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# Creating through dialogue

The conductor's role during the process of first  
performance

Skriftlig reflektion inom självständigt, konstnärligt arbete



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# **Abstract**

In this study I will research and reflect on the conductor's role during the process of preparation for a first performance. I will present differences between two kinds of working processes: one where the conductor is working with a contemporary composer on a piece of music that is going to be performed for the first time in contrast to one where he or she is working with traditional repertoire or with music already performed. Throughout the process I will also focus on the dialogue between the conductor and the composer.

The work consists of three parts. The first part is an overview of the process and its phases from the conductor's point of view. I go through the process and introduce some key points and challenges associated with it. In the second, practical part of my work I adduce a case of my own as an example of the experiences related to working with a composer in the process of première preparation. In the third part I suggest one solution for facilitating a better dialogue between the conductor and the composer.

## Introduction

My love for modern music began with choir singing. I sang in the chamber choir, EMO Ensemble, for ten years and during that time we sang mainly new music. As I was sixteen years old when I first started singing in the choir, I feel that the EMO Ensemble had a huge influence on me and my growth as a musician. Singing in that choir also allowed me to follow closely the collaboration between our conductor Pasi Hyökki and many of the leading composers in Finland. We performed many premières and it was common to have the composers coming to listen to our rehearsals. When I started to conduct it was clear that I wanted to commission music myself. As a young aspiring conductor it was also important for me to seek collaboration with young composers. In my so far short career I have conducted at least 20 first performances with choirs and instrumental ensembles. During my studies at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm I have also had the opportunity to work with young student composers and conduct their new music. The collaborations with the composition students has always included working in workshops. Through these experiences I have started to reflect upon the collaboration between conductors and composers. It is an interesting, diverse process in which the conductor is expected to take many roles.

The collaboration that I'm representing in the practical part of my study is one with a Finnish composer Riikka Talvitie. Riikka's piece *Pinnan alla* (*Under the surface*) was commissioned by my choir, Akateeminen Laulu. Our collaboration with Riikka was close and in my opinion the dialogue between us was open. I'm introducing the whole process from the first contact (September 2011) to the first performance (November 2013). I interviewed Riikka by email about our collaboration and about dialogue between composers and conductors. She answered by email and I translated the answers into English.

In my study I use the term *new music* instead of *modern music*, because I'm writing about first performances. New music is mostly modern in style, but here I use the term to indicate that the music hasn't been heard before. My experiences come from classical music and my focus is on choral and orchestral music that requires a conductor. From now on I refer to conductor or composer with the word *she*, instead of *he or she*. It feels natural in this context because my study reflects on a collaboration between two female musicians, Riikka Talvitie and I.

This study is a half of my master degree in orchestral conducting. The other, artistic half of my degree was my examination concert (April 29, 2015) with the Norrköping Symphony Orchestra. In addition to conducting *The Enigma Variations* by Edward Elgar, I commissioned a new piece for the concert. *Tagli, Pugni* was composed by a young Swedish composer, Petter Ekman. I interviewed also him about his experiences of working together with conductors.

## **Conducting and performing new music**

Conducting and performing a first performance is a different kind of process than one with a more traditional repertoire. I suggest that there are three major differences to be found. The first difference is that - considering the musical work itself - the creative ideas are set to music by an actively working composer who is able to be present during rehearsals and at the first concert performance. The conductor and musicians have the privilege to hear firsthand information about the composition. Meeting the composer and getting to know her personality can also be an important source of inspiration and knowledge for the musicians. A second, yet interesting, difference is that the music is completely new. No one has heard or tried to play the music before, even while the outcome may resemble some already existing piece of music. Given that the music is new, it is likely that it imposes definite constraints upon the rehearsing process or forces the artists to overcome some constraints of their own. The third and most important distinction between conducting and performing traditional repertoire or new music is the process which precede the concert where the music is being performed.

### **The relationship between conductors and composers**

The American composer David Lang and conductor David Miller discussed about the music of our time in a public conversation organized by the The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum in New York. David Lang compared the composer's musicianship to citizenship: "In order to write music composer needs other people. People is needed to listen to the music, to perform it, to get the music out to be heard by anyone who wishes to hear it. So it is very important for the composer to decide how he wants to represent himself and what is his attitude towards people." (Lang, 2015) If

a composer wants to make a living as a composer, she is dependent on commissions.

## **Phases in the process**

I have divided the process of first performance into five different phases.

- Starting points
- Planning
- Composing
- Rehearsing
- Performing

When a conductor is involved with music already performed or traditional repertoire, she has a role only in the two last phases: in the rehearsing and performing of the piece. When the conductor is the commissioner or the artistic representative of a group that will commission music, she has many different roles during the whole process.

### **Starting points**

There are various starting points for commissioning new music. Often the music is commissioned for some special occasion such as an anniversary concert or the opening of a festival. By winning a competition a composer can be given an opportunity to compose new music. The initiative can come from the performing group, the conductor or the organisation behind the artists. Sometimes it is the composer who contacts the artists with an idea of a new commission.

I consider it to be a vital part of a conductor's job to be interested in the music of our time and seek collaboration with composers. There doesn't have to be any special occasion for the commission. It can be made purely out of an interest to support composers' work in the creation of new music.

## Planning

When the context and the setting for the new music are clear, more detailed planning can begin. It is possible to conceive the whole planning process as a sequence of imposing necessary constraints. The number and type of these constraints vary a lot depending on the nature of the first performance. The first constraint is imposed when the composer is being chosen. By choosing the composer, the conductor already makes loose definitions of the musical language of the piece. The constraints are practical rather than artistic in nature. Here are the most common constraints:

- Commissioner's financial situation – length of the piece
- Instrumentation, ensemble
- Special constraints in the ensemble, for example the imbalance between voices in a choir
- Musical capacity of the performers
- Amount of rehearsal time
- Theme of the piece
- Nature of the premiere concert
- Other repertoire in the concert

Maintaining a good dialogue during the planning process is important. The conductor states the starting points as well as the context of the commission and shares his wishes concerning the music. The composer, then, has the

opportunity to ask for valuable information about the instruments in question and make specific inquiries about the context. In my view, an important aspect in planning is to ensure that the composer sees the constraints not as limitations but as an inspiration for his musical ideas.

The conductor's role at this point in the process is to be the initiator. The conductor opens the dialogue and presents ideas and relevant constraints for the commission. Then it is the composer's turn to answer by providing musical ideas. During the planning process the practical constraints of the commission give rise to thoughts about musical form in the composer's mind. Usually at the end of the planning process, the composer has some kind of a preliminary structure in mind for the music.

## Composing

After the composer and the conductor have agreed about the details and constraints concerning the composition, the composing process can begin. Here, it is possible that the communication between the composer and the conductor attenuates or even comes to a halt for a certain period. The amount of communication at this point depends on many things. Most of the composers I have worked with haven't wished for any communication during the composing process. If the planning process has been good and the composer has all the adequate information, communication is not necessarily needed.

The conductor's role at this stage of the process is to be alert. If the composer wants to have a dialogue and reflect on some thoughts concerning the piece, the conductor has to be ready to respond to these questions.

## Rehearsing

If during the compositional process the composer is in the spotlight and the conductor in the background, when rehearsals begin the roles change [the tables are turned]. The conductor starts to work actively, while the composer is involved in a less active way. Whatever style or period the music represents, whether it be new music or old music, conductor's tasks in the rehearsal process are practically the same. I would like to divide the process into three different phases:

- Conductor's own preparation
- Showing the essence in the music to the performers
- Inspiring musicians

Conductor and author Erich Leinsdorf lists ten suggestions about the practical, daily routine of the profession. The first suggestion is really simple: be prepared. He specifies that being prepared means that the conductor knows exactly what should be heard and diagnoses the problem if it is not heard. (Leinsdorf 1981, p. 175.)

Being prepared in the way Leinsdorf describes requires a lot of background work. The conductor has to know the score thoroughly. Knowing the techniques and structures in the music is as important as knowing the composer's style and intentions. The conductor has to look at the score from many different points of view. These things are as crucial with first performances as they are with traditional repertoire. The conductor cannot neglect the background work even when the music represents our own time.

The possibility to communicate with the composer is a great advantage which affects on the conductor's own preparation. For me, personally, this is the most interesting part of the process; to hear how the composer talks about her own music. It is important to hear how the composer wants her

music to be played in this point of the process, before the music has being realized in sound.

When the conductor is rehearsing new music with the composer present, there is an additional element to be included in the phase considered:

- Being the intermediary between the composer and the musicians

When an orchestra or a choir is rehearsing traditional repertoire by a deceased composer, the musicians direct their questions about the composer's intentions and musical ideas at the conductor who answers them to the best of her knowledge. The conductor's knowledge can be based on the score, on her knowledge of other repertoire by the same composer, on the literature she has read or any other reference she has managed to find. The conductor has to have the authority to answer those questions during the rehearsals.

When the composer is present at rehearsals, there opens up a new dimension in the communication. Once again, many questions are asked, but this time they are answered by the most reliable source of all, the composer herself. That the composer is present also bestows a new role upon the conductor, who becomes the intermediary between the musicians and the composer.

This extra phase in the rehearsing process means that there can be a need for extra time. The journey from printed notes to freely flowing music can be more complicated than the one with more traditional music. New music can include notation that is unfamiliar to the musicians. It may require preparing instruments or finding new techniques and new sounds. There is no reliable aural reference for the musicians to listen to beforehand. Nowadays it is indeed possible to listen to a MIDI-playback based on most traditional notation. What you hear may not, however, be entirely reliable, since the program cannot read all applicable techniques, and the sampled timbres don't correspond with their acoustic equivalents, not to speak of overtones. The new music in its entirety is heard for the first time in the first rehearsal.

When the conductor has the role of an intermediary, she needs to be sensitive to what the musicians and the composer are experiencing. It is crucial to sense whether there are any signs of frustration and, if so, where this frustration is coming from. The presence of the composer can cause a flood of feedback from the musicians' side, purely because it is now possible to communicate with the composer. The conductor's task is to see the bigger picture and decide what is essential. What kind of feedback is necessary? When do you change something in the score? Is some passage too difficult to play just for now, or is it impossible? Will it make a difference if you change the score? The composer wants to make changes, but do you have time to execute them? These questions have to be answered each according to the situation. The conductor has to keep a good balance between practical considerations and artistic work.

Sensitivity is also needed to recognize what type of questions the conductor and the composer can talk about openly. The conductor's most important job is to guide the musicians to execute the notes in the score in such a way that the composer's musical ideas and visions can be heard. The conductor's job is not to interfere with the composer's artistic vision.

The third major role that the conductor has in the rehearsing process is to inspire the musicians. This goes hand in hand with the other important task, showing the essence in the music. The young Swedish composer Petter Ekman answered some questions I had about the dialogue between the conductor and the composer. In this short email interview Petter wrote about his thoughts about our collaboration during a short opera project that we both were involved in, in the spring 2014.

I do like hearing my colleagues' opinions, though I also think it is important for the composer to stand up for her-/himself when it comes to changes in the music. One cannot expect the stage director for example to know which changes can be done to the music without disrupting its coherence. If the composer is not present (or is incapable of taking on such a role) it's important that the conductor executes that power and protects the music's integrity. I'm not talking about not allowing any changes - I believe opera is depending on constant compromise - but rather about always

making the effort to find the best solution from a musical perspective. (Ekman, 2015)

To protect the music's integrity is a huge responsibility, but the conductor can succeed only by being endlessly interested in the music and the composer's thoughts about the music. Only by being inspired himself can the conductor truly inspire others.

## Performing

Although the performance constitutes only the tip of the iceberg within the whole process, its importance must not be downplayed. According to the Russian pianist and composer Samuil Feinberg a musical composition that has been fixed in notes but has not been performed, that is only on its way to full realization in sound, is not completed (Feinberg, 2015).

Performance is always an interpretation. Because the music comes together in the rehearsal process, the final interpretation has already taken shape during rehearsals. Composer Riikka Talvitie answers in my email interview that often the final interpretation in the first performance is some kind of a compromise made during the discussions between the composer and the conductor (Talvitie, 2015).

In my experience some composers are more open to different kinds of interpretations of their music than others. The conductor's job is to respect the score and composer's musical intentions. But even if the conductor has the greatest respect towards the composer and her work, and a pure intention to execute exactly what is written in the score, the conductor's personality, skills and working methods make an impact on the music. According to Samuil Feinberg, the performer's individual characteristics are evident throughout a performance and not only when the performer is significantly deviating from the score. Individuality and brilliance of performance are

seen also in the smallest details and shadings of the playing (Feinberg, 2015).

In performance, the conductor's job is to remind the musicians of the interpretation and lift it up to an even higher level. In my opinion, the conductor takes the final responsibility for the concert performance. She is also responsible for ensuring that the composer's voice is heard.

It is important to separate the first performance from the composition. It is a fact that all first performances don't succeed. The performing group can fail trying to execute the composer's ideas. On the other hand, composer's final work does not always meet the commissioner's expectations.

In the interesting public conversation between conductor David Miller and composer David Lang, Lang tells the audience that he likes to think that the music exists in a way that leaves it open for lots of different kinds of interpretations, and that the music is strong enough so that a bad performance or a bad interpretation doesn't kill it. David Lang continues about bad performances: "If you think of the number of bad performances of the Beethoven string quartet you've ever heard, it's really terrible to sit through it, but it didn't hurt the music. You know, it didn't hurt Beethoven." (Miller, Lang, 2015)

I agree with David Lang when we talk about Beethoven or some other established composer and their recognized and often performed music. But what happens if a first performance of a piece doesn't succeed? I believe that it can hurt the composer. If the first performance doesn't honor the essence of the music and the intentions of the composer, the public will not hear the music the composer wanted them to hear. Only a best possible performance can help the music to live longer.

## **Riikka Talvitie: *Pinnan alla***

A Finnish freelance-composer Riikka Talvitie graduated as oboist from the Sibelius Academy in 1997. After that she continued her composition studies with composer Tapio Nevanlinna and professor Paavo Heininen. As a composer Talvitie has worked a lot with texts and choral music. She has collaborated with many Finnish poets and writers. (Talvitie, 2012)

Akateeminen Laulu, the mixed-voice choir of the Student Union of the University of Helsinki celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2013. Among many other festivities, the choir's board and I as the choir's artistic director decided to commission a new piece. The theme for the anniversary year was the Baltic Sea and we wanted the commission to make a statement about the environmental problems associated with this sea. I suggested that we would work with Riikka Talvitie because I had had good experiences in working with her earlier. I was already then fascinated by Riikka's music that always had an almost astetic, clear and strong sound. I felt an urge to commission something new and different. With this particular commission I was longing for dialogue and exchange of thoughts and I expected that, with Riikka, this could be both possible and very meaningful.

It was clear to me that the new commission should be included in the music we were planning on recording and then releasing in our anniversary concert. That forced us to begin the planning in good time. It was in September 2011 when I first suggested collaboration for Riikka. We received a scholarship for the commission in the beginning of the year 2012 and the music was ready on January 16, 2013. The final piece was for mixed choir, trumpet and French horn. It was 10 minutes long and it contained both expository text from the internet and a dialogue, which was written by Riikka.

There weren't any changes to be made in the score so we started to rehearse the piece immediately. We performed the piece three times during our tour

in Sweden and Denmark in May 2013 (the version without the instruments) and recorded the piece in September 2013. The whole piece was performed for the first time in our anniversary concert on September 11, 2013.

## **The process begins**

Hi Riikka,

Once again I approach you with composing matters. My choir, Akateeminen Laulu, has an anniversary year in 2013 and we would like to commission a new piece. Would you be interested to compose for us? I was thinking that the piece could be about 10-15 minutes and it could also have one or two instruments with the choir. [...] Akateeminen Laulu is a traditional choir and the sound is big and round, when it is at it's best. I would like to have new music that somehow could reflect our traditions but at the same time be clearly something new. (Kiiski, 2011)

My collaboration with Riikka started in September 2011 with this email. In my email I provided all the basic facts I had about the commission in that point. Many things were still undecided but I wanted to open the discussion between us and also see if Riikka would immediately show interest towards the ideas. We first had to wait for the financial matters to be confirmed. In the spring 2012 we started working with the ideas. Riikka started to look for inspiration on the Baltic Sea theme. We talked about the possibility of using some other type of text than prose to make the composition more modern and involved.

Hi,

It seems that there is a lot of information about protecting the Baltic Sea. I could explore those websites and look for a possible text. One idea that came in to my mind is to connect underwater pictures to expository text. For example five pictures of some endangered species. Text could be very summarised. Underwater "textures" for choir could be really fascinating. Greetings, Riikka. (Talvitie, 2012)

These ideas were the starting points for our work.

## Constraints

Before Riikka started her work, I wanted to provide a focus for the commission. The first constraint was of course choosing the composer for the piece. The next constraint was the theme, the Baltic Sea. I was interested to hear new choral music with instruments that are unusual in a choral context. I was happy when also Riikka was inspired by the idea. Her choice to use a trumpet and a French horn proved to be fascinating.

With Pinnan alla the Baltic Sea theme wasn't so much a limitation but an opening for a discussion. The presence of brass instruments was really inspirational idea. (Talvitie, 2015).

In Akateeminen Laulu the balance between female and male voices has never been ideal. I told Riikka that in my opinion it was better not to divide tenor or bass parts more than in two voices in each. On the other hand I encouraged Riikka to make divisions for the female choir. I also mentioned that we have good solo voices in the choir.

I went to listen the choir's rehearsal and after that I concluded that I wanted to use division only in the soprano part (Talvitie, 2015).

I had one really special request for Riikka. I wished that the piece could also be performed without instruments. We wanted to perform it on our tour in Sweden and Denmark and it was not possible to take the wind players with us. Riikka kept this in mind and composed the piece in a manner that enabled us to perform it without the instruments.

Riikka listened to my suggestion for the instrumentation and my thoughts about our choral balance. The piece was challenging but not overwhelmingly difficult. I felt that Riikka understood my point of view but also kept her own voice clear.

I didn't have any particular text in mind so I wanted to listen to Riikka's suggestions.

I read different kinds of texts about the Baltic Sea, both poems and expository text. Finally I concluded that the text has to be something

concrete if I want the protection of the Baltic Sea to be visible in the piece. So I wrote part of the text myself (which I usually don't do). (Talvitie, 2015)

*Pinnan alla* is built on two different texts. First you can hear the expository text from the internet. It is an informative text that has a lot of facts about the environmental situation of the Baltic Sea. Then comes the dialogue that Riikka wrote. It is a dialogue between a mother and a son. They are arguing about whether it is safe to swim in the Baltic Sea. The informative text is used to create a feeling of the underwater world. The text is intentionally blurry and the fast descending passages create a wave-like pattern. The dialogue between two soloists, a mother and a son on the shore, is, on the other hand, very clear and the text stands out.

## **Dialogue in the planning process and the composing**

Every commission is a definition. In this sense, well-argued constraints are good. It feels that the nature of limitations has changed recently. There are a lot of new, production-related things in musical life that one has to take into consideration. I could think that the constraint could be more strained concerning the instruments in use or some special skills that exceptionally are present. With some older commissions I would have hoped to receive better plans from the orchestra so that the pieces could have been performed also in some other places. All composers aren't happy to develop ideas with conductors, but I believe that the younger generation is quite active in this sense. (Talvitie, 2015)

I was happy to read Riikka Talvitie's thoughts about limiting the composition. Whenever we talked about the creative process, it somehow didn't feel suitable to mention practical matters. I have had the fear of blocking the composer's imagination by suggesting or requesting something. I understood now that, with constraints discussed between composer and conductor, the conductor can really help the process. I have first-hand knowledge of the instrument, - the ensemble -, and it wouldn't be wise not to share it.

With *Pinnan alla* our working method with Riikka was quite clear. We first talked about some ideas. I felt that Riikka was inspired by the theme and she

had a quite clear picture of the structure of the piece. She started to compose and I received the piece when it was finished. I didn't ask to see anything during the composing and Riikka didn't ask to show anything. I thought that our way of working was suitable for the occasion but I agree with Riikka when she answered in my email interview that we could have done experiments on, for example, how to combine the singing and the spoken text. (Talvitie, 2015)

## Rehearsing process

The notation in *Pinnan alla* was very clear and there weren't any changes to be made. It was really easy to start the rehearsals. We rehearsed quite a long time before Riikka came to listen for the first time. With an amateur choir it is important to have the piece in good shape before the composer comes to listen. Only then can we make changes and try them out immediately. If the singers aren't familiar with the music, they can't adjust to new demands as quickly as required.

When Riikka finally came to listen to our rehearsals, it really helped us to find certain colours and nuances of which I didn't have a sufficiently clear idea before. It was also valuable to hear her opinion about some notation issues that we could interpret in many ways. Here is one simple example:

In the beginning of *Pinnan alla*, all the parts start to recite the text, using the voice the composer has given and making *glissandos* when given. The performance marking is *Unclear, singers recite the text freely, everyone in their own tempo*. When we started to rehearse this opening section of the piece, I noticed that it was hard for the singers to sing at their own, individual tempo. One basic thing in choir singing is to sing at the same tempo with others, and when you have to work against that it can feel difficult at first. But there were also other difficulties. The first question was; how can each singer sing at his or her own tempo? The time signature

in the beginning is  $\frac{3}{4}$  and the metronome mark for crotchet is 132. One singer should sing five syllables in one bar. When the tempo is this fast, there aren't much leeway for choosing an individual tempo. The second challenge was the text. The composer had written it so that the singers should sing certain words in a certain bar. There is also the instruction to sound unclear and everyone in his own tempo. How should the singers really sing this section?

1. If you want to emphasize the asynchronous character of the text, you need to sing it against the notation and let the singer sing the text forward even if they aren't yet in the next bar.
2. Depending on the number of the singers, one solution for creating the projected ambiguity would be, quite naturally, to repeat some words or syllables before going on to the next bar, if necessary.

When I studied the score beforehand, I felt that this particular section was clearly marked. I couldn't see the problem before I heard the singers singing it. The problem was solved when Riikka came to listen and we discussed these different options. The most important thing was the asynchronous text, that created the feeling of the underwater world. We gained more asynchronousness when I asked the singers not to start simultaneously. Finally we agreed to that some of the singers were responsible for starting on the first beat and others had the freedom to start after. Singing the right tone in the right bar was more essential than singing all the five syllables in the exact bars they were written in.

## Workshops

The workshop is one way to enhance the dialogue between the conductor and the composer during the composing process. In a workshop the conductor and the performing group gather to sing or play material which the composer has composed. The workshop is a laboratory for the composer to experiment with techniques and notation, and listen if the sound produced by the performers is corresponding to the notated musical idea.

Workshops can be private sessions just for the composer, conductor and the musicians. They can also be public sessions when other composers, conductors and musicians take part as listeners and benefit from the things they observe.

In my experience, working in workshops is rewarding especially for young composers and conductors. This kind of working method gives everybody the possibility to experiment, ask and learn without the pressure of having to succeed. Communication is open in all directions between the composer, conductor and the performing group. If the composer has already acquired routine with different composing techniques and notation it is understandable that she doesn't necessarily feel the need to work at workshops. Nevertheless, if the most experienced composer wants to try out new musical ideas, workshops are ideal venues for it.

The advantages of workshops are various. The composer is given a possibility to hear the ensemble she's writing for. With the material she has written for the workshop she can try out the limits of the ensemble. The composer can see both the actual capacity of the musicians but also the willingness of the individuals for executing new ideas. There is also a possibility to get feedback from the musicians who in the last analysis are the ones who produce the sound. The conductor gets the opportunity to get acquainted with the style of the composer. From the conductor's point of view it is wise to solve questions with notation, sounds and techniques in

the workshop and then save the actual rehearsal time for rehearsing the final composition. For the musicians the workshop offers a possibility to be involved in the process. Meeting the composer and contributing time and effort to the process can motivate the musicians. It might help them to connect better with the music and to have a deeper understanding about the composer's work in general.

In my opinion, workshops work best when composers have really clear musical ideas to test. It doesn't have to be a composed excerpt from the upcoming composition, but the idea has to be clear. Then also the singers or the players can enjoy the testing and really give their best in the situation.

## **The challenge of incompleteness**

Workshops are places where the work is in progress. No visible results are expected at the end of a workshop. The composer goes back to her composition process and the positive effect of the workshop can, hopefully, be heard in the final composition. Riikka Talvitie describes her experience with musicians in the following manner:

I would love to show more unfinished ideas to conductors and musicians, but it doesn't always work. Many musicians face a lot of blocks when they have to deal with incompleteness, and that is sad, because I'm not bothered by the incompleteness but trying to hear how my ideas work and also get the best out of the performers. When I show something unfinished I often get a lot of feedback about things that aren't working but when I change just some small thing, everything is all right again. This shows that the sense of reality is not always present in these situations. (Talvitie, 2015)

Musicians are often encouraged to pursue faultlessness. If the musicians are then handed material that is still unfinished, or the composer wants to hear something in the middle of their rehearsal process, it is possible that the musicians can't adapt to the situation and let go of their own pursuit of perfection. It is possible that neither the musician nor the composer knows what the other person is expecting from the situation. We can easily get so

disturbed by our own incompleteness that we forget to concentrate on the communication with the persons around us.

When feeling uncertain about themselves, people easily say no to new things. If you have commissioned new music you should do just the opposite. You should keep your mind open and look with curiosity for new musical images and sounds. One challenge concerning incompleteness is to recognize when you let your own incapacity affect your judgment. The conductor should be able to tell the difference between her own limits, and musical solutions that can be possible after rehearsing.

The composer can get a lot of negative feedback if everything isn't written and marked very clearly. The truth is that I don't always know in advance. If you try to find new modes of expression you have to really think and come up with the adequate notation. Workshops before composing for example with a choir could help to find a suitable notation for the situation in question. (Talvitie, 2015)

Workshop situations could give all parties the possibility of being ignorant in a positive sense. Nothing new can be created if we don't first tread on the ground of uncertainty.

## Conclusion

I have had many collaborations with composers and hopefully I will have many opportunities to work with composers also in the future. Past collaborations have raised questions of the conductor's role during the process. My study on the subject has helped me to understand the importance of dialogue. Only when there is good dialogue, does it come about that both the composer and the conductor can execute their own roles with the greatest professionalism they have. Communication is a starting point for understanding, understanding is a starting point for respect.

Dialogue and knowing one's role go hand in hand. If we know our role in the process and we are respected and listened to in this role, dialogue becomes easier and more free. Good collaboration does not guarantee that the music will be better. For me, though, that is not what is central. What is truly important is the connection we gain through working in a process with other people. Working in workshops can be one way to find this connection. Conducting and composing both being lonely professions we should cherish and respect this connection and allow dialogue to make us better musicians.

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# Appendix

Talvitie, Riikka: *Pinnan alla*, 2013 (score)

