

An Evening with ^{two} gifted friends in St Petersburg

I had long endeavored in my position ^{as semiconductor but not by any means in years} at the Imperial Opera House ^{to find} talented musicians who could take up leading positions as budding conductors - We had some very gifted young men who had at last plucked up courage to ask me if they could possibly conduct some performances - I was only too delighted, not in the least foreseeing what this would ultimately lead to - One named Braner, a really good chap + first class coach begged to be allowed to conduct ^{Puccini's} La Boheme so one evening I took him to my home in order as I thought ^{just} to give him all the ^{musical} tips I had rec^d from Puccini himself in London concerning the phrasing of espe the ensembles in the 2nd + 4th acts - We started, I at the piano, + Braner with the full score in front of him + a stick in his hand + in my full view - He began cleaving the air, to the right, then to the left, then endeavored to swing round all the way in one sweep + kept at this until within a minute or two he was exhausted + had to sit down for a breather - This fumbled me up sharp - I had never had a stick technique lesson in my life - Never did my beloved master didn't trouble about the stick - he took it for granted we had all watched him closely during his rehearsals + concerts + could find out for ourselves - If we couldn't manage the stick part he just part on to the next pencil + the next + the next + it generally fell to my lot to demonstrate a particularly nasty bit like the two in the 3rd of Beethoven which the others had just bungled - As there were about 30 of us in the class it sometimes became a real genesis + exodus for the class until the class room sang with - "We want Coats, We want Coats" - I was anything but popular really, but they always were hoping I would bungle it with the rest - but that never happened, I suppose it was just in the blood + ⁱⁿ my very great love + affection for my master - ^{for he} seemed to lend me his wings where necessary - Braner as I said brought me up sharp + I started to show him how one should conserve energy for a long opera in 4 acts - What would he have been like, cloying the air indiscriminately when he came to the last act - La Boheme is alright - Its 4 short acts only, play less than 1/2 hr each - but what about the Titurel of the Gods by Wagner where the conductor + all concerned are hard at it for two very solid hours for ^{the 1st} act ^{alone}, then there are two acts to follow each well into the 90 minute aspect with terrific force necessary in each act + no rest for anyone - This opera is the greatest tax on sheer physical force of all the operas ever written so far - Parsifal the Meistersinger Tristan are far less taxing - I started Braner off with a simple demonstration - namely, the very fact that ^{the rock stands on} opera is individually lit up + so likewise is the conductor's desk

differing entirely from concert with the lighting is usually diffused all over the orch from central lights from above, but not so opera - lighting is of paramount importance - especially conductors desk for not only the orch but the singers, from a considerable distance, must be able to see the beat + in many instances when a great master is leading the opera his facial expression is of ~~of~~ ~~paramount~~ importance on the character of the music + his inspiration is very catching for all concerned from the greatest artist on the stage down to the last man on the last desk in the orch - usually the triangle -

So obviously the first rule is to so handle the stick that every movement is clearly visible to all concerned, the Technical way is to so clear the air ^{that the stick remain} in the light. Thrown up from the whiteness of the paper of the full score lighting ^{upright} the hands ^{+ the face} clearly + ~~the face~~ effectively - Obviously if you clear to right or to left away from the desk you are futilely moving in the dark + is ^{bound} ~~apt~~ to disturb more than help everyone who depend on a guiding hand -