Berlioz's *Harold in Italy*: leading softly

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This paper explores Harold in Italy, a symphony by Hector Berlioz. It offers a way of conceiving of organizational leadership beyond the controls of a hero figure and proposes alternative ways of being that facilitate group interactions. Subtlety of gesture, non-action, a willingness to respond to the promptings of others by being able to perceive what is occurring in the moment, are qualities that are discussed.

Keywords: art, collaboration, constraint, control, laissez-faire leadership, music, orchestra

'You say it best when you say nothing at all.'

Ronan Keating

1 INTRODUCTION

Although heroic figures dominate the leadership landscape, there are other forms of leading that are equally potent and perhaps more effective. Accounts of valiant men, and sometimes women, who inspire acts of courage by their own selflessness and acts of outstanding bravery, and exceptionally gifted people, skilled at bringing together disparate groups under a common banner, are focal to leadership studies, but this is not universally accepted. In this paper I explore alternatives to the strong and supremely competent leader-narrative that is privileged in leadership discourse. Works of art both affirm and contest the belief that there must be a single person who takes charge, and who assumes final responsibility.

Driving hero leader conceptions are accounts of men like George Washington and Napoleon Bonaparte: extraordinary military strategists who demonstrate significant leadership qualities (Flynn and Griffin 2012) and who bring about revolutionary change. Such figures are sought after in organizations, in the belief that they will perform unique feats of derring-do that will transform a company into a market leader. For instance, today we might speak of Steve Jobs (Isaacson 2011), the inspired creator of the computer giant Apple, or of 'Lee' Iacocca, the self-made man who revived the Chrysler Corporation after it faced bankruptcy during the 1970s oil shock (Iacocca and Kleinfield 1988; Iacocca and Whitney 2007).

These images of charismatic individuals, who lead companies out of distress and into prosperity, resonate with artworks that valorize revolutionary leaders. For instance Emanuel Leutze's 1851 painting of *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, reveals a courageous and committed leader fighting for his people against overwhelming odds. In their analysis of this work, McManus and Perruci (2015, p. 12) claim that the painting depicts an idealized conception, where George Washington the leader is 'endowed with superior powers, calm under pressure, resolute', stirring followers to fulfil his mission.

Similarly, painters and propagandists of the French Revolution and subsequent reign of Napoleon Bonaparte, Jacques Louis David and Antoine-Jean Gros, rendered the leader in various heroic poses – crossing the Alps with his name engraved on the hardened rock alongside Hannibal and Charlemagne (David, 1801–1805, *Napoleon at the Saint-Bernard Pass*); standing erect in his imperial robes (David, 1805, *Portrait de Napoléon en costume imperial*); or with supreme courage and compassion reaching out to touch a contagious soldier (Gros, 1804, *Bonaparte visitant les pestiférés de Jaffa*).

Napoleon is even held up today as an example of a ‘great achiever’ (Drucker 2005, p. 100), a fine leader who knew his own strengths and weaknesses and who could therefore inspire others (Blaufarb 2012; Widmer 1980). However, these visions of leadership, both in narrative art and biography, reveal unattainable qualities, even for those who are central to the narrative. For instance, Gros’s depiction of Napoleon as a messianic miracle worker reaching out in compassion to the diseased soldier to heal him (Hicks 2012), contradicted Napoleon’s somewhat pragmatic decision to euthanize the disease-ridden soldiers (Jordan 2012, p. 59). The painting was designed to calm the French populace and create an alternative, though untrue, narrative, which would reveal a man of deep compassion.

Napoleon’s ability to turn on the charm covered his abrasive character, and according to Jordan (2012, p. 107) ‘he was a bully’, advising his immediate circle to behave similarly. For instance, Napoleon maintained continual correspondence with leaders throughout his empire, and in letters to his elder sibling Joseph, who he made King of Naples, he ‘monotonously accused [him] of goodness, softness, and dangerous sensibility’ (Jordan 2012, p. 84). Far from a compassionate commander-in-chief, as Gros depicts, Napoleon was an aggressive, uncompromising and sometimes vindictive leader.

In sum, heroic images have impacted negatively on our discipline because they do not reflect the warp and weft of organizational life, where the active involvement of everybody is essential (Monin and Bathurst 2008). Furthermore, depictions of the supremely competent leader are not only pretentious; they also damage the well-being of staff who seek to carry out their bidding. For, as Gemmill and Oakley (1992, p. 115) argue, dominating leaders create ‘learned helplessness’ on the part of so-called followers.

It is not surprising, then, that post-heroic conceptions of leadership are becoming more common (Crevani et al. 2007), where great-man theories transmogrify into a search for plural forms of collaborative leadership (Kort 2008; Reicher et al. 2005).

Contemporary reconfigurations of leadership that privilege processual approaches (see, for example, Wood 2002) also have precedents in Napoleonic Europe. For instance, Beethoven, believing that the French revolutionary would usher in universal brotherhood, was enraged on hearing that Napoleon had crowned himself Emperor, and scored out the dedication to ‘Buonaparte’ on the title page of his third symphony (*Eroica*). Beethoven’s disillusionment was palpable in his blunt renunciation of Napoleon as he literally tore into the score:

So he too is nothing more than an ordinary man. Now he also will trample all human rights under foot, and only pander to his own ambition; he will place himself above everyone else and become a tyrant! (Wegeler and Ries 1838 [1987], p. 68)

Beethoven’s work was not an isolated case, and visions of a world eschewing the tyranny of a dominating leader can be found in his aesthetic milieu (Berlin 2006). Therefore, in what follows I explore what it might mean for leaders to take a retiring

position which privileges soft speech, creating spaces for ideas to come from the larger whole. In taking this journey I stand in the place of violinist extraordinaire Nicolò Paganini (1782–1840), who was the patron who commissioned the French composer Hector Berlioz (1803–1869) to write a work for solo viola.

With the need to find alternatives to leaders framed by media and biographers who valorize their exploits and cast them as heroes, and in the shadows of Napoleon's disastrous warmongering, in this paper I will explore Berlioz's symphony – *Harold in Italy*, first performed in 1834 – written in response to Paganini's request. I maintain that this offers artistic prompts that facilitate a discussion of twenty-first century leadership issues, especially those that investigate the leader as a person who stands back from the action, facilitating others to take a lead. In particular this symphony provides a mechanism for exploring leadership beyond the *property* of an individual (Koivunen 2007; Spillane et al. 2004), a social process that is embodied in the spaces between people (Hatch 1999; Uhl-Bien 2006).

Our initial reactions to the proposition that a work of art could be instructive for business leaders may be to dismiss the proposition out of hand: it is patently absurd to take an old and obscure artwork and draw lessons from it. Berlioz is 200 years too late to speak to us today! How might we respond, though, if we reversed this position and thought of the work as a contemporary piece that provokes our sensibilities? Indeed, McLuhan (1987) considered that artists were provocateurs speaking to future generations, alerting us to potential blind spots in our social customs and cultural values (see Theall 2001, p. 29). For McLuhan, organizational leaders seem more focused on the past, devising strategies that worked for yesterday while artists perform a social function of proposing and creating new and innovative directions.

Works of art, then, can endure beyond the immediate context and environment within which they were conceived and continue to speak to subsequent generations. For, as Žižek claims:

Perhaps the most elementary hermeneutic test of the greatness of a work of art is its ability to survive being torn from its original context. In the case of truly great art, each epoch reinvents and rediscovers it. (Žižek 2008, pp. 129–130)

Thus in this paper I will apply this rubric to *Harold in Italy* and seek to draw lessons for contemporary leadership practice from it. First I will focus on the two main protagonists, Paganini and Berlioz.

2 PAGANINI AND BERLIOZ

Paganini was an exceptional violinist. Wowing audiences across Europe with his virtuosity, his brilliance came from a potent mix of skilful mastery, self-assurance and not a little arrogance. Perhaps today we would call him a strong 'hero' leader, a man with nerves of steel and a penchant for risk-taking. Supremely competent, he would turn the instrument of his profession into his plaything and, according to legend, prior to concerts he would deliberately damage one of his strings so that when playing, it would break. Undeterred, and without pause, he would continue performing feats of genius on three strings. In our contemporary context, Paganini would have been just the guy to bang heads together, getting rid of dissenters who poison the organization's climate (Levy 1999) with their disaffection, and to confidently declare his new strategic vision for the enterprise he leads.

Although he was a composer – his *24 Caprices for Solo Violin* written between 1802 and 1819 are so technically demanding that only highly skilled violinists attempt to play them – it was his reputation as a soloist that brought him fame. And Berlioz was well aware of this celebrated violinist, calling Paganini a ‘Titan among giants’, a genius with ‘long hair and piercing eyes’ who stirred Berlioz to his core (Berlioz 1870 [1974], p. 270). For Berlioz, Paganini was a charismatic figure with all of the self-assurance and courage to inspire others.

Only half the age of Paganini when they met, Berlioz was no stranger to fame either. In 1830 he received the *Prix de Rome*, the pre-eminent award for French artists which required spending at least two years in Italy. From 1830 to 1832 he stayed at the official residence of the French Academy in the Villa Medici in Rome. During his stay he travelled extensively, preferring rural settings to the bustle of the city. He developed an affinity for the Abruzzo region east of Rome and it was here that he gained inspiration for his *Harold in Italy* symphony.

It is not surprising that a close bond formed between Paganini and Berlioz, perhaps because each recognized and respected the talents of the other. Both were innovators and it was this ability to stretch the boundaries beyond comfortable norms that cemented their friendship.

In December 1833 Paganini approached Berlioz, proposing a work for viola and orchestra. Paganini was in possession of a viola made by the renowned Italian craftsman luthier Antonio Stradivari and he asked Berlioz to write a piece of music which would show the instrument off to the public. (In today’s market, this viola would fetch around US\$ 45 million!)¹ It was indeed a great honour to be requested to write music by the most famous violinist of his generation, who would perform on an instrument made by the greatest craftsman of them all. (The viola is played in the same manner as the violin, being held under the musician’s chin, and it is common for violinists to also be violists.)

Who would not be flattered? A young composer receiving a commission from a superstar was an opportunity too good to pass up. With the niceties of demurral and counter-proposal out of the way, Berlioz set about writing the work. With an ear for the subtleties of the viola’s unique timbres, Berlioz wanted to both celebrate the famous soloist and his instrument, and to give full expression to the varieties of orchestral colours that he had been experimenting with in previous compositions.

Berlioz began composing, and in his memoirs he records that he had only just completed the first section when Paganini wanted to see the manuscript.

Paganini wanted to see it? When only a quarter of the work had been completed? Berlioz should have read the warning signs: would his patron seek to control his artistic urges and if Paganini was displeased would Berlioz have the resilience necessary to retain his confidence?

Paganini’s first response was blunt and dismissive. All Paganini could see were the places where he was *not playing*, and exclaimed, ‘This is not good!’ He went on to say that he needed much more focus on the solo instrument and that he should be playing continuously.

How would Berlioz react to such a crushing assessment?

By pushing back.

Berlioz retorted, saying, ‘If you want a viola concerto then you must write it, I am writing a symphony for solo viola; that is a different kind of work altogether’

1. This viola is now owned by the Nippon Music Foundation and is currently on loan to Kazuhide Isomura of the Tokyo String Quartet.

(Berlioz 1870 [1974], p. 270). After a moment's contemplation Paganini turned on his heels and left the room. Several days later he went to Nice, and three years were to pass before the two were to meet again.

In the meantime Berlioz continued working on the symphony and he was clear in his conceptions of the work. Free from the controls of his patron, Berlioz set himself new constraints: he was writing a symphony for solo viola where *both* the orchestra *and* the soloist were of equal status, with each complementing the other. The constraints he worked with were that the viola would take on human-like qualities and interact with the memories of Berlioz's wanderings in Italy. Berlioz had in mind a somewhat retiring individual who was not at all brash or outspoken. Thus the viola could easily be swamped by the other sounds in the orchestra and he would need to take care with how he placed the viola within the overall texture. These constraints would demand as much from Berlioz's creativity as the work's outlandish predecessor, *Symphony Fantastique*.

In late 1834 the work was complete and *Harold en Italie, Symphonie en quatre parties avec un alto principal* was first performed on 23 November at the Paris Conservatoire. Berlioz had realized his ambition and had produced an innovative work which was, as is often the case, panned by the critics. Berlioz writes:

After the first performance of the symphony a musical journal in Paris published an article abusing me violently. The article began, in the wittiest fashion: 'Ha! Ha! Ha! – haro! haro! *Harold!*' A day after it appeared I got an anonymous letter which, after a stream of even cruder insults, accused me of 'not having the courage to blow my brains out'. (Berlioz 1870 [1974], pp. 272–273)

For this French critic, 'Haro' was an expression of his extreme hostility to the work. He hated it and made no bones about telling Berlioz directly. Furthermore, the commissioning agent, Paganini, was silent and no fee was forthcoming. To be rejected by the audience and spurned by the sponsor should have put Berlioz out of business. Certainly, he was carrying large debts and he had to trim his budget in order to support his wife and young son.

Four years later, in December 1838, Paganini finally heard the work and was stunned by it. He spontaneously proclaimed to Berlioz: 'You're a genius!'. Paganini dragged Berlioz onstage and publicly knelt before him and kissed his hand. Was this mere showmanship on Paganini's behalf? Berlioz had every right to be suspicious. However, a few days later Berlioz received a letter from Paganini, brought to him by the violinist's son, Achille:

My dear friend,
Beethoven being dead, only Berlioz can make him live again; and I who have heard your divine composition, so worthy of your genius, humbly beg you to accept, as a token of my homage, twenty thousand francs, which Baron de Rothschild will remit to you on your presenting the enclosed.
Believe me ever your most affectionate friend,
Nicolò Paganini. (Berlioz 1870 [1974], p. 300)

Berlioz among the pantheon of famous composers and compared to the greatest of them all? To be considered equal to Ludwig van Beethoven is probably the greatest accolade any composer can receive.

But what did Paganini find so overwhelming that he would part with a small fortune? In its finished form the symphony did not offer the soloist the opportunity to demonstrate amazing feats of brilliance and Berlioz had not compromised his conception of the work, with the long periods of the viola's silence remaining in the score.

In what follows I imagine Paganini's amazement and try to follow in his footsteps to unlock some of the ideas that inform this symphony. Paganini had heard Berlioz's first major orchestral work *Symphonie Fantastique: Épisode de la vie d'un artiste ... en cinq parties* (first performed in 1830) and had, along with Parisian audiences, been absorbed by its groundbreaking musical language that takes listeners beyond the familiar. The bizarre programmatic narrative is about an artist in love, with Berlioz himself as the centre of that story. Drunk with passion, and his senses dulled in an opium fog, the artist dreams that he is beheaded at a guillotine and that witches are dancing in celebration around him. It is an adventurous work that shows the orchestra in all its hues, and continues to be performed in concert halls across the globe with audiences still being impressed by its innovative canvas.

Harold, by contrast, is a much more contemplative work. Mirroring Beethoven's cyclical Choral Symphony, *Harold* is a mix of subtle orchestral colours, sonorous viola passages and one of the most dramatic endings in the symphonic repertoire. It tells a story of scenes from rural Italy centred on a pivotal character, Harold. (Berlioz had been enamoured of Byron's Childe Harold.) Comparisons with *Symphonie Fantastique* would have been in Paganini's mind as he listened to *Harold* for the first time.

Furthermore, what does this music about a wondering individual have to say to a world far removed from early nineteenth-century France and Italy recovering from the ravages of war, and how does it speak to twenty-first-century leaders facing the uncertainties of a complex world? Making these links and allowing this work to yield its treasures will require us to hold sometimes competing ideas and to think counter-intuitively. In particular, these issues are: listening for the nuanced gestures of the solo viola accompanied by and accompanying a full orchestra with all its dynamism; grappling with the relational dynamics between the soloist and the orchestra; and finally the narrative arc that proceeds from 'Harold in the Mountains', through the 'Procession of pilgrims singing the evening hymn' and the 'Serenade of an Abruzzi mountaineer to his sweetheart', and culminates in 'The brigand's Orgies'. First I will discuss the viola as a solo instrument.

3 THE VIOLA: COMMUNICATING MORE BY SAYING LESS

The viola is a curious choice for a solo instrument. Once Paganini had made the invitation to write for his 'Strad', Berlioz became intent on delivering. In its orchestral setting the viola has an ambiguous place and is rarely heard on its own. It is an 'inside' instrument in that its muted tonal qualities lend themselves to being part of a chord cluster rather than the most noticeable instruments at the top or bottom of the texture. Its role in support of the harmonic and rhythmic structures within symphonies means that it is only rarely noticed.

Berlioz takes this most retiring instrument and places it centre stage, requiring it to play the main recurring melody. The symphony begins with the lower strings (cellos and double basses) playing a very soft murmuring figure, and soon the main theme is heard from the woodwind section. When the viola enters it repeats this woodwind melody on its lower strings where it is difficult to project the sound. Furthermore, on the repeat of the 8-bar symmetrical melody, Berlioz notates *ppp* (very very soft), adding in written text for extra reinforcement that the soloist should play 'as softly as possible – scarcely audible'.

In what follows I will offer analyses for readers who are musically adept, indicating measure numbers from the orchestral score. Readers who are not so familiar with musical notation I will invite to go to YouTube (www.youtube.com). This social

media website has a number of versions of the symphony and the one I recommend is Leonard Bernstein conducting the Orchestre de Paris. For the illustrations included below I will be referring to the time code from this version. When viewing the YouTube clips, you will be tempted to focus on the conductor only. I ask you to resist this urge. Yes, the conductor participates in the realization of the work in time and place. However, for the purposes of this study, it is important to concentrate only on the music and performers. The role of the conductor in orchestral performances as an archetypical leader is canvassed in the literature (see, for example, Byrne 2009; Drucker 1993; Ropo and Sauer 2007; Vredenburg and He 2003), but this role is not within this paper's purview.

There is no blazing, dramatic statement by either the orchestra or soloist: the ideas are suggestive and muted. This would have stopped Paganini in his tracks! His presumption would have been that to convey important ideas, you first have to get people's attention. But Berlioz was writing a symphony that develops musical ideas through a series of stages ('movements' in musical language), not a concerto that is primarily designed to show off the talents of the soloist.

Having come to terms with this shift in orientation, Paganini would then ponder how he might express Berlioz's intentions on the viola. Playing loudly is easier than playing softly and to play extremely softly in the way that Berlioz notates requires supreme mastery of the instrument. The performer's stance needs to be solidly grounded with the shoulders and right arm completely stable so that the intensity of the sound can be maintained along the bow's full length.

The nuances in sound and tone quality are delicate and restrained. Listeners are required to turn their attention to the subtleties and softness of the viola's tones, *and* the supportive accompaniment and interjections by the harp and woodwind.

Here I urge readers to pause and listen to the first five minutes of the symphony. The easiest way is to listen to the recommended YouTube recording.

For the musical literati the orchestral opening is ambiguous. The stated key is G major but the sixteenth note semitone shift to A flat and then to B flat in the first measure indicate that the key could be G minor. The symphony poses the same question that Beethoven asks in the opening of the 9th Choral symphony: is it major or minor? The tonality is disorienting and as the murmuring figure progresses it adopts a fugue-like quality with the second entry of the subject in the first violins on the dominant D, but again in a minor mode.

The ambiguities of this opening are further enhanced by the entry of the main theme – the *idée fixe* – at measure 14. The woodwind introduce the melody which appears to reinforce the G minor tonality. However, when the viola plays the melody for the first time in measure 38, it is in G major. The melody itself is symmetrical with the first 4-measure phrase balanced by the next 4 following the same rise and fall but this time moving towards the dominant in the second half of the phrase. The entire 8 measures are repeated, reinforcing the melody's simplicity. There is nothing demanded of the violist here because the notes lie directly under the fingers and can be played entirely in first position, making it deceptively easy.

Disguised in the simplicity are suggestions of rhythmic ambiguity in the first movement which will be exploited more as the symphony unfolds. The introductory section is in triple meter and at measure 85 the timpanist plays triplets against the assumed duplets. This feel of 6 against 3 is made more explicit in the Allegro which is in a compound duple metre. At measure 191 the viola shifts into a simple duple rhythm against the established rhythm in the string section (Figure 1), an idea already flagged at measures 107–117 in the strings.

Figure 1 Viola duplets against compound triple rhythm (measures 186–194)

These suggestions in the first movement become explicit contestations throughout the rest of the symphony. Rhythmic ambiguity gives a sense of momentum and developing narrative to the work as it progresses.

The confusing tonal qualities of the opening, the uncomplicated melody for the viola and suggestions of cross rhythms mean that our focus is on the interweaving ideas, some of them profound while others are very simple. We are drawn in to the subtleties of the music rather than being held spellbound by the soloist's feats of brilliance. How does this simple melody, sparse accompaniment replete with tonal uncertainty, and rhythmic ambiguity inform our understandings of leadership?

In their interesting and somewhat disturbing study about group leadership, Anderson and Kilduff (2009) explore how dominant personalities gain influence. While we imagine that group leaders are selected on the basis of their competence, they tell a different story. From their study it seems that selection is more about the force of personality and that 'dominant individuals behaved in ways that made them *appear* competent to others, above and beyond their actual competence levels' (ibid., p. 502, emphasis added).

Certainly people with powerful personalities have their place in promoting and selling ideas. In organizations they are the people who corral others and provide a unifying perspective. However, they may also inhibit the development of new ideas because the most competent individuals may be the silent ones who are rarely heard. The leadership skill in groups, then, is to give confidence to the silent ones so that they contribute their ideas to the whole. Dissenters also need to be accepted as part of the group's mandate because they too have insights that can be crucial for development (Collinson 2005).

The subtleties of gesture both in language and actions are also crucial leadership qualities especially on the diplomatic stage. Jönsson (1996, p. 25, emphasis added) claims that:

Diplomatic body language encompasses everything from personal gestures and the shape of a negotiating table to the mobilization and movement of military troops and hardware and the actual use of force. In fact, both behavior and *nonbehavior* may constitute messages.

Bold and confident gestures that situate the leader in the most prominent place in a group may ultimately prove deleterious to an organization's development. Žižek (2008), in his

reflections on the rise of global terrorism and state responses to it, explores the impact of dramatic responses to terrorist acts like the September 11, 2001 World Trade Center bombings in the USA. He argues that restrained responses or even no response are more powerful than direct and spectacular action. He draws on literature and music to argue that 'the first gesture to provoke a change in the system is to withdraw activity, to do nothing' (ibid., p. 180). For Žižek, doing nothing does not equate to weakness and ineptitude, but is a strategic choice in order to provoke attention.

Indeed Berlioz asks this of the viola soloist in the final movement of *Harold*. Here, apart from the beginning and a short passage about two-thirds of the way through the movement (in the fourth movement, measures 475–497 and time code 42:36–43:11), the soloist is silent. Berlioz's masterstroke is to withdraw the soloist altogether. Listeners are then required to imagine the viola and its unique tonality. This absence has the effect of drawing the listener in to the full viola section of the orchestra and to become aware of the role in the middle of the texture. What should the violist do when there is nothing to do? Instead of standing still and remaining silent, many soloists choose to join the viola section and play what *they* are playing. By taking this action, concertgoers are drawn into the entire viola section's contribution to the symphonic narrative and the synergies of the whole.

4 THE VIOLA AND ORCHESTRA: COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Having established the soloist's role in the fabric of the orchestration, Berlioz sets about creating fluid interactions between the viola and orchestra. In the first movement proper, the orchestra and viola collaborate, taking each other's thematic ideas, weaving them together. At times the viola plays the melody on its own (in the first movement, see measures 134–145 or YouTube time code 8:18–8:36); see Figure 2.

At other times the melody is broken up, with the orchestra and soloist playing a question-and-answer routine (see first movement measures 146–169 or YouTube time code 8:19–8:55), requiring both the soloist and orchestra members to be alert to each other. This is no time for sleepwalking by any of the musicians, and Paganini would have been acutely aware of the dangers of these rapid interjections (see Figure 3).

Berlioz also deploys a device of instrumental doubling which he had explored in his first symphony. In this instance the viola plays in unison with the other wind and brass instruments (see measures 345–364 or YouTube time code 12:53–13:09), which has

The image displays a musical score for measures 129–135 of a piece. The top staff is labeled 'Viola Solo.' and contains a melodic line with various dynamics including 'cresc.' (crescendo) and 'espress.' (espressivo). Below this, there are several staves representing the orchestral accompaniment, including woodwinds, brass, and strings. The orchestral parts are marked with 'pp' (pianissimo) and feature rhythmic patterns that complement the soloist's melody. The score is written in a standard musical notation with clefs, key signatures, and dynamic markings.

Figure 2 Viola Solo with orchestral accompaniment (measures 129–135)

Figure 3 Soloist with orchestra interjecting (measures 143–148)

the effect of creating new timbres, preserving the viola's identity without crushing it. Interestingly, here Berlioz slurred the viola notes into groups of 4, meaning the player must perform these 4-measure phrases in one bow stroke. Performers often ignore Berlioz's requirement and play each note with a single blow to avoid becoming swamped in the texture. The creative potential of this form of doubling is powerful, for, as Barzun (1969, p. 248) says, 'any monotony that might result from the viola sound is avoided by adding to it unisons of horns, clarinets, bassoons or cellos'.

In the second movement, the 'Procession of pilgrims singing the evening hymn', the string section begins the melody. The viola repeats the main melody they played at the opening and then for the rest of the movement it accompanies the orchestra. Again, here the viola is required to play softly and for much of the movement the composer requests that the soloist plays *sul ponticello* – with the bow kept as close to the bridge as possible (from measure 169 or YouTube time code from about 19:41 onwards). The effect is a somewhat harsh and penetrating sound which allows the viola to be distinguished from the other instruments as well as setting out the chord changes in the harmonic structure. Here the viola must paradoxically be in the foreground *and* background. It needs to be heard so that the chord changes are audible, and it also needs to be in the background behind the pilgrim's chant and plucked bass line. Ever the innovator, the thinner 'edge' that is achieved through playing *sul ponticello* adds new colour to the texture.

Berlioz gives the viola similar functions in the third movement, 'Serenade of an Abruzzi mountaineer to his sweetheart'. Apart from the dynamic markings (indications of the degree of loudness or softness) which are usually *p espress* (play softly and expressively), the orchestra and soloist have to continually negotiate their respective places in the texture. The simplest question each asks of the other is, 'are you playing a melody, counter melody or are you accompanying?' Further, they need to judge their degree of loudness in comparison to each other, but from the listeners' perspectives. This necessitates that each player maintains a close connection with the others through making constant eye contact, and to continuously assess how the overall sound is being received by the audience.

An orchestra is a social grouping where gestures are fundamental to the way they operate. Very few verbal instructions are given to players when rehearsing and none while performing. Information is mostly given and received through bodily gestures

as well as the acoustic sounds of each instrument (Koivunen and Wennes 2011). All the players are acutely aware of each other. For instance, string players keep an eye on which part of the bow their section principal is using. Most often it is appropriate to mirror exactly their bow strokes, while at other times, especially when a long sustained chord is being played, the bow changes must not be in sync with each other. Many of these negotiations occur *in situ* and in the moment without any formal instruction being given. Judgments about how loud to play, which part of the bow to use, even what fingering to use for a particular passage, are made continuously by each musician. They assume individual responsibility while taking collective action.

For musicians, these collaborative negotiations are continuous, as achieving a tight ensemble is the essence of their work. There is no way of escaping from others in the team, even when relationships become tense. Berlioz writes of his friend Girard, who conducted performances of his symphonies, that Girard was unable to 'galvanise the orchestra' (Berlioz 1870 [1974], p. 272) during the first performance of *Harold*, especially in the final movement, and this led to some of the harsh criticisms Berlioz received.

Orchestras must achieve ensemble integrity in order for works to be performed credibly. Even when a conductor is not competent, and this occurs more frequently than is often acknowledged, musicians are still required to forge a cohesive whole that communicates the essence of the ideas. Musicians prepare for this contingency from a very young age, usually in small chamber groups, as they learn the negotiating and diplomatic skills necessary to achieve collaborative performances. When musicians are selected for orchestral positions they are required to demonstrate an ability to work with the larger whole collegially. (When listening to the rendering of the symphony which I recommend, you will notice that the Orchestre de Paris loses cohesion at time code 44:00. This has the potential to create, in musicians' language, a 'train wreck', and the cause is Bernstein's insistence on a faster tempo, which is not marked in the score. Berlioz had already achieved the intended dramatic final flourish by changing the pulse from duple to triple at measure 559, and then to heavily accented whole-note chords at measure 565, giving the illusion of *accelerando* without actually quickening the pace. Furthermore, the final tempo marking that Berlioz writes is back in measure 441, *senza accelerando* [without getting faster]. In cases like this, musicians adjust to the conductor's whims, and here the Orchestre de Paris quickly re-established its sense of ensemble without destroying the final flourish, or exposing the conductor's unrehearsed idiosyncrasies.)

In the organizational context, establishing functional teams is also necessary in order to complete complex tasks. This is potentially problematic in that a new staff member is usually appointed to their role or position on the basis of individual skills, and then required to work with others after being employed. A talented individual may not make for a productive team member, and this makes successful teamwork much more difficult to achieve, especially in hierarchical organizations where individual job descriptions and titles create boundaries which then dictate how a person functions.

What, though, would occur if these boundaries were removed? Such a scenario is difficult to imagine and controls are often kept in place to avoid the possibility of anarchy and chaos.

One way of understanding the generative potential of operating without controlling instructions is in one of the Western world's most common pursuits: driving a motor vehicle. There are multiple protocols and laws for motorists to follow in order to ensure public safety. However, these rules do not always guarantee that drivers will

arrive safely at their destination. Furthermore, how do motorists and pedestrians interact together to ensure each other's survival? Renowned Dutch traffic engineer Hans Monderman came up with an innovative yet counterintuitive idea: remove all road signs and restrictions in urban areas. When driving in zones where there are no signs, motorists are required to behave differently – to 'look each other in the eye, to judge body language and learn to take responsibility – to function as normal human beings' (Monderman, quoted in Brunton 2008, p. 37).

Certainly this makes driving much more complicated, but that's the point. Each driver now recognizes that he or she is in a community and required to relate to other members of that community – like, for instance, children playing and people walking or taking other slower forms of transport. Collaboration, therefore, becomes essential for everybody's well-being and security, and mixing together motor vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians into the same space 'rather than clarity and segregation ... create[s] confusion and ambiguity' (Vanderbilt 2008, p. 30).

Confusion, lack of clarity, ambiguity and chaos are not the enemies of success. Certainly, in the musical contexts of symphony orchestras and jazz combos, ambiguity and complexity are prized values (Atik 1994; Barrett 2000). Here, leadership is about welcoming uncertainty because it invites creative responses. In the world of business, leaders are much more conservative and often resist attempts to minimize controls, yet letting go of control is an important leadership competence in this complex world. This is why Wilkinson (2006) argues that it is this ability to deal with ambiguity that makes for excellent leadership, and why Jönsson (1996, p. 25) claims that 'in diplomatic communication ambiguity is considered constructive and creative'.

Ambiguity has the effect of raising awareness and heightening our sensitivities to each other. Paganini would have become acutely aware of this change of focus from the showmanship of the soloist to the more subtle yet paradoxically more difficult demands for collaboration to occur. Working together also requires us to consider how we see each other. This will be explored in the next section, where I discuss the narrative of the final movement.

5 THE LEADERSHIP OF EVERYONE: THE BRIGANDS

The final movement of *Harold in Italy* shows Berlioz the innovator (beginning at YouTube time code 31:32). It is here that he claims his place in the pantheon of worthy composers and confirms Paganini's assessment that Berlioz is indeed Beethoven's heir.

The movement begins with each of the main themes from the other three movements being reprised. This is a direct reference to the final movement of Beethoven's 9th Choral Symphony where he too repeated the main themes before launching into the full movement. Following these restatements, the soloist is silent. There remains only a short passage of sustained notes played very softly, building up to a very loud trill (measures 475–497 or YouTube time code 42:36–43:11). The close of the viola solo signals the beginning of the coda, the final passage. Here the music is like a spring gradually being wound tighter and tighter until it is fully taut (measure 460ff or time code 42:05 to the end). The symphony closes with the entire interest being on the orchestra with its full brass section blasting across heated strings – the viola has merged completely into the orchestral corpus. The pace gradually increases with duple and triple rhythms crossing each other, until it spectacularly uncoils in a dramatic race to the end.

Berlioz gives the title 'The brigand's Orgies' to this movement, and, like its predecessor *Symphony Fantastique*, it is effervescent with a full range of orchestral colours

and cross-rhythms to startle the audience (see, for example, measures 373–394 or time code 36:38– 37:05). Here the first violins play a repeated 8th-note figure against the second violins that have a triple figure. This is juxtaposed against the brass and bassoon that have half-note triplets. This is a complex piece of cross-rhythm that enhances the dramatic intensity towards the final coda.

For Berlioz, the brigand was not only an outlaw-bandit, he was also a pre-industrial figure who would ‘enact revenge against social injustice, real or fancied – the Robin Hood motif’ (Barzun 1969, p. 255). And in Berlioz’s France, the brigand label is more potent in that it is a man who works *with* the people to bring about social change. Says Barzun (*ibid.*):

In any event, flirting with the idea of brigandage hinted of the nascent democracy already undermining the bourgeois monarchy of Louis Philippe.

The brigand, then, is a political figure engaged in a quest for democracy. The brigand prefigures the post-heroic quest for leadership as a process rather than the possession of an individual. The cross-rhythms that characterize the end of the movement are at odds with the strong 4/4 pulse, and the rhythmic clashes of triplet figures competing against quadruple rhythms reveal a highly contested territory. Gradually the contrasts are resolved with the orchestra adopting both figures in succession, revealing the constructive ability for *both* and paradoxes to exist together without one dominating the other: a truly democratic space.

This idea provokes a somewhat disturbing conclusion. If organizations are to be egalitarian places, who then assumes ultimate responsibility? Surely it is with the leader that the buck stops. In organizations there are nominated leaders, and in politics at city and national levels we have elected officials who are tasked with ensuring unity of purpose and social cohesion. We hold these leaders responsible for our well-being, and when they fail, we fire them.

And yet holding a single figure to account for actions that were generated within a social context is somewhat flawed. We are all responsible, for, as Ladkin (2010, p. 188) claims,

[i]n accepting the notion that leadership is a dynamic in which followers are also implicated, failures of leadership are followers’ responsibility as well ... leaders and followers are together implicated in the enactment of leadership which successfully achieves mobilization towards desired purposes.

Therefore, we are all actors who participate in society, whether in our professional lives, voluntary social activities or as private citizens, and our participation influences the greater whole. Furthermore, we are far from the helpless individuals of whom Gemmill and Oakley (1992) write and we all take responsibility for organizational development and leadership. This is the story of *Harold*.

6 LEADING SOFTLY

Early on this paper I claimed, following McLuhan, that artists help us understand the future. Clearly, artists are not prognosticators and if they are prophets then they are more concerned with provocation than prediction. Art helps us experience the present in ways that are visceral; it helps us experience possibilities without necessarily taking the risk of enacting those possibilities. Art gives us the opportunity to encounter something different without necessarily changing anything, and in this way it acts as a

DEW Line² (Theall 2001, p. 29), which alerts us to potential threats. And so, this paper seeks to take a work of art and to use that as an alibi to speak about concerns in the present as well as envisaging future possibilities.

In this foray into Berlioz's *Harold in Italy* I have sought to place myself in the shoes of Nicolò Paganini. On taking a look at the first movement sketches, Paganini was dismissive. Yet on hearing the symphony in full for the first time he was effusive. A dramatic change occurred in his perceptions of the work and my analyses have focused on what appears to be extraordinary about it. Paganini was a showman and it seems to be the lack of opportunity for displaying advanced technical skills that captured his imagination.

These changed responses are instructive of our perceptions of leadership. As a contemporary phenomenon, we think that leading requires strong individuals (Collins 2001) who, like Napoléon, are able to master themselves (Drucker 2005) and therefore can exert control over their changing environment (Kotter 1996). Certainly, there is a plethora of texts that assist people to become strong performers in their organizational worlds (Eikenberry 2007) and who offer guidance on how to become an exemplary leader (Heard 2007).

Indeed, the call for strong leaders who are able to cope with complex situations appears to be generalized across cultures and organizations. For instance, on the political stage, whether at local (Jan Verheul and Schaap 2010; Judd 2000) or national levels (Greenstein 2008), strong leaders seem to be favoured.

Managing change within organizations is a fraught enterprise which, scholars remind us, requires strong leaders who are able to provide clear strategic vision (Redick et al. 2014) and incentives for people to adopt the new situation. This can be seen, for instance, in a study conducted among physicians in the United States of America which found that strong leadership was an important factor for offering effective primary healthcare services (Colla et al. 2014).

And yet there is a nagging doubt about the effectiveness of these strong individuals. People want a strong leader until they don't want one, and many a strong leader has found themselves emasculated by a public that has grown weary of them. In response to this I have explored ways in which groups may activate their creativity beyond the urges of a leader who gives permission to act and who can then be blamed when those actions cease to be effective.

In this paper I have explored views that contest the heroic construct of a strong leader. Harold, as personified on the solo viola, is a retiring individual who is noticed more for his lack of action than spectacular interventions. However, inaction may not equate to incompetence, but rather may be a strategic choice made by the leader seeking to recruit the creative energies of her or his team members so that they perform their own remarkable acts together in concert. This is what appears to be the case in Lao Tzu's classical Chinese text *Tao te ching*. The popular phrase from his book concerning leadership reads:

Book XVII

§ 39 The best of all rulers is but a shadowy presence to his subjects.

Next comes the ruler they love and praise;

Next comes one they fear;

Next comes one with whom they take liberties.

2. The DEW Line refers to the Danger Early Warning radar system which during the Cold War – about 1941–1991 – formed an information shield in North America to warn of attacks via intercontinental ballistic missiles from the USSR.

§ 40 When there is not enough faith, there is lack of good faith.

§ 41 Hesitant, he does not utter words lightly.

When his task is accomplished and his work done

The people all say, 'It happened to us naturally'. (Lao Tzu 1989)

This lack of direct involvement on the part of the leader is not a quietist withdrawal from the rigours of organizational life. Rather, it is a practised letting go of control in order for action to take place. Hence, leaders practise the art of *wu wei* – action by inaction. The Way (*dao*) was found deep within the self and was a means of getting back to instinctive, *natural*, ways of behaving (see Armstrong 2014, pp. 74–75).

This form of active inaction looks like a recipe for disaster. It may be seen as laissez-faire leadership, only by another name. Certainly there is evidence to suggest that hands-off leadership can have a very negative impact on people in organizations who need support when facing abuse and personal attacks from colleagues (Nielsen 2013) or customers (Skogstad et al. 2007).

Harold tells a different story, however. It is about how people in all levels of an organization may interact together in a way that enhances that organization's well-being and purpose in the community. The viola, although unheard for much of the symphony, is nonetheless very present. For even when it is not playing we are aware of its presence through the contrasting timbres of all the other instruments and their combinations. It is about how collectives lead *and* follow at the same time, and interact seamlessly without one individual impinging on the process as it unfolds. Therefore, by its silence, the viola makes its presence known.

Berlioz wrote the symphony in an unstable political environment. There were deep wounds to heal in revolutionary France and post-Napoleonic Europe, and Berlioz offers a view on how that might occur. A strong man in the figure of Napoleon had wrought devastation and trauma, and this symphony, like Beethoven's 9th before it, envisages a new world where totalitarianism is renounced in the hope of a universal human awareness taking the foreground ('the universal brotherhood of man' is the phrase from those times). I think this is the concept which Paganini struggled with. He was a towering personality, the ideal strong leader, and demurring to others would not have come easily to him. A quietly spoken instrument with not much to do would have grated on him initially. Yet he was insightful enough to acknowledge the symphony's profound importance as a work of art.

Today we re-examine this work as though we are hearing it for the first time and have found an innovative Berlioz who offers re-conceptions of leadership, ideas that contest the view that a single individual at the top of an enterprise takes ultimate responsibility for the acts and strategy of that organization. The viola with all its subtleties is an absent presence, silent for much of the work but acutely present in a way that makes its contributions profound. The viola calls for a tightly woven ensemble, and gestures to the rest of the orchestra to collaborate together in creating a masterpiece. Similarly, in contemporary organizations it exemplifies other ways of doing leadership that privilege cooperation and teamwork.

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