
Rick's Place

Notes, Thoughts, and Random Musings on the Online Experience

by Rick Hein, AMIS web master

It occurred to me that the situation could be remedied by combining adjacent bars so as to reduce the basic beat to an eighth-note; for instance, the succession of bars of 3/16, 2/8, 1/16, 4/8 could be integrated into a single bar of 4/4. To be sure the downbeats would be dislocated at several points, but Stravinsky had numerous syncopated accents anyway, so the basic rhythm would be preserved.

Nicolas Slonimsky
Perfect Pitch: A Life Story

Courage to see things anew. To take the unfamiliar and make it familiar. To enable a performer to realize their full potential by rearranging a piece that is difficult to understand into one that can be performed capably. Nicolas Slonimsky is fulfilling the role of a teacher in this example. As you will see later, because of his position in relation to his 'pupil' he also had to exercise considerable tact.

Welcome back to your new year. I hope that you have had a summer rich with experience, that you have had a chance to rest and re-create, and that you are ready to relight the lamps of learning. What new gems have you found for your performance groups? What reading have you done on learning styles and rehearsal techniques? Have you finished a degree, started a course, or just plain got your peace of mind back?

No doubt, following the words of wisdom in the past Rick's Places, you have cleansed your E-mail of all ancient items and organized all of the current files, devised a set of fiendishly complicated rules allowing your E-mail program to sort and arrange your mail, organized your bookmarks in your web browser, and sequenced rehearsal pieces for all of the major works you intend to teach to your performance groups and classroom extravaganzas: you have notated all of the arrangements you have created for all of the public domain folk songs you teach and have finally gotten that elusive setting of the Prayer of St. Hieronymous notated for SSAAB chorus, piano, flute, clarinet, euphonium, and viola; self published it via the Internet and, as a result of the score, received a commission from Warner Brothers to edit a collection of pieces for that voicing.

No?

Whatever you have done this summer, I know that you are ready for the return to classes. You are excited about the possibilities, both scared that it won't be like last year while hoping that it won't be like last year. Audition materials are waiting for you; the music for Boyz Sing, Too should be in the mail room and the International Honor Jazz Band music will be buzzing in the ears of your successful auditionees. No doubt your skills at rearranging music for ease of understanding have already begun in the same manner as last year.

Back to Slonimsky and Serge Koussevitzky. In Paris in 1921, Slonimsky was hired by Koussevitzky to be the "orchestra" for his conducting practice of *Le Sacre du printemps*. Slonimsky noticed that Koussevitzky's technique was such that when going from 3/16 to 2/8 that the sixteenth-notes slowed down and the eighth-notes sped up, losing the binary ratios. He would also count 5/8 as "1,2,3,4,5,uh" so Stravinsky's asymmetric rhythms turned into a gentle waltz. Slonimsky rebarred the score in blue pencil and Koussevitzky was able to make the music come alive. The parts were rebarred to match the score and used by Koussevitzky in Paris and later in Boston.

Twenty years later, he received a letter from one of Koussevitzky's own pupils. It concluded:

Every time I conduct *Le Sacre*, as I did most recently two weeks ago (and always from Koussy's own score, with your rebaring), I revere and honor you as I did the very first time. Bless you and more power to you.
Lenny B

Serious praise, from a modern master who was the protege of another modern master. Praise for the enabling act; yet, as we all know from all of our conducting and editing classes, Slonimsky broke all the rules.

Sometimes it is just that look beyond the surface, the breaking of the rules; the thinking different that makes everything fall into place for your student. Take the chance. The only thing you have to gain is success.

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