‘Conductors make no sounds, they change sounds’. Or so argued the eminent British conductor, Sir John Pritchard, after his last concert as Chief Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1989.\(^1\) With the exception of a few well-chosen words during rehearsals, this paradox is largely true and is a central tenet of the art and craft of conducting. But, in preparing for rehearsals and performances, conductors spend literally thousands of hours during their careers studying scores in private before interacting with their orchestral and vocal colleagues. Described recently as ‘The Silent Musician’ by Mark Wigglesworth,\(^2\) the conductor uses this intensive period of private study to develop and to reflect on the initial parameters of their musical interpretations. Expected to understand and to be able to articulate their precise demands in rehearsal, conductors will often mark their intentions in their performance scores and orchestral parts. These not only act as essential aides-mémoire, but also personal confessionals. While it is true that a small number of conductors, such as Herbert von Karajan, annotated almost nothing in their scores, the overwhelming majority of them did insert their intentions and insights into their materials. By engaging with the printed text in this manner, these artists were able to commune more deeply with the artwork that they were preparing and to express more tangibly what they expected from themselves and the musicians they were leading.

With very few exceptions, conductors possess a library of scores that are representative of their personal musical interests. Often annotated in different-coloured pencils and inks to elucidate details that they want to realise in rehearsal and performance, these marked scores act as a kind of musical road map. By confirming important cues that players either expect or need, by indicating which instrumental lines should be more prominent at particular junctures, by inserting preferred bowings, phrasings and articulations and by alerting themselves to sudden changes in dynamics and tempo, conductors use this highlighted information to ensure that their rehearsals are managed efficiently and that their interpretative choices are transmitted effectively. To increase efficiency still further, and to minimise the need for an excessive use of verbal instructions during rehearsals, the annotations found in their marked scores are often transferred to the orchestral parts. While this type of surface cartography is clearly important, conductors also concern themselves with the music’s content in these artefacts, occasionally, as in the case of Bruno Walter,

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1 Conversation with Raymond Holden after the Last Night of the BBC Proms, 16 September 1989.
As marked scores are often vivid expressions of artists’ professional and psychological thought processes, it is perhaps inevitable that they also reveal something of conductors’ personalities and individual histories. Scribbling furiously in German, English and very occasionally Hungarian, those of the pan-European Sir Georg Solti⁴ exude a manic energy that vividly articulates his near-obsessive concern with tempo. With multiple metronome markings that often annotate tiny bar-by-bar fluctuations in speed, his scores reflect a conductor who is seemingly determined to subdue a musical work to his own artistic will. While Leonard Bernstein’s scores also exude energy, they leave the reader in no doubt that he felt the need to enter into a kind of composerly communion with the musical masters he was interpreting by frequently inserting poetic descriptors, literary illusions and private notes to himself. Conversely, the annotated scores of the gruff, matter-of-fact Otto Klemperer largely contain instructions of a purely practical kind, while those of Sir Charles Mackerras reflect his passion for balancing musical scholarship with practical musicianship. And then there was the anthroposophical, Jewish-born Catholic convert, Bruno Walter, who freely adorned his scores with religious and philosophical aphorisms.

Given the revelatory qualities of these artefacts, it is perhaps surprising that they had something of an uncertain future and status following the deaths of their owners. Some were bequeathed to the conductors’ disciples and assistants, some were deposited in libraries, some remained in the possession of the artists’ families and heirs, while some were simply neglected, dispersed or discarded. Only recently did it become obvious that these materials are of great cultural, historical and musical importance, prompting institutions such as the Royal Academy of Music, Harvard University and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra to make available their extensive collections of marked scores and annotated orchestral parts to scholars and musicians. With this increased availability came increased interest. Inevitably, discussions were had and opinions were formed. ‘How best to interpret these artefacts’ was the question that many scholars and performers were asking. While it would be foolhardy to suggest that there is, or should be, a one-size-fits-all approach when investigating these diverse materials, this study does offer a particular method that not only places them and their former owners within a broad historical context, but also analyses them in a practical manner.

Sir Georg Solti was born and trained in Hungary, held music directorships in Germany, France and Britain, lived in London and had a holiday home in Italy. Yet, he is probably best remembered for his years as Music Director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (1969–91).

— The Marks of a Maestro
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The Marks of a Maestro

Considering the sheer volume of annotated performance material that seems to appear almost daily, it is no exaggeration to say that those interested in these documents are spoiled for choice. Consequently, it was decided that this study should concentrate on one masterwork with a concert history that spanned the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries and that could be traced through the annotated materials, recordings and writings of at least four consecutive generations of iconic conductors: Gustav Mahler, Richard Strauss, Felix Weingartner, Sir Thomas Beecham, Bruno Walter, Otto Klemperer, Erich Leinsdorf, Sir Georg Solti, Leonard Bernstein and Sir Charles Mackerras. That being so, the composition that immediately came to mind was Mozart’s Symphony No. 41, K. 551 (‘Jupiter’). Today, the edition of the work that most conductors prefer is Bärenreiter’s Neue Mozart Ausgabe (NMA).⁴ But, with the exceptions of Erich Leinsdorf and Sir Georg Solti, the ten artists considered here all performed from Breitkopf & Härtel’s earlier Gesamtausgabe.⁵ While their choices of edition are discussed below, it is not so much the edition they chose but what they did with it that is the focus of this study. By examining these ten conductors’ methods and interpretative approaches, today’s musicians can not only benefit from the artistic insights of some of the greatest figures from conducting’s golden past, but also use those insights to better understand their own places within the ever-developing performance continuum.

1 Why Marked Scores?

Professor Raymond Holden was one of the first scholar-performers to have recognised and articulated the historical, didactic and interpretative importance of conductor’s annotated scores and marked orchestral parts. He has published, lectured and broadcast widely on the subject and uses these artefacts as the basis for his teaching at the Royal Academy of Music. The following interview is derived from a series of recorded discussions that took place in Sydney, Australia in August 2019, between Dr Stephen Mould and Professor Holden, during which they discussed their shared interest in this area of study, the significance of the material held by the Royal Academy of Music, London, and the wider application of these materials as teaching tools.

Stephen Mould (SM): Following your first visit to the Sydney Conservatorium of Music some years ago, it was clear to me that our professional interests intersected in the area of conductors’ marked scores. I well remember that as a student at the

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⁵ See the score at: https://imslp.simssa.ca/files/imglnks/usimg/8/81/IMSLP100325-PMLP01573-Mozart_Symphony_41_SCORE.pdf
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Royal Academy of Music in London in the mid-1980s, my interest was sparked by this material after discovering the annotated scores of Otto Klemperer, Sir Henry Wood, Sir John Barbirolli and others on the Academy’s library shelves and then available for loan. At that time, there was little, or no, understanding of how the information contained in these documents could be used and it was many years before I was able to contextualise what I had encountered. Given your involvement with this material, entwined with your distinguished career as a conductor and a writer, how did you discover this resource and how did your interest develop?

Raymond Holden (RH): As a young conductor, I was fortunate to work as the assistant to Sir John Pritchard. In that capacity, I had to deputise for him from time to time at rehearsals and took part in many performances that required the presence of more than one conductor, such as Ives’s Fourth Symphony, Berlioz’s Requiem, Schoenberg’s Moses und Aron, Strauss’s tone poems and Mahler’s symphonies. When preparing the material that I was responsible for at those performances, I would often consult Sir John’s scores, which were marked in some detail. These markings were clearly indications of intent and were essential for me to digest musically if I were to respond successfully within the performance situation. As Sir John was a master conductor, it was clear from his performances and recordings that that which was written in his scores was realised in sound. Thus, a clear interpretative line could be charted that led directly from intent to result.

After I was forced to stop performing professionally at the beginning of the 1990s because of a severe back injury, I decided to explore my musical heritage by investigating Richard Strauss’s activities as a Mozart interpreter. As he had been a huge influence on Fritz Busch’s Mozart style, who, in turn, had influenced Sir John as a Mozartian, my investigations were not only of wider musicological interest but a form of personal musical self-discovery. Having been introduced to the Strauss family, I was given unrestricted and unlimited access to the composer-conductor’s marked performance scores of Mozart and Beethoven. Somewhat worryingly, these were not complete, as his son and daughter-in-law had the habit of giving some of them away as gifts and mementos to prominent conductors and scholars. But, from what remained of his complete set of the Breitkopf & Härtel Gesamtausgabe of Mozart’s works and his two sets of Beethoven’s symphonies—the Chrysander and Eulenburg editions—it was clear that I had struck the musical mother lode. The scores were marked in detail and what appeared in annotated form was clearly audible in Strauss’s recorded performances of these works. Again, a clear linear example of musical intent and result and a phenomenon that related directly to my earlier fascination resulting from my work with Sir John. Sadly, what was not among Strauss’s collection were any marked scores of his
own works or those of Wagner. It was also clear from the materials themselves, and my discussions with the family, that the Mozart and Beethoven scores had lain undisturbed since Strauss’s death and were considered simply souvenirs of a once-great conducting career. Having had my interest piqued for a second time, I started looking further afield and found that this benign neglect was not uncommon. When I visited the University of Basel to examine Felix Weingartner’s scores the following year, for example, I found that they had suffered a similar fate: they lay dormant in a subterranean storage space in the cardboard boxes and battered suitcases in which they had first arrived after the conductor’s death in 1942. These scores, too, were reflective of the writings and recordings of the conductor in question and were, again, a tangible expression of intent and result. Since those early days, I have visited many archives around the world and discovered that similar materials had been treated in a comparable fashion. That situation has begun to change considerably, and greater care of these artefacts is increasingly common.

SM: As Professor of Public Engagement at the Royal Academy of Music, you have the luxury of working with that institution’s extraordinary collections and have access to the marked scores of conductors such as Sir Henry Wood, Sir John Barbirolli, Sir Charles Mackerras, Sir Colin Davis and Ferenc Fricsay. This repository of musical treasures has not only informed your work as a writer and as a researcher, but also your teaching of the next generation of conductors. While this material was formerly considered somewhat ephemeral, and of only archival significance, it has recently caught the eye of scholars and performers alike. Through your work, the information contained in these scores has been increasingly recognised as being particularly valuable when used in conjunction with conductors’ extant recordings. The musical conceptions and preferences of these leading conductors can then be investigated in a very practical way and can form the basis for a programme of learning, such as that led by you at the Academy.

RH: The function of marked scores at the Academy is, indeed, educational and they are a central teaching tool when working with young and emerging conductors in particular and performing musicians in general. In much the same way as a violinist or pianist might look to a particular instrumental professor for insights into the best practical methods of interpreting a composition, conductors can also gain similar advice by consulting the marked scores of leading figures. By forensically analysing and considering these annotations, along with those found in the conductor’s marked orchestral parts, an aspiring artist can gain many valuable hints as to how to achieve a particular musical effect. But marked scores and parts can only provide partial solutions. To reveal fully the insights that these materials have to offer,
they should be compared and contrasted with the conductor’s sound recordings and writings on both individual works and interpretation in general. But, and this is crucial, young conductors should not simply mimic the approaches of these masters from the past. Rather, they should use this information to inform their readings and to solve technical problems that might arise when preparing a score for performance.

SM: I know that you are keen that your work on these materials should not be discussed solely in an abstract way and that you are also keen to demonstrate their practical applications. Have you ever explored the implications of these materials in a performance situation and, if so, what was the response of the public and fellow musicians to this exploration?

RH: As I work in a major international conservatoire, I believe that my work must have very real practical outcomes and that those outcomes should be able to be tested publicly. Recently, the Royal Academy of Music and the Hochschule der Künste, Bern, joined together to mount a series of lectures, round tables, workshops and concerts to investigate the implications of conductors’ marked scores. It was decided that students from the two institutions should play at an open orchestral workshop and give a public concert in both Bern and London, led by me. So that I was able to explain to the audience what they were seeing and hearing at the workshops, I trained a young conductor to assist me at those events. The repertoire chosen was Mozart’s Symphonies K. 201/186a and K. 551 (‘Jupiter’) for Bern and K. 425 (‘Linz’) and K. 504 (‘Prague’) for London. As these were public events, it was decided to restrict the number of conductors to be discussed to four and that those four should not only overlap chronologically but reflect a wide spectrum of approaches. After some discussion, we opted for Richard Strauss, Bruno Walter, Sir Thomas Beecham and Sir Charles Mackerras. To allow the players to shift seamlessly between the ideas of these four artists, a set of marked parts was created using different-coloured inks that indicated clearly what tempo, bowing, phrasing, dynamics, articulation and expression annotations belonged to what conductor. These were then arranged according to how these particular issues were addressed by the artists within each of the symphonies’ movements and sub-structures. To ensure that the audience could follow the workshop’s narrative, a big screen was erected that displayed all the examples using PowerPoint. Not only did the players quickly master the differing materials but they were surprised by their shifting responses to them. Equally surprised were the British and Swiss audiences, who felt that each workshop offered a unique insight into the individual working practices of the four conductors and a means of placing them within a wider cultural context. But, as I pointed out at those events, I was not just interested in the obvious differences.
that existed between each artist, I was also interested in the ways in which their methods and ideas had informed my understanding of the symphonies. As a musician who firmly believes that a highly organised approach to tempo is necessary if a symphony’s structural imperatives are to be fully realised, I have always been attracted to Strauss’s methods in this regard. Equally, Beecham’s approach to string technique seemed to answer many of the questions that I had concerning this issue in Mozart’s late works. By drawing all these interpretative threads together at the concert that followed each of the workshops, I was able to explore with the players and the audience how these performance tools shaped not only my work in particular, but also the wider musical landscape.

SM: Driven by the notion that conductors were in search of strategic interpretations rather than simply realising the printed page, artists began to mark their scores in detail during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Individual interpretations developed as a concept with the growing influence of the conductor as mediator between the composer and the listener. These interpretations also developed from the performance of music from a more distant past. Consequently, the need arose for broad interpretative decisions to be made about works that were outside the stylistic and interpretative competencies of the players. The conductor, therefore, assumed the roles of interpreter, historian and advocate of music from these earlier periods. Is this the basis for your comment that there is a ‘difference between simply realising a score and interpreting it’?

RH: Broadly speaking, yes. In many ways, I agree with Leonard Bernstein, who said to me at a British-American music festival held at the Royal Festival Hall, London, in 1982: ‘it’s not what the composer wants but what we think he wants that is important’. To attempt a simple realisation of the musical past is something akin to purchasing a piece of furniture from a reproduction antiques shop. Worse still would be to purchase an antique by Chippendale and strip it of its patina of age, thereby rendering it valueless and leaving only a worthless pile of wood. That is also the case when we attempt to strip completely the acquired patinas of musical masterpieces. Antiquarianism might be fine when selling old manuscripts, but for those engaging with musical artworks, we must always move forward confidently with history at our backs and not constantly look over our shoulder at it. In other words, the score becomes the basis for a discussion between the composer and the performer, with the conductor as the point of mediation – a discussion that should vary from artist to artist and from period to period.

SM: During the second half of the nineteenth and the first part of the twentieth centuries, performers began to publish instructive and annotated texts that outlined their approaches to the emerging central European canon. Along
with clarifying performance options and codifying performance style, they were an attempt to fill lacunae in the knowledge of performance practice of works from the past. The books and articles of conductors, such as those by Richard Wagner and Felix Weingartner on the performance of works by Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert, were read widely and became extremely influential. While conductors’ marked scores are clearly related to such texts, they are more personal and contain an individual’s directions for exploring a work’s structure, tempi, phrasing, articulation and bowing. In addition to these, there are the Retuschen that conductors make, which have profound consequences for orchestration, dynamics, articulation and note length. What are the bases for these Retuschen and are they still as common today as they were for previous generations?6

RH: While the need to retouch a score can be traced back to the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was the writings of Wagner that focused the minds of later conductors on the issue. His articles – ‘Über das Dirigieren’ (‘On Conducting’) from 1869 and ‘Zum Vortrage der neunten Symphonie Beethoven’s’ (‘Performing Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony’) from 1873 – directly influenced the responses of conductors to the printed text and are still much discussed today. With the exception of his highly influential thoughts on melos, which Sir John Barbirolli defined as ‘the unifying thread of line that gives a work its form and shape’, Wagner’s other suggestions concerning retouching, tempo integration and tempo modification were adopted and shunned in equal measure by subsequent generations of artists and have proved both seminal and divisive.7 So impactful and contentious were his thoughts on these issues that they even prompted two conductors born four generations apart – Gustav Mahler and Sir Charles Mackerras – to distribute detailed printed pamphlets at their performances of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony to explain precisely why they had either adopted or rejected his

6 Retuschen is to ‘retouch’, or to alter, the existing text, either orchestrationally or dynamically.

7 The French composer and conductor, Pierre Boulez, for example, recalled that he had read ‘with great interest what Wagner thought about conducting’ and agreed with it. Like Wagner, Boulez argued that ‘until one finds the right speed – not necessarily a constant speed, but one that fits the moment, and can vary with the context – until one finds that tempo, then even in one’s own compositions the interpretation remains weak and prevents the music from swelling forth’. Similarly, the British conductor, Sir John Barbirolli, wrote that ‘Wagner laid it down that the two fundamental principles underlying the art [of conducting] were: (1) giving the true tempo to the orchestra; (2) finding the “melos,” by which he means the unifying thread of line that gives a work its form and shape. Given these two qualities, of course, we have the conductor in excelsis, and most of our lives must be spent in trying to obtain these qualities, the more especially the first’. J. Vermeil, Conversations with Boulez: Thoughts on Conducting, trans. C. Naish (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1996), p. 70; J. Barbirolli, ‘Speech to the New York Philharmonic-Symphony League, 1 November 1938’. Original typewritten manuscript held at the Royal Academy of Music, London.
principles. And, while Mackerras argues against much of what the Leipzig-born master suggested concerning tempo modification and tempo integration, he does retouch the work’s orchestration extensively.

SM: In the case of many conductors, their score annotations are then transferred to the players’ parts. For those artists, providing their own annotated orchestral material is essential if their interpretations are to be realised in the most time-efficient manner. Erich Leinsdorf has written, for example, that

if possible, it is best for the conductor to own the parts for standard works by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and others. Otherwise he is faced with two alternatives, both equally unsatisfactory. If he is a guest conductor, he must accept the bowings and other editing he finds in the orchestra’s scores, for he has no right to change those of the regular conductor. If the orchestra is his own, he must waste preparation time while the players write in changes – unless he and the librarian do this before the rehearsal begins. This offers a glimpse behind the scenes that may surprise readers. There is a complex series of conventions and processes behind conductors’ methodologies when transmitting their written instructions to the orchestra, and marked parts are central to that process. But how common is it for archives to retain annotated parts of conductors long dead, and are these artefacts important when determining more fully the intentions of these artists?

RH: Not as common as one might think. In fact, one of the greatest problems for scholars and performers interested in this area is the availability and exact whereabouts of conductors’ marked orchestral parts. For artists such as Sir Henry Wood and Sir Charles Mackerras, these materials were central to the logistics of their performance styles. Both retained large libraries of parts that supplemented, and complemented, their own performing scores and both had the habit of lending or, in the case of Wood, hiring these resources to other artists and institutions. While what remains of their collections are housed at the Royal Academy of Music, gaps can be found in both. In the case of Wood, his library was an essential tool when mounting nightly Promenade Concerts at the Queen’s Hall, and later the Royal Albert Hall, with little or no rehearsal. As he had a defined aesthetic view of the music he was rendering, he believed fully

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8 Mahler issued his pamphlet at a concert with the Vienna Philharmonic at Vienna’s Musikverein on 22 February 1900 and Mackerras issued his at a performance with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra at the Sydney Opera House on 22 October 1988.
that the best practical means of achieving that view was to set out clearly his intentions in his annotated parts. While this was also true of Mackerras, his parts often extend and clarify the musical argument further than what is contained in his conducting scores. When I arranged for his library to be acquired by the Royal Academy of Music, he was at pains to stress that, to understand his approach fully, one had to consult his marked parts rather than take at face value his annotated scores. A close reading of his Mozart material is a case in point. Often his symphonic scores of that composer’s music contain conflicting and contrasting instructions and aides-memoire that reflect his developing thoughts on a particular passage or movement. In contrast, he clarified, distilled and defined those thoughts in the parts, as these were the means the players would use to express the content of his interpretations in the heat of performance. Different again is the case of Sir John Barbirolli. With the exception of a set of marked string parts for Brahms’s symphonies housed at the British Library, there is no other marked orchestral material available to the general public. An avid and indefatigable marker of such material, Barbirolli generally used the parts owned by the Hallé Orchestra. This meant that the material he carefully and painstakingly annotated was then used by the orchestra’s other conductors after his death. That said, his extant conducting scores are a goldmine of information. The string material is particularly richly annotated and is a lesson in creative bowing. His tempo structures are also clearly indicated and do much to suggest his architectonic vision of a particular work.

SM: Concerning architectonic visions, you often stress the importance of tempo in realising these visions and are adamant that the use of metronome marks, in preference to computer-analysed performance data, is most useful when working with aspiring artists. Why is that?

RH: For conductors who were either from, or influenced by, the central European school of conducting, tempo integration and tempo modification were the bases for their interpretations and found expression in the decisions they made about phrasing, articulation, melos and structural integrity. When the Hungarian-born conductor, Artur Nikisch, whose scores seem to have inexplicably disappeared, made his London debut with Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony in 1895, the critic for The Musical Times reported that the conductor had a ‘perfect clearness [of form], . . . [and] gradations of speed and power . . . [that indicated] a mind with the sense of form strongly developed and acting in every case with consciousness of the end in view’.10 The reviewer’s impression that the conductor adopted a speed at the start of the symphony that was directly related to

10 The Musical Times, 1 July 1895, pp. 455–6.