



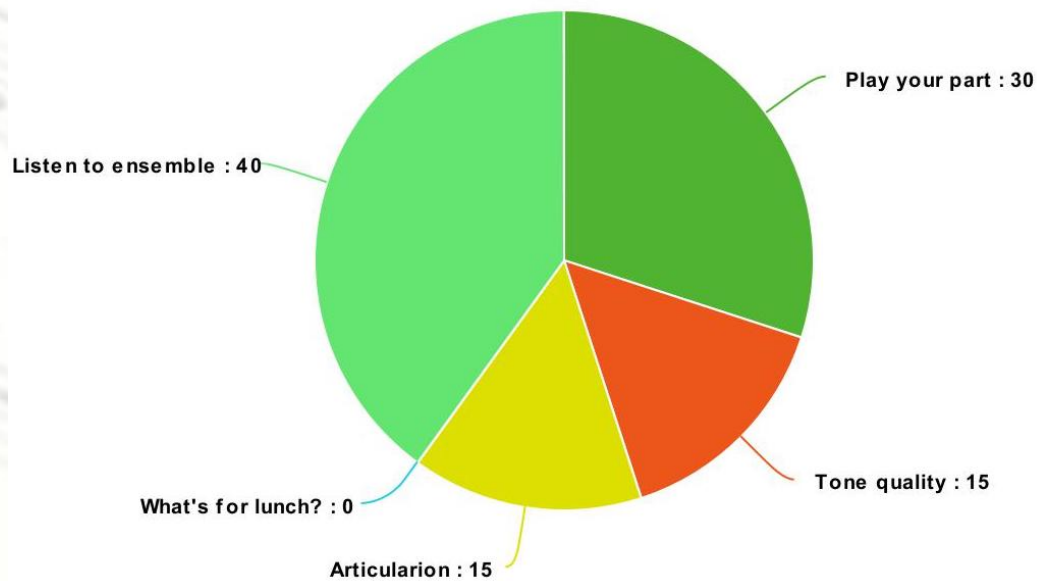
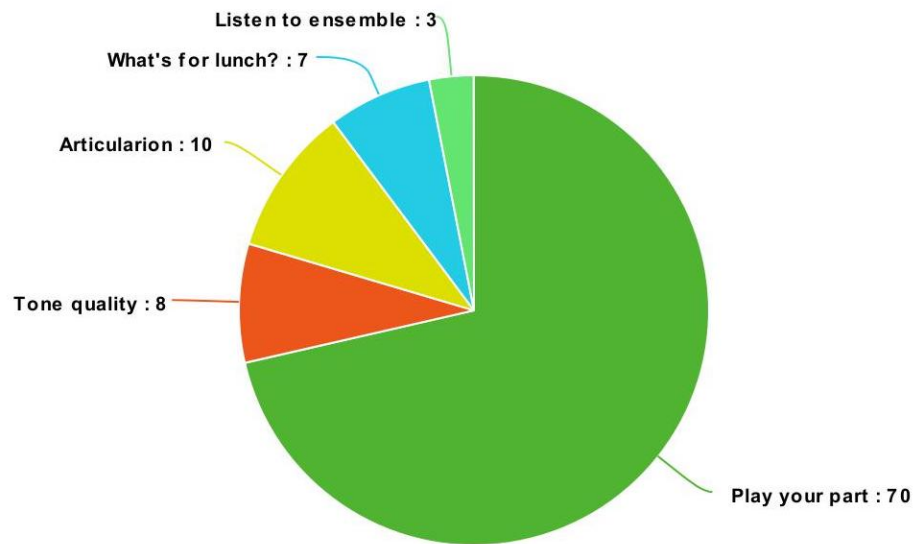
Rehearsals, Repertoire & Stuff

Michael Votta
University of Maryland

Player Responsibilities

(or, “How to be a Pro in 8 Not-so-easy Lessons”)

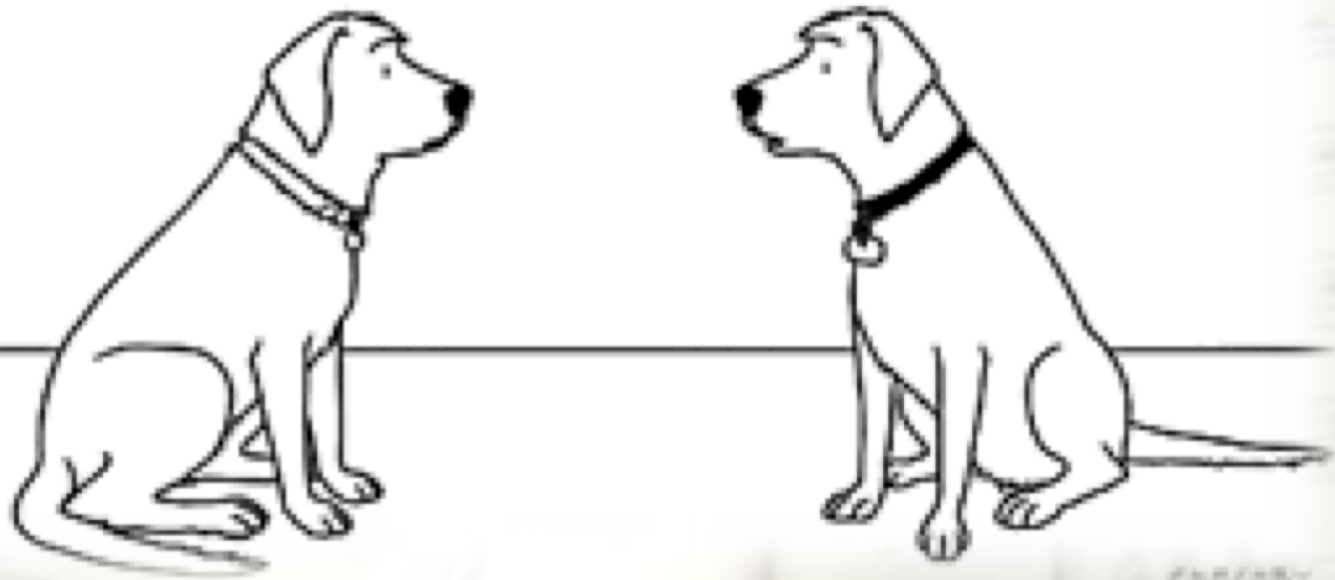
1. Pulse/tempo maintenance
2. Count rests
3. Notes/rhythms
4. Articulations, slurs
5. Balance (obvious items)
6. Intonation
7. Dynamics
8. Phrasing/dynamic shape of lines



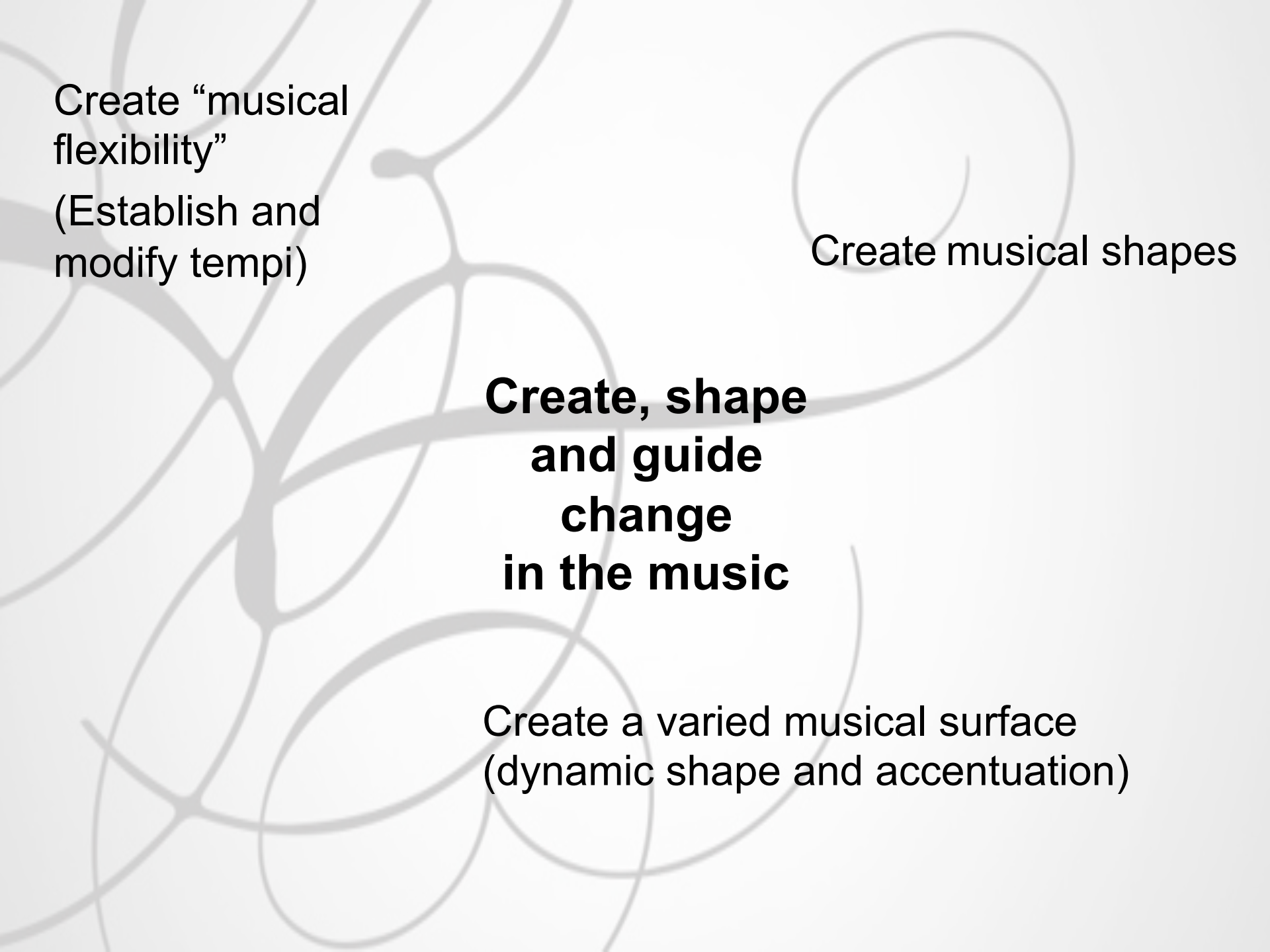


When players take responsibility for “player things,”
the conductor is free to focus on “conductor things.”

conductor things?



here we go again...



Create “musical
flexibility”

(Establish and
modify tempi)

Create musical shapes

**Create, shape
and guide
change
in the music**

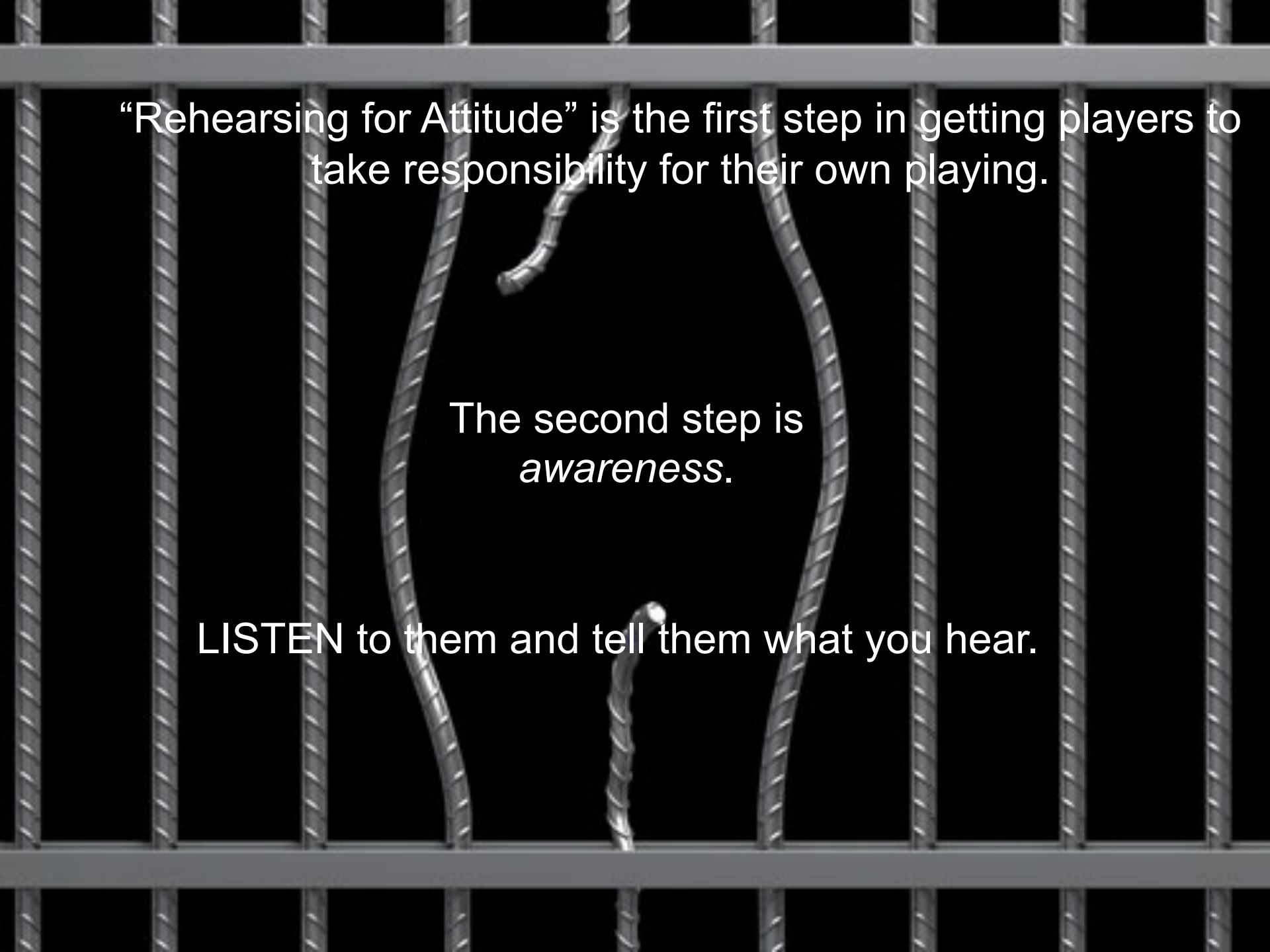
Create a varied musical surface
(dynamic shape and accentuation)

CONDUCTORS ARE
“AGENTS OF CHANGE”





When conductors try to assume responsibility for “player things” they become imprisoned musically.



“Rehearsing for Attitude” is the first step in getting players to take responsibility for their own playing.

The second step is
awareness.

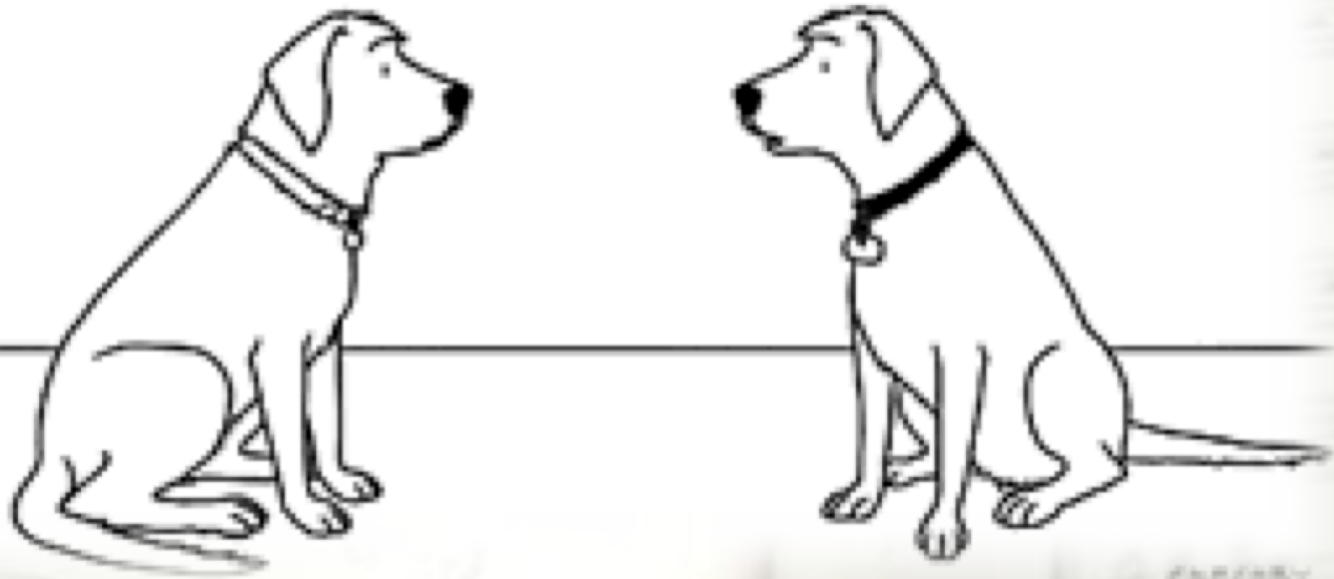
LISTEN to them and tell them what you hear.

Stop as little as possible



Say even less

did you hear that?
dude says not to stop so much



jeez. I have to stop sometime.
did he say when it was ok?

You Make the Call



The Essentials of Judgment





“Once an official has developed a penalty standard early in the game, the players will tend to play within the established standard.” -USA Hockey Level 3 Official’s Manual

(The ensemble will focus on the whatever caused you to stop--
You are telling them what to listen for next time.)

“The most important call, therefore, is the first penalty.”
(What you stop for first sets the tone for the entire rehearsal)

“It communicates what actions the official will allow and not allow.”
(It sets the agenda for the day’s lesson plan)

I know it's wrong,
but I'm not sure how to fix it



Instructor Ears

Quantitative (Precision/Accuracy-oriented)

- Time: Steady pulse, accurate rhythms, coordinated attacks and releases
- Pitch: Correct notes, centered pitches, good intonation
- Dynamics: Notated and implied
- Interpretation markings: Accents, staccato, etc.
- Quality of sound: Balance, blend, intonation

Evaluating and correcting these elements of ensemble performance
requires little or no specific knowledge of a given score

—this is why judges at a band festival can function reasonably well.

This is also why it can seem difficult to know what to do
after the band can play all of the right notes.

Conductor Ears

- *SHAPE*
- **Color**
- **Phrasing**
- **Weight**
- **Character**
- **Energy**
- **“Feel”**
- **“Spirit”**

Evaluating and modifying these aspects of ensemble performance requires the conductor to possess vivid mental images of specific sounds.

These images arise from imaginatively conceptualizing musical notation
—
and from internalizing the sounds that you expect to hear.

They transcend “knowledge” of the score.

Can you recognize this person?



Clothing, expression or action don't matter

How different would he have to look before we could no longer recognize him as Obama?

How much does a person have to change their appearance before they're effectively disguised? (This is important if you're a spy, by the way...)



Our mind stores memories in categories,* and we make estimations when confronted with a new object: is it a member of an existing category (i.e. “Barack Obama”) or something new?

*It's somewhat more complicated than this, but this is close enough for conductors.
(Apologies to any neuroscientists in the audience)

We remember a “prototype” for each category, and compare new images with the prototype.*

(*again, apologies to the neuroscientists in the audience)



If it's close enough, we consider it part of the category.
If not, we make a new category.

Happy Birthday!

We remember musical events
with prototypes and categories, too

How different would this have to be
before we could no longer recognize
“Happy Birthday?”



Transcending Prototypes

Focus on being SPECIFIC

If your category is “male” any guy will do.

If it’s “my husband,” you are seeking something more specific.

You will therefore be able to recognize if he is “the right guy” (or not) clearly and quickly.

Transcending Prototypes

Make Score Study an Active Process

Be accountable for producing the note

Use your imagination when you study

NB: Recordings accomplish neither of these—listening to a recording is too passive to give you useful information about conducting it.

Transcending Prototypes

Play or sing the notes
hear and feel the HARMONY

Tempo doesn't matter

Play as much as you
can from memory



The piano is best—so you can feel the
harmony and counterpoint in your
hands.

Transcending Prototypes

Use your imagination when you study
Internalize the sound, then experiment with it in your mind



Imagine your “ideal”
performance of the second
phrase of the Holst Eb
Suite.

Now, turn up the volume
on the second cornet part.

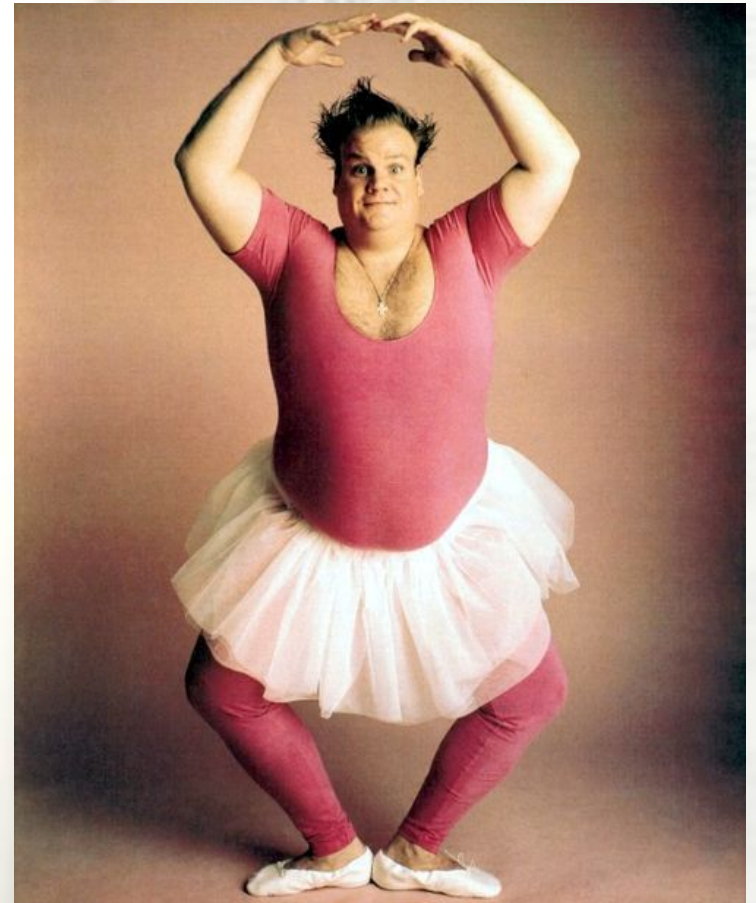
Now do it with the first
trombone.

Transcending Prototypes

Use your imagination when you study

“Listen” to the piece in your head and move to the music (like dancing, not like “conducting”)

Create “feelages” in your body about how you imagine the music should feel

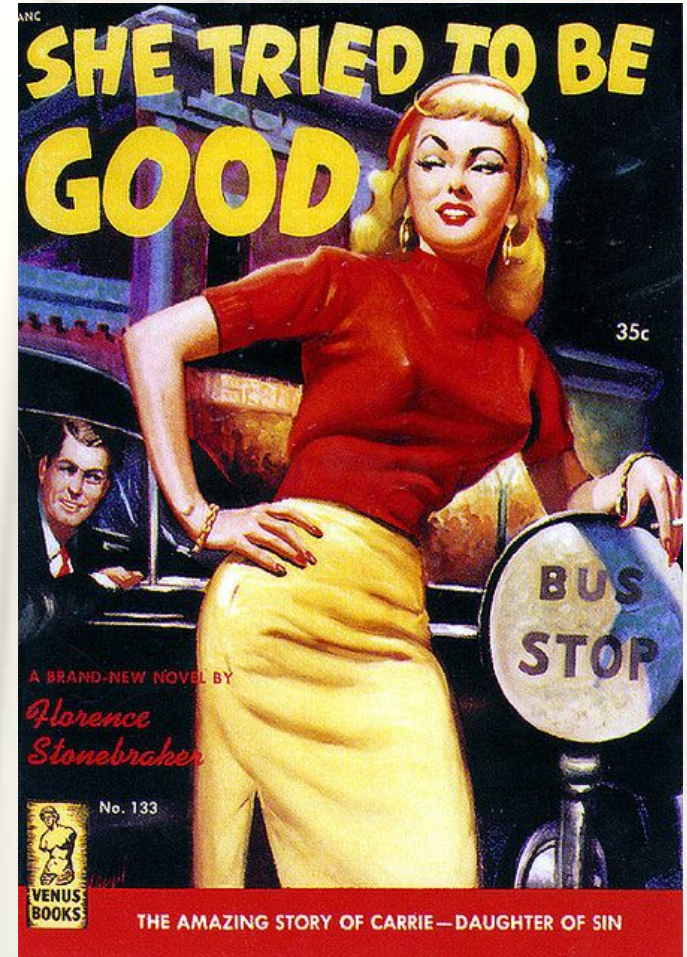


Transcending Prototypes

Don't settle for the first sleezy Holst Eb Suite that comes along and bats its eyes at you.

Make an investment to find that one, “special” Eb Suite—the one that’s right for you.

Your players WILL know the difference.





Teaching

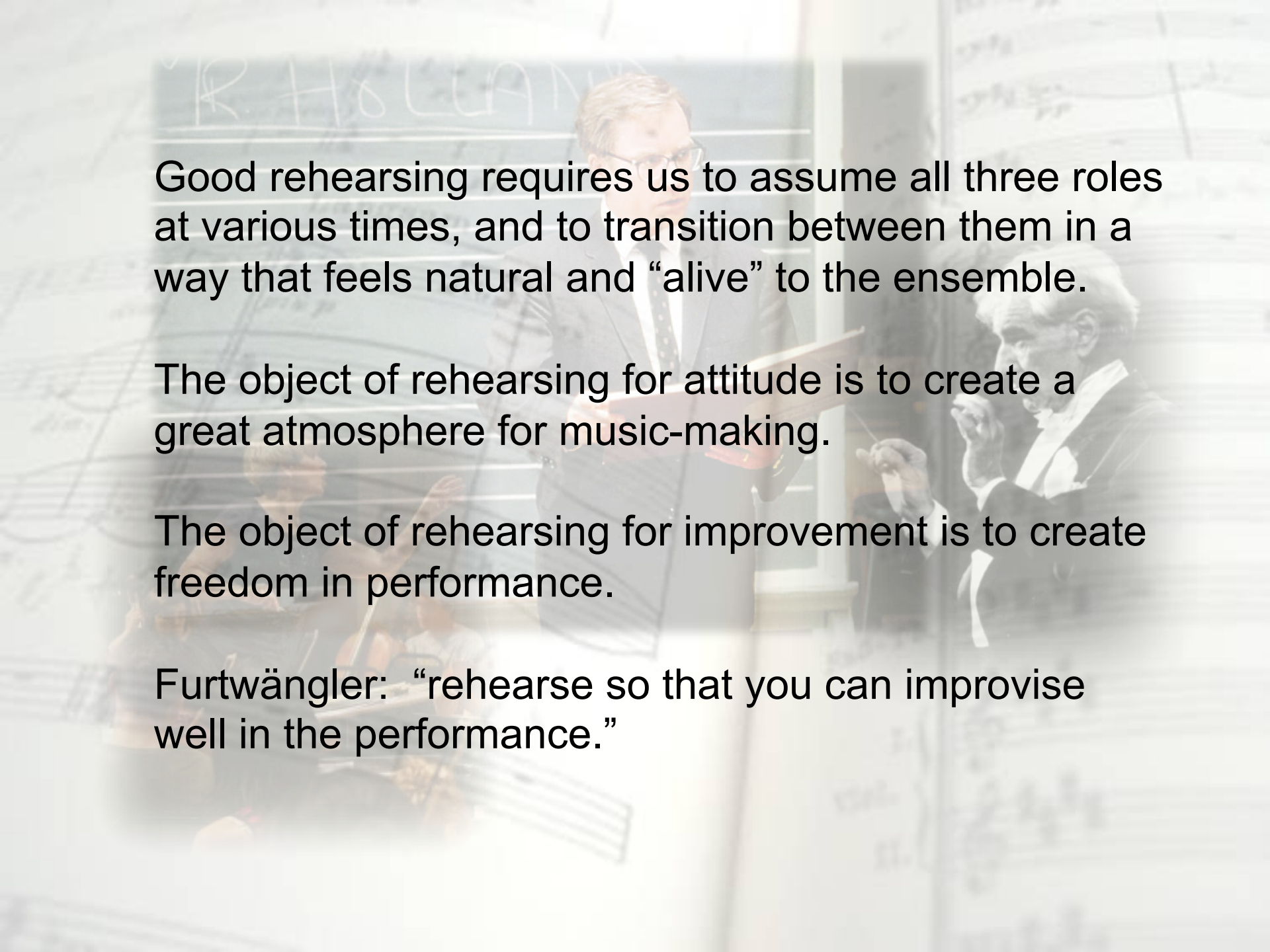


Conducting



Coaching

Three DISTINCT Roles

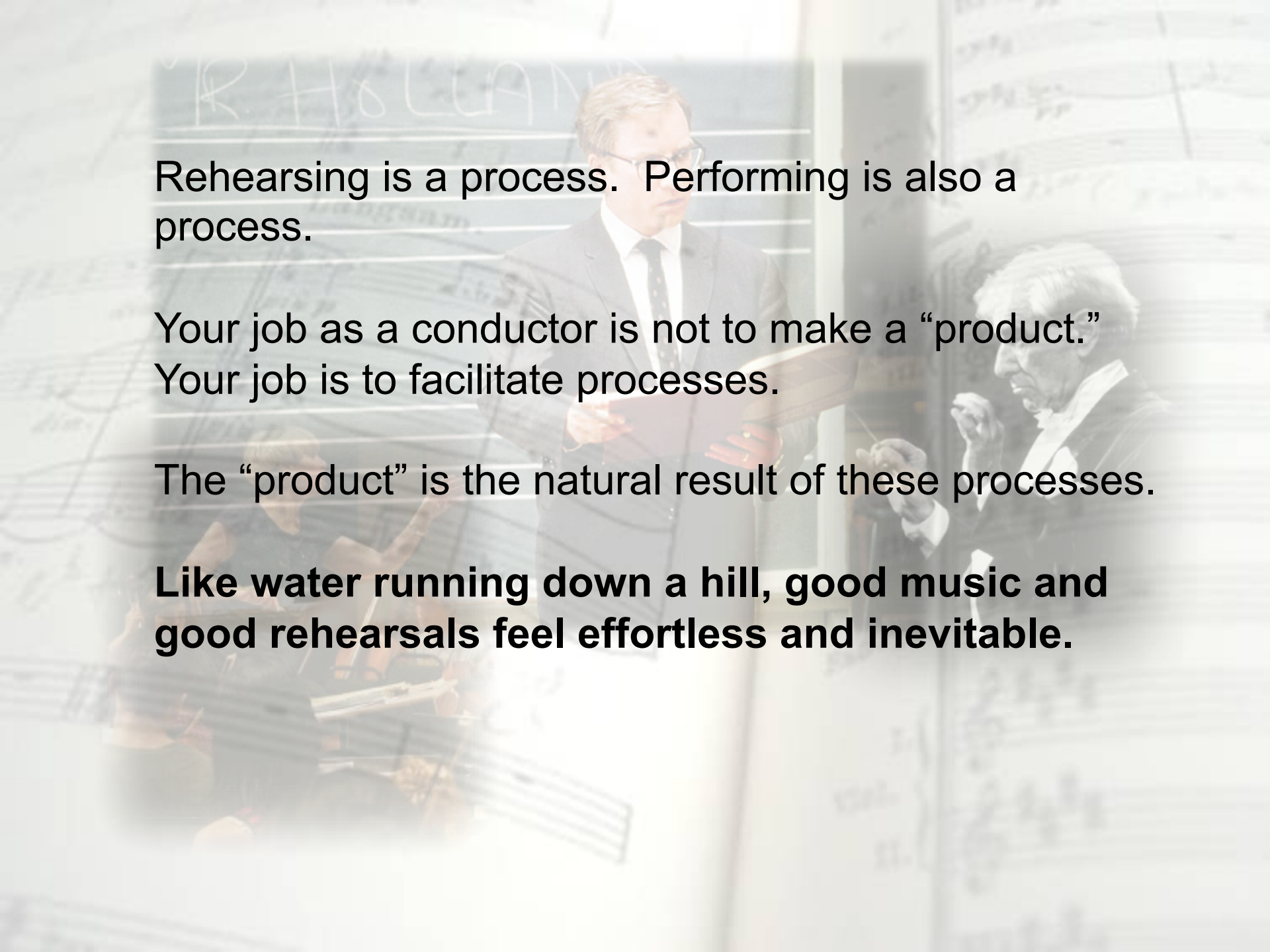


Good rehearsing requires us to assume all three roles at various times, and to transition between them in a way that feels natural and “alive” to the ensemble.

The object of rehearsing for attitude is to create a great atmosphere for music-making.

The object of rehearsing for improvement is to create freedom in performance.

Furtwängler: “rehearse so that you can improvise well in the performance.”



Rehearsing is a process. Performing is also a process.

Your job as a conductor is not to make a “product.”
Your job is to facilitate processes.

The “product” is the natural result of these processes.

**Like water running down a hill, good music and
good rehearsals feel effortless and inevitable.**

A little bit about arm-waving

Make beautiful shapes

Which likely will be curved

And related to “Conductor Ears”

And that tell the players more about “how”

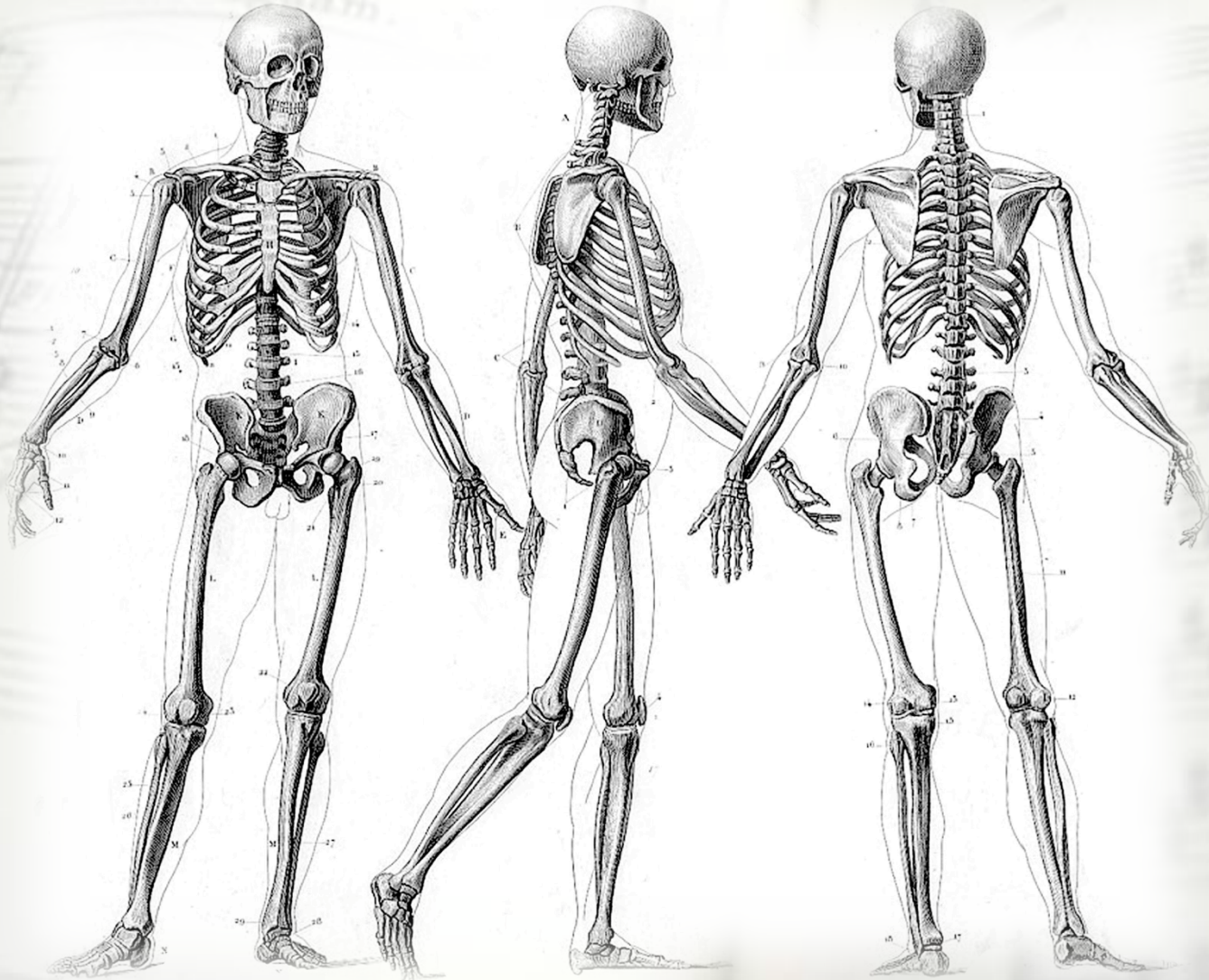
than “when”



because that's ***their*** gig...

And that release the sound of the ensemble

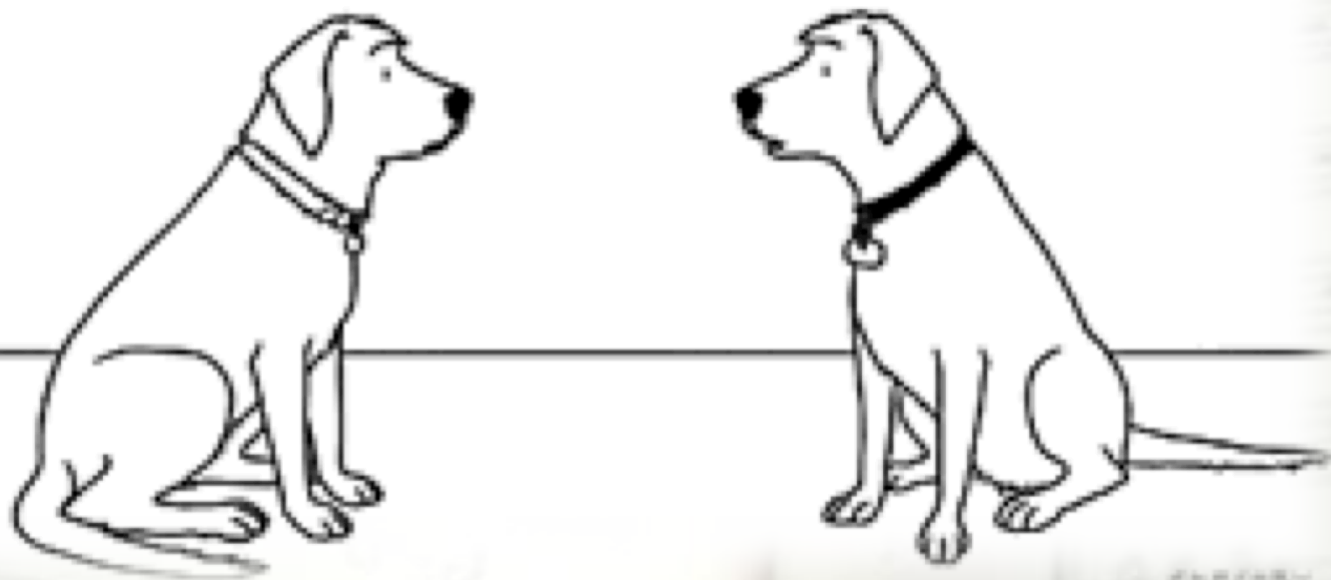
Geometry + Rhythm =



Harmony, Color, Weight and Shape

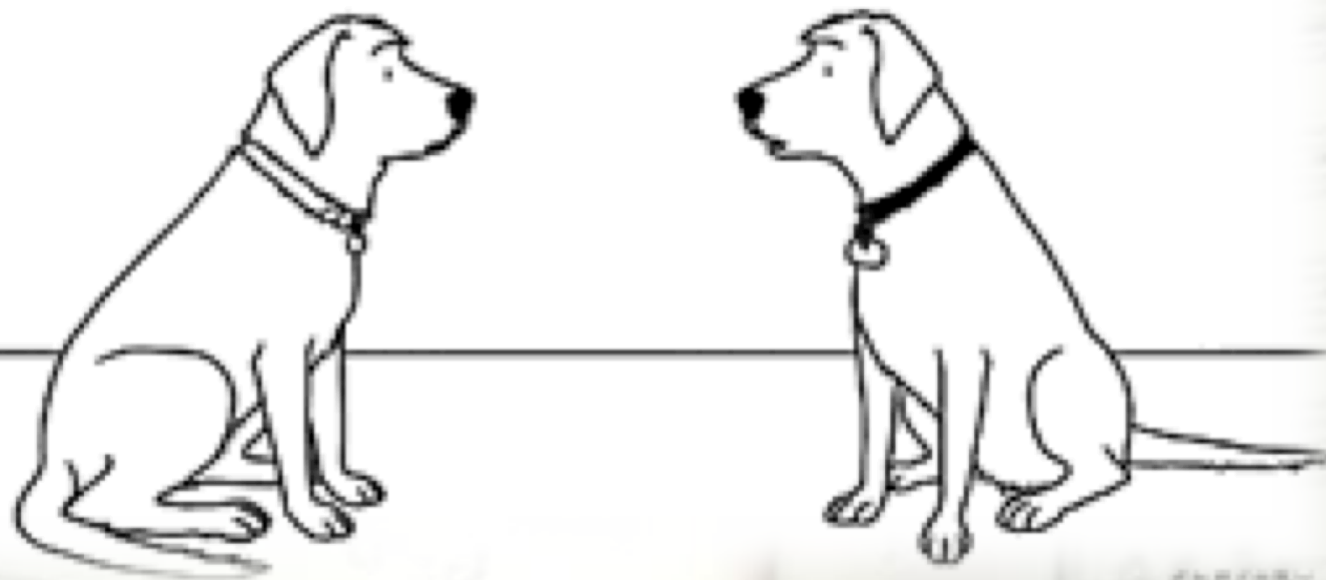


this is all really about
relationships, isn't it?



ya know—for a dog you're pretty smart.

i'm going to a rehearsal



that's cool. have lots of good ones this year!