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TEAM WORK, WORKING EXPERIENCE AND THE NECESSARY DISCIPLINE: THE RECIPE FOR SUCCESS AT THE WEIMAR CONDUCTING SCHOOL

"You're losing tempo" warns Nicolás Pasquet. The professor is standing between the double basses, closely watching the conducting student on the podium. "Your attacks are still too slow", he calls to him. Together with his colleague, Prof. Ekhart Wycik, he is coaching a half-dozen conducting students at an orchestra rehearsal.

The student, in his sixth Bachelors semester, nods hardly noticeably and lifts his baton. In front of him there is a chamber ensemble of about 40 students, who are all there to play Haydn's Symphony for Tympany just for him today: the "**Orchestra for Practical Conducting Lessons**" (Orchester für den Praktischen Dirigierunterricht, OPD).

The OPD is generously supported by external sponsors and is one of the keys to the success of the Weimar Conducting School. Four or five times each semester, it offers the opportunity to work on standard repertoire under real rehearsal conditions rather than just with piano accompaniment. The OPD is only one of the building blocks in the programme's cosmos. The main partner of the conducting classes for their practical lessons is the **Jena Philharmonic**, closely followed by the **Thuringian Philharmonic Gotha** and the **Staatskapelle Weimar**. The students regularly stand on the podium of these orchestras for rehearsals and concerts. Several-day excursions to the Czech Republic enlarge the selection, when the orchestras in Teplice, Karlovy Vary and Hradec Králové take turns playing for these practice weeks. Again, both professors give students their guidance during rehearsals and concerts. The Weimar students value this experience. "There is much more practice here than at my former conservatory. Weimar is the top address in Germany."

"Maintain eye contact with the winds - and use your left hand to take the singer with you!" reminds Ekhart Wycik. This morning Rimsky-Korsakov's "Sheherazade" was rehearsed with the Staatskapelle Weimar, and the afternoon will be dedicated to opera repertoire with "Ballo in maschera", "Entführung" and "Bohème". "Do not make repairs now," he tells the concertmaster, "just play what is being conducted!"

The conducting professors **Nicolás Pasquet** and **Ekhart Wycik** divide the teaching work of the Institute for Conducting and Opera Coaching between them, thus they teach the class together. All the students of

orchestra conducting have lessons in choir conducting with **Prof. Puschbeck**. Every student benefits from the close collaboration of the team and the international expertise in symphonic and music theatre repertoire.

The principle of "**Everyone in a team**" and the **practical teaching in a group** offers excellent possibilities for the students. One graduate comments: "Working with a real orchestra is the essential part of studying conducting. This practical experience often falls behind, because it is so difficult to organise. Students who graduate in Weimar have already had incredibly extensive orchestra experience. At my former conservatory I was a student who conducted. Now I am a conductor who studies.