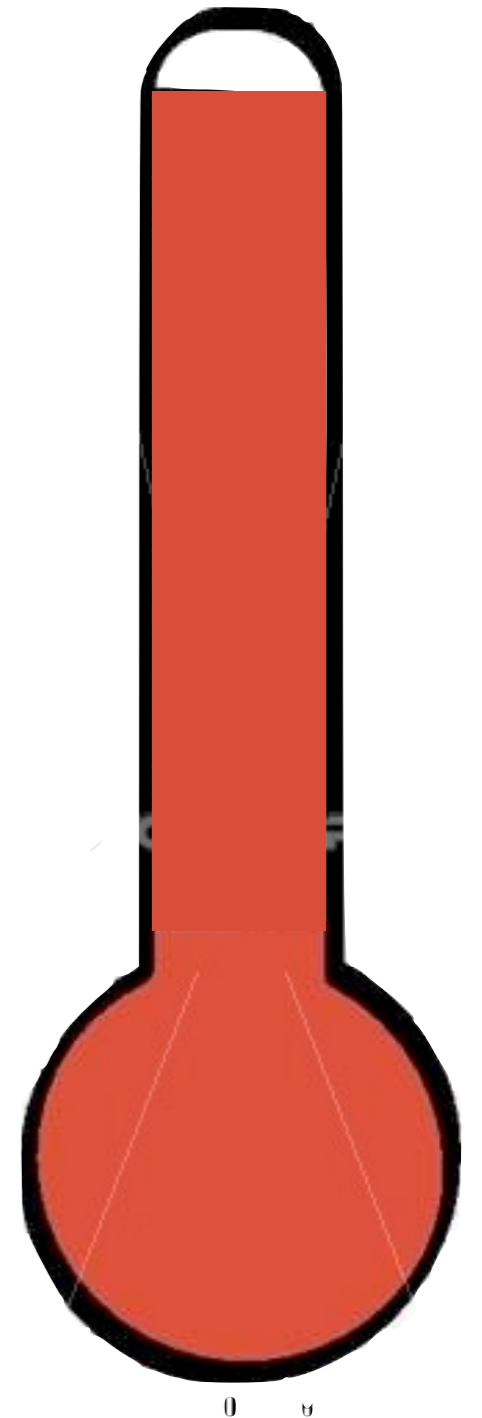
My  
Despairometer



# Eduardo Mata

My  
Despairometer

*I studied with Carlos Chávez, who taught us the possibility of analyzing scores exhaustively....He used anatomical and morphological analysis related to the density and important of the material utilized...Soon I realized that there is no better way to learn a score.*

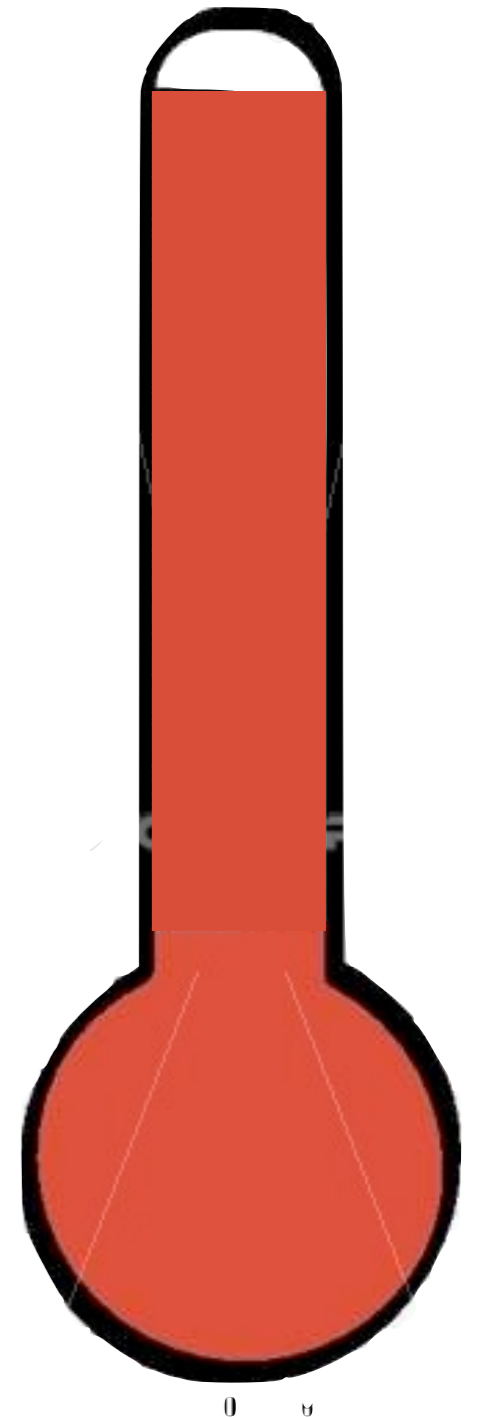




# Roger Norrington

My  
Despairometer

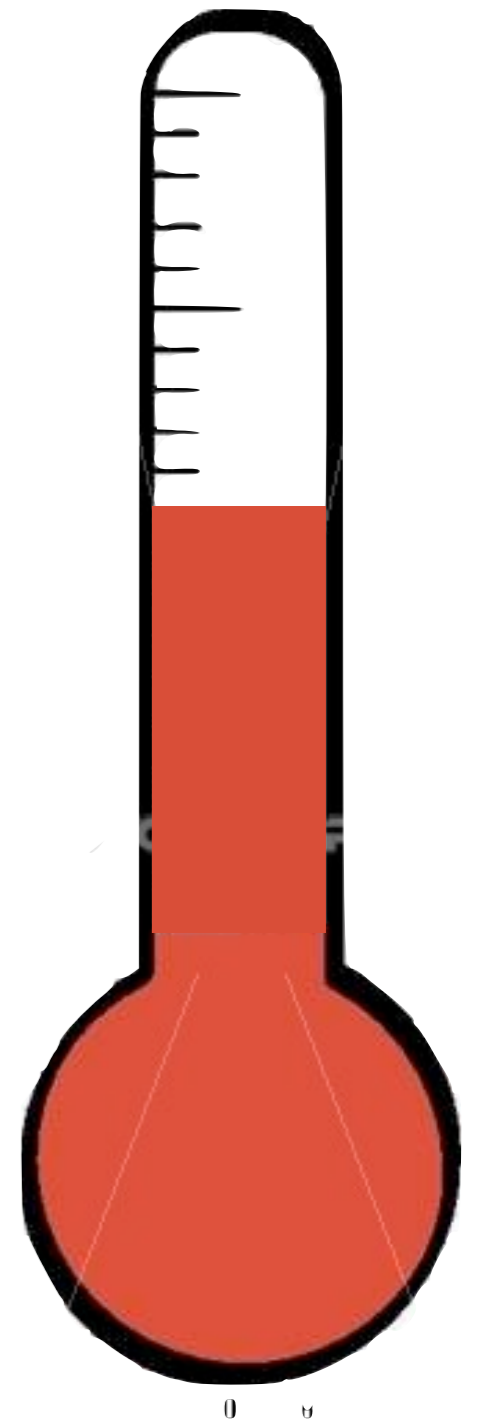
*I study in lots of different ways. If I don't know a piece, I'll listen to a recording...any recording would do. I'd listen just to get the sound of the score in my head. I'd probably listen to it while driving. I'd just get used to it subconsciously...So if I'm driving it's good because I can't look at the score. I have to listen to what's happening...I don't use the piano much since I never learned how to play the piano well. However...*



# Roger Norrington

My  
Despairometer

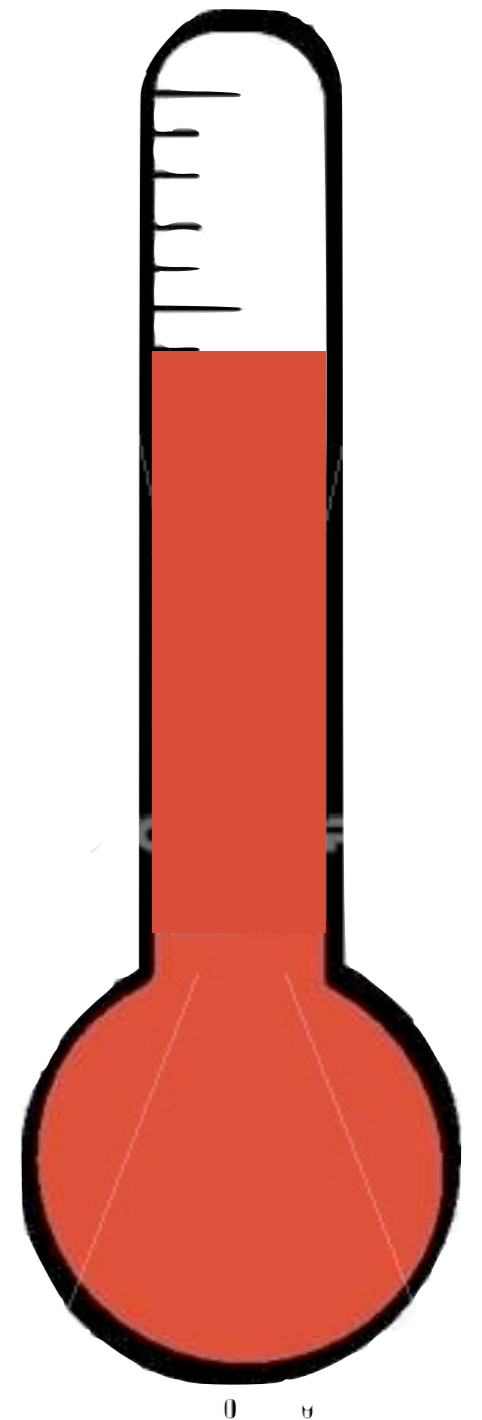
*...then I go into a whole lot of detail. I might not label every chord but I know what it's doing and where it's going. Then I go through the score with a more inventive mind, forgetting about structure. I ask, 'What's really happening?'...is the music funny or serious, whether a particular gesture is tragic or comic. I ask what the flavor is....I live with a work a minimum of six months before performing it.*



# Claudio Abbado

*The conductor must know everything that can be found out about the composer, and this should include studying all his chamber and vocal works as well, to get a 'feel', a better idea of his style.*

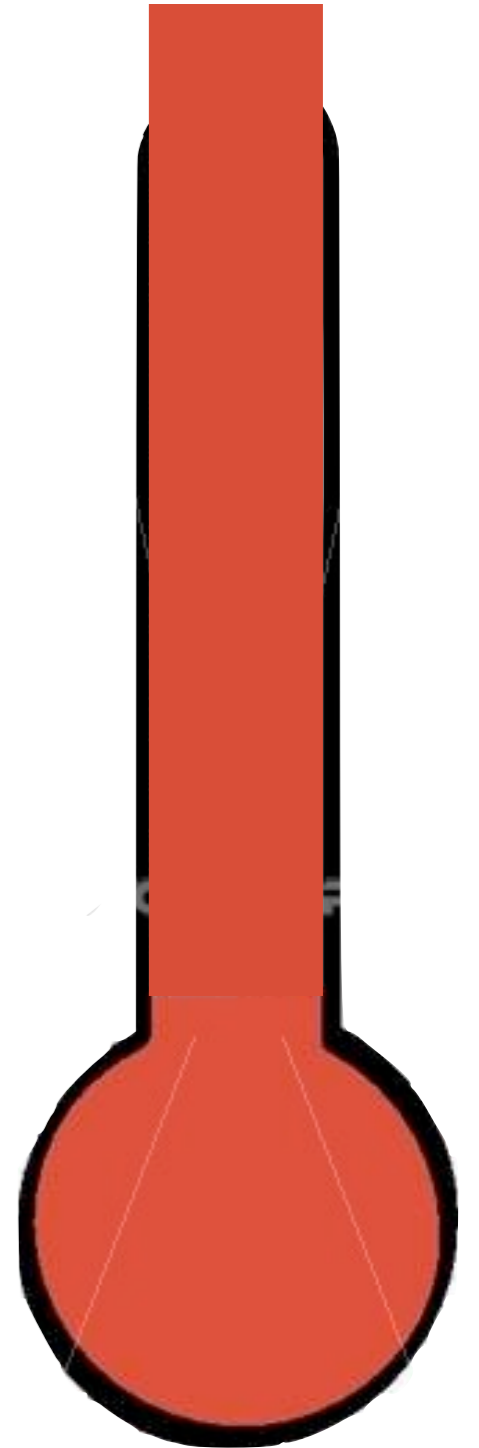
My  
Despairometer



# Catherine Comet

*Well, first of all, it takes hours and hours. Score learning is basically about score analysis. You go as deeply as possible. You need to be able to reconstruct from scratch what the composer originally did and then put it back together again.... Then you think that once you have spent maybe 200 hours on a score that you have learned it. Well, that's not true....*

My  
Despairometer





# Score Study Commonalities

as reported by these maestros

- Research the basic idea and history of the piece: **All**
- Macro and micro analysis: **Most**--a few notable exceptions
- Marking the score: **Most**, to some extent
- Harmonic analysis: **All**, to some extent
- Phrasal or motivic analysis: **Most**
- Structural analysis: **All**, to some extent

# Score Study Commonalities

as reported by these maestros

- Playing the score on piano: **Some**
- Listening to recording(s): **Only one who admitted**
- Playing or singing the individual parts: **Some**
- Regular study time every day: **A few**
- Memorizing the score as an aid to learning it: **Some**
- Using photographic memory: **Very few**
- Looking at the score a lot: **All**

# Hypothesis

- *We often associate “analysis” with less enjoyable “academic” passive experiences. Jan LaRue talks about analysis being the study of “frozen” music.*
- *We became musicians and conductors because we are “doers,” we like to “play.”*
- ***We may have greater success preparing our music, if we take an active “doing” approach as opposed to a passive “analytical” approach. We can think about actively studying music in order to “defrost” it.***

# Patrie Overture

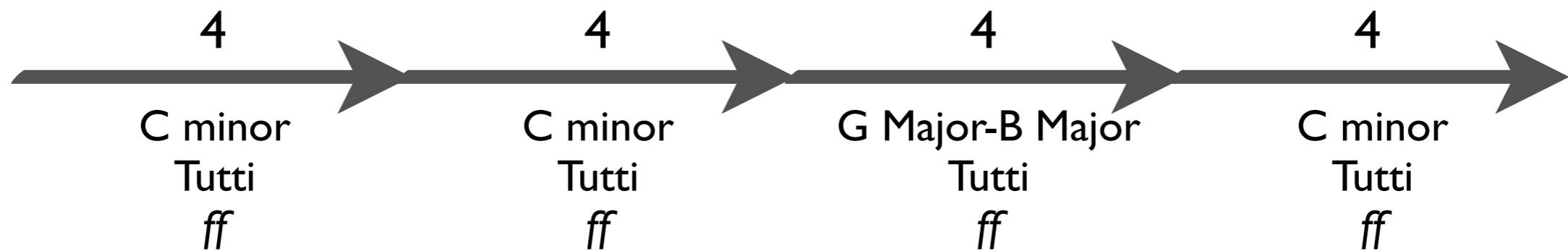
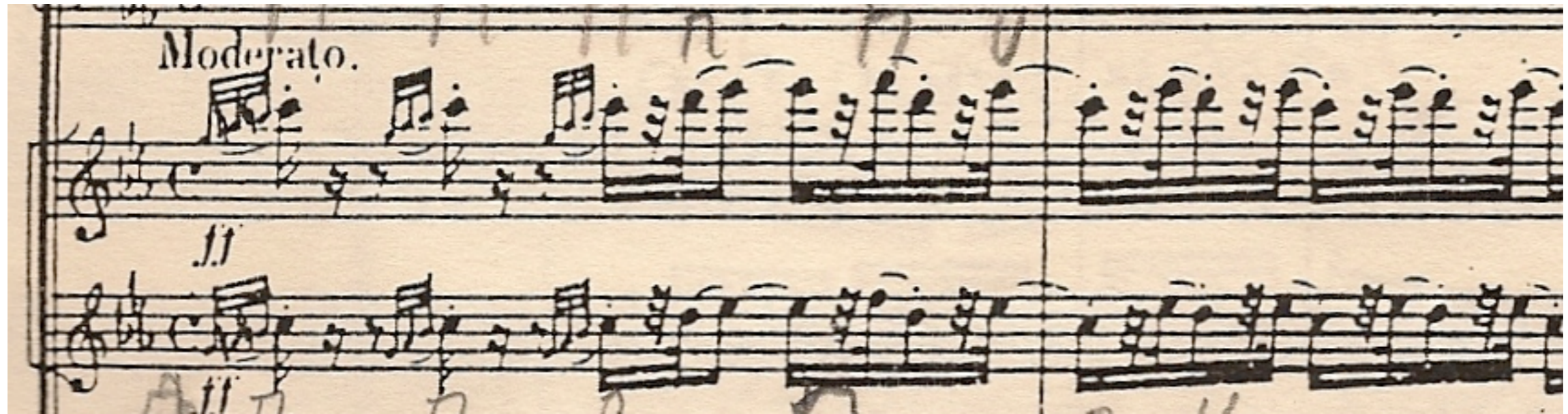
Georges Bizet



# Section A, PART I, 16 measures

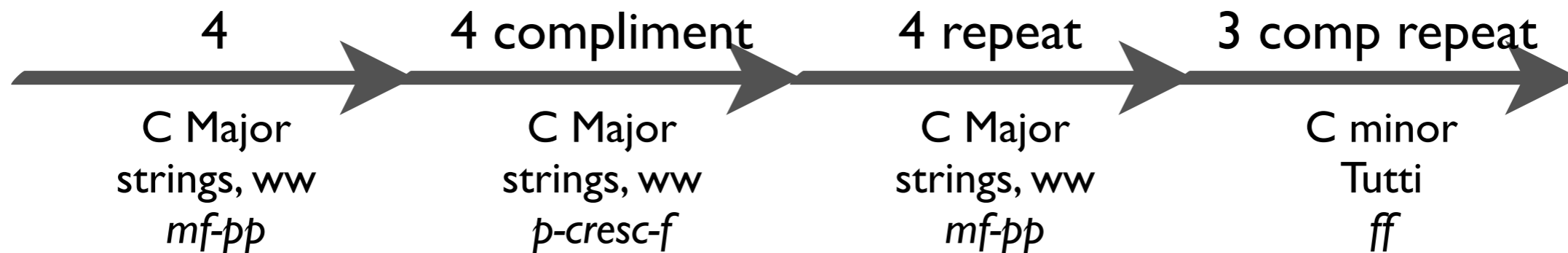
Quarter=78

***Off to battle***



# Section A, PART 4, 15 measures

Quarter=78 reh B

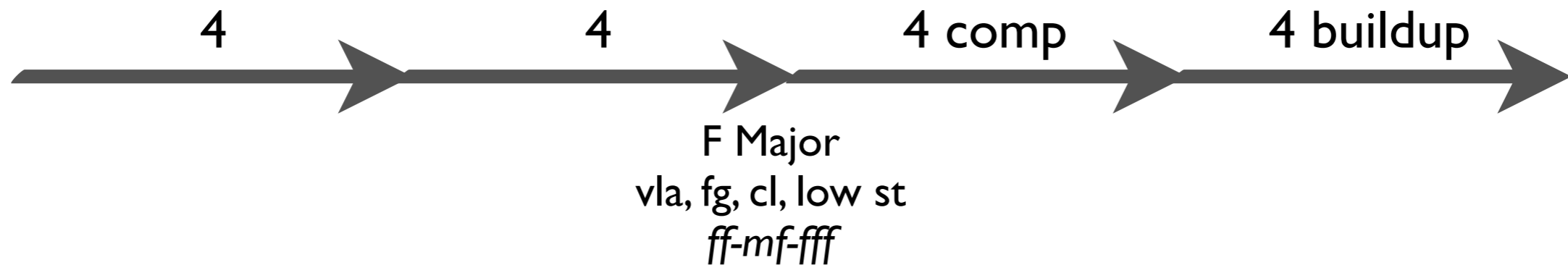
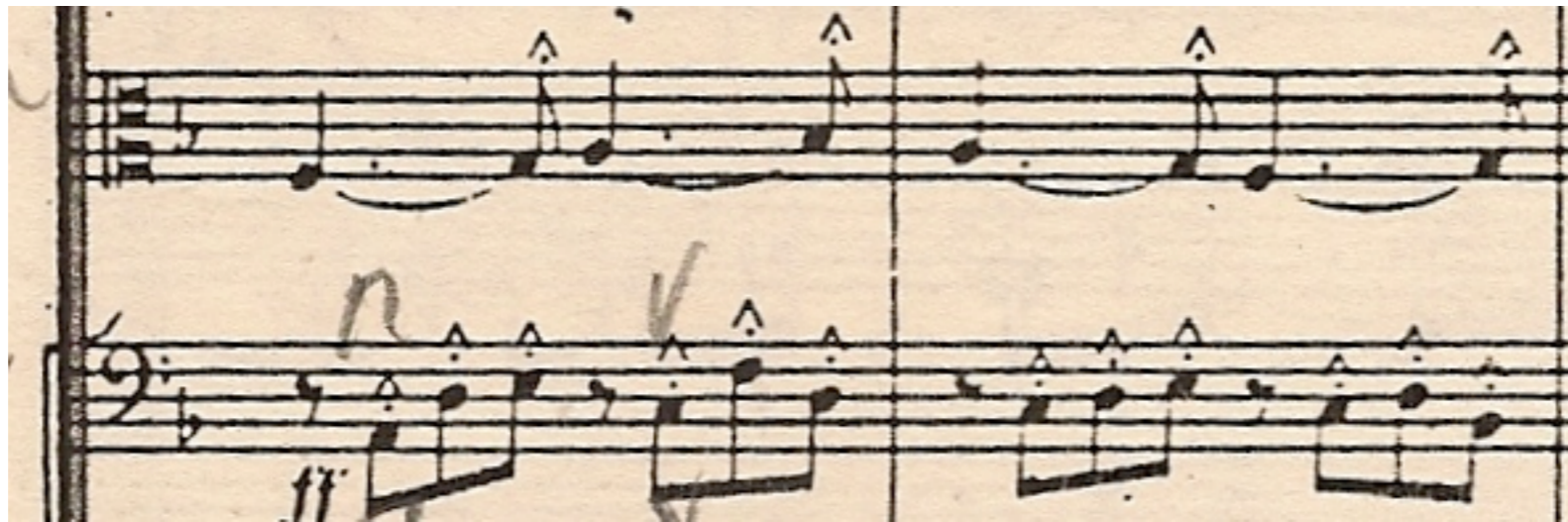




# Section B, PART 1, 16 measures

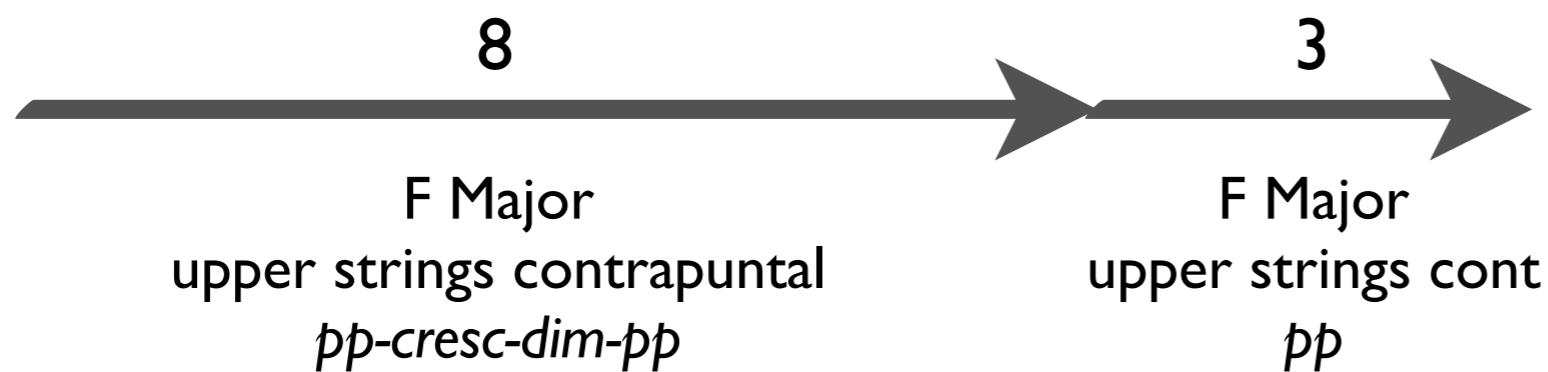
Quarter=110 reh E

**Optimism**



# Section B, PART 2, 11 measures

Quarter=110 reh F





# Section D, PART 4, 15 measures

Dotted quarter = 60

**6/8**

reh U

**Jaunty  
nationalism**



5

5

5

C Major  
strings then brass ww fanfare  
*f*

C Major  
strings then brass ww fanfare  
*f*

C Major  
strings then brass ww fanfare  
*f*

# Section D, PART 5, 4 measures

Dotted quarter = 60

**Chromatic  
ascension**

reh V



4



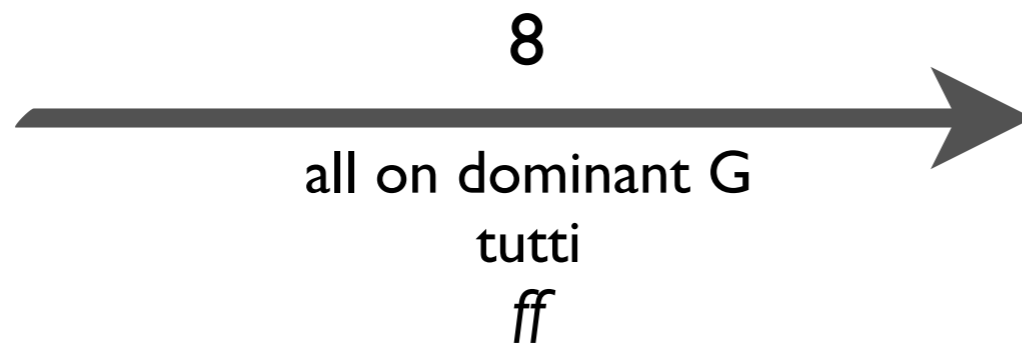
to dominant G  
strings, wws  
*pp* to *ff*



# Section D, PART 6, 8 measures

Dotted quarter = 60

**Fanfare  
and  
Finale**





# A Few Suggestions for Everyday Conductors

## **1. Don't Despair!**

- a. Be selective in which scores you really study.
- b. Be positive. Change “I have to do this score study” to “I get to defrost this frozen musical notation.”
- c. Time spent in score study is time earned in rehearsal. Think “rehearsal preparation.”
- d. Remember that there is no perfect or universal approach...tailor your score study to your learning style.



# A Few Suggestions for Everyday Conductors

## **2. Learn with your ears**

- a. Edwin Gordon (*Sound before Symbol*)
- b. Back to our roots
- c. Repetition is our friend. (*Rote has gotten a bad rap.*)



# A Few Suggestions for Everyday Conductors

## **3. Learn with your hands & body**

- a. Mark scores--translations, bowings, phrasings, chords, structural elements, transpositions, etc.
- b. Sing parts or play them on your instrument.
- c. Conduct or move to the music while listening or singing. Conduct phrases, dynamics, energy, style--NOT PATTERNS!
- d. Write a written rehearsal plan based on your study.



# A Few Suggestions for Everyday Conductors

## **4. Learn with your mind**

- a. Find out what is happening in important sections.
- b. Work towards visualizing/hearing the entire score from memory in sections, with eyes closed.
- c. Start with small sections and build.
- d. Memory is not a performance end, but a means to learning (internalizing) the piece.



# A Few Suggestions for Everyday Conductors

## **5. Discipline yourself to memorize**

- a. Visualize (or sing or play) in real time from the beginning with eyes closed.
- b. When you miss something, look at the score and then
- c. Go back to the beginning and try again.



# A Few Suggestions for Everyday Conductors

## 6. **Divide & Conquer**

- a. Study one piece (movement) at a time and select only “significant” literature to study.
- b. Make a ToDo List
  - Don't spend too much time making the list
  - Just do it and check things off



# Active Score Study Checklist

(sample idea)

- ✓ Get a recording and listen to it with eyes closed
- ✓ Move to it, 'conduct' it (not patterns) while listening
- ✓ Look at the score a lot, sometimes while listening
- ✓ Sing/play melodies
- ✓ Mark bowings, translations, cues, etc.
- ✓ Look and mark small sections, then large, think *grammar*
- ✓ Mark main harmonic structure, cadences
- ✓ Use what you have learned to write a composite analysis
- ✓ *Visualize/hear* the piece in sections, real time, eyes closed
- ✓ Read two sources about the piece, adjust thinking



# References

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- Green, E. & Malko, N. (1975). *The conductor and his score*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Matheopolis, H. (1982.) *Maestro: Encounters with conductors of today*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Wagar, J. (1991). *Conductors in conversation*. Boston: G.K. Hall & Co.

# Handout

*If you wish to receive a pdf handout of today's presentation, please send me a request by email to*

*duitmanh@gvsu.edu*

*and I will send it to you as an attachment.*