

CONFLICT AND COLLABORATION IN MULTIPHASE ORCHESTRA PRACTICE

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Background

Previous studies have shown that the majority of interpersonal conflicts in ensembles emerge from interpretations for performance. Thus, negotiation between performers is necessary. In particular, orchestras often contain multi-phase negotiation processes, for instance, practice of each instrumental part, practice of a section that incorporates several instrumental parts, and practice as a whole body. Do negotiations between performers differ at each practice phase? We explore this unclear question.

Aims

This study investigated negotiations among orchestra members, including multiphase practices. We examined: (1) whether adoption of interpretations for performance differs depending on practice phase; (2) how leaders' roles in each practice phase differ; and (3) what types of leaders' behaviors are associated with performers' satisfaction with practice. This investigation can lead to understanding not only social interactions in ensembles, but also in general group activity that contains multiphase collaboration processes.

Method

We conducted a questionnaire survey targeting members of two university orchestras, with a total of 107 students ($M_{age}=20.2$; 37 males and 70 females) participating. Questionnaires incorporated items addressing types of interpretations adopted, the leader's role, and satisfaction with practice in each phase: individual practice, each type of instrumental part practice, section practice that incorporates several instrumental parts, and two types of whole practice—with a student conductor, and a conductor who conducts the actual concert. After providing informed consent, participants responded to the questionnaires.

Results

Analysis showed that interpretations for performance adopted by members differed depending on practice phase. As the multiphase process progressed from each instrumental part practice to section practice, to whole practice, the number of responses indicating that members adopted compromise interpretations for performance became higher. Meanwhile, throughout all practice phases, the number of responses indicating that members find new interpretations by negotiating with one another was relatively high. Results also suggested that the leader's role differed between part practice and section practice. Part practice leaders created a good mood, while section practice leaders suggested interpretations for performance. Members' satisfaction in each practice phase was associated with leaders and conductors' behavior. In part practice and section practice, satisfaction was associated with leaders' ability to create a good mood in groups and to help adjust opinions. In practice with the student conductor and the conductor for stage performance, as the conductors communicated more instructions, members' satisfaction rose.

Conclusions

Principal findings are the following: (1) members' interpretations for performance differed depending on practice phase; (2) the leader role differed between part practice and section practice; and (3) the leaders' behavior is important for members' satisfaction during both part practice and section practice.

Keywords

orchestra; multiphase practice; negotiation; leadership; interpretation