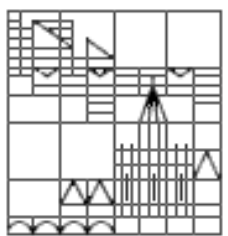**Leadership in the Arts, the Arts of Leadership**

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Leadership in Orchestras –
Findings and Reflections

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Outline

1. Findings from symphony orchestras:

    Directive leadership

2. Findings from a chamber orchestra:

    Shared leadership

3. The Orpheus Chamber Orchestra: Democratic leadership

4. Reflections on leadership in higher music education: directive, shared or democratic?

1. Findings from symphony orchestras: Directive leadership

"There is no more obvious expression of power than the function of a conductor"
(Elias Canetti, 1998, p. 394)

Conductors' voices

"As a conductor, in this moment you feel the temptation of power. I can almost imagine that it is me creating the symphony, the musicians being my instruments and the score coming from my assistant, Ludwig van Beethoven."

Source: Schultz, S. Die Macht der Maestros. Spiegel online. 8.6. 2009

Conductors' voices

"… because, when you have 117 musicians in an orchestra, you have, like I said, 118 opinions or more. And, basically, musicians are nothing else but children, adult children. Some are more mature, others are less mature."

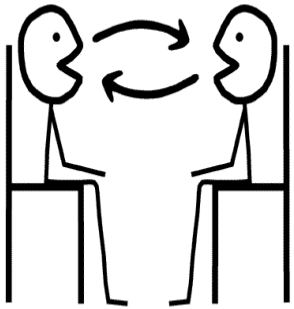*"They have to dance to my stick, otherwise it's not working."*

"… And if they feel that the conductor is rather informal, very friendly and doesn't give much about discipline, musicians very quickly become beastlike."

Source: Boerner 2002

Musicians' voices

interview

" (...) The fact that, throughout your whole life, you'll always be treated like a student. So, it's awful. The conductor says: practice, practice! That's what I say to my students. And this is awful, this is nasty. So eventually (…) some are approaching their 60s and still there's someone standing there, and maybe he's even 20 years younger (…) it cannot be like that, this is awful. Which profession is like that? "

Source: Boerner 2002

Explanations from musicians

"I think it's wrong, and a cooperative relationship would be better. But I have rarely experienced that, practically never. And I think there are reasons for this, because they are not stupid, these conductors."

"But for example Celibidache is known for the fact that everyone was terrified of him and he must have been, frankly speaking, a real bastard. But nevertheless the artistic quality in the evening was amazing. So, it's a phenomenon I'm thinking a lot about, but I still wasn't really able to find an explanation."

Source: Boerner 2002

Explanations from research:
a. What is special about the task?
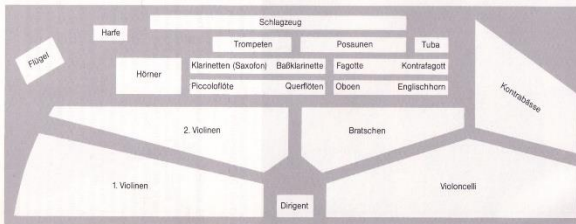
Large ensemble

High levels of task interdependence

b. What is special about leadership?

Marin Alsop
Music director Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and
Sao Paolo Symphony Orchestra.

"But if you are doing a great job, meaning that you are totally committed and totally convinced and that you have worked terribly hard, the way you are structuring and motivating a piece sweeps up even those who disagree with you. There is no conflict."

Source: Pollack 1996

b. What is special about leadership?

Transformational leadership

Transformational leaders…

… are charismatic personalities,

… are able to illustrate attractive visions of the future,

… think outside the box ,

… enhance intrinsic motivation in employees

…„move followers to performance beyond expectations" (Bass 1985, p.9)

# c. What is special about the team?

Diversity with respect to

- instrument (-group)
- position (Soloists vs. rank-and-file members)
- age
- nationality

Need for strong team spirit, i.e.,

- … the musicians value one another.
- … there are not too many conflicts inside the group.

Empirical study

- The more transformational leadership, the better the artistic quality.
- But: there has to be a strong team spirit among the musicians.
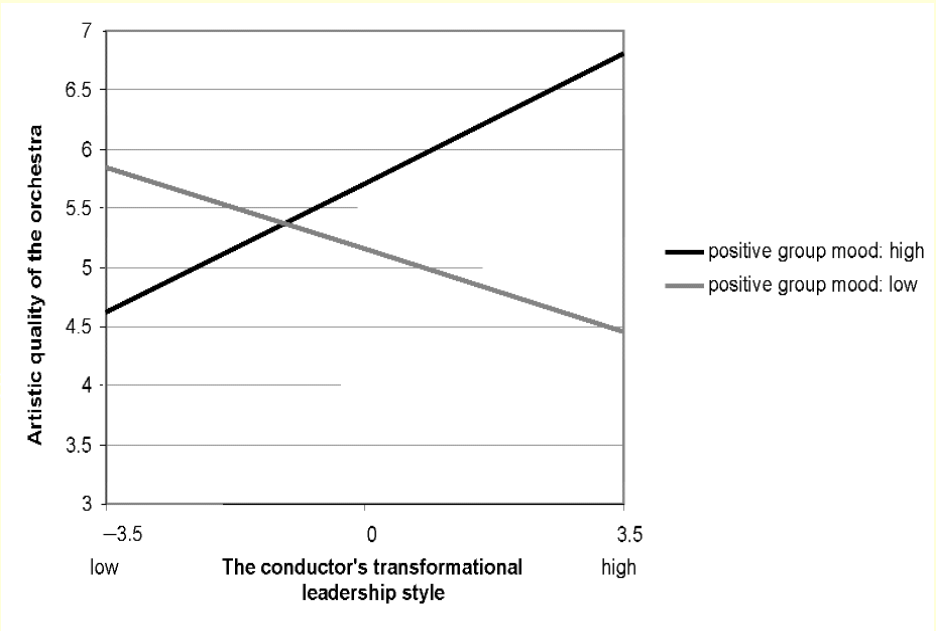
"The conductor's transformational leadership style *only* increases the artistic quality of the orchestral performance
if there is a strong team spirit at the same time."
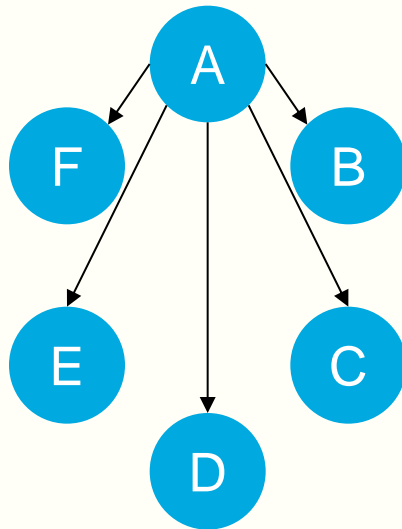Source: Boerner & v. Streit 2006

2. Findings from a Chamber Orchestra: Shared leadership

- **"Camerata Harmony"**
- **founded in 2007 as a string chamber music ensemble in Germany**
- **13 permanent members**
- **graduated from different academies of music in Germany and Eastern Europe**
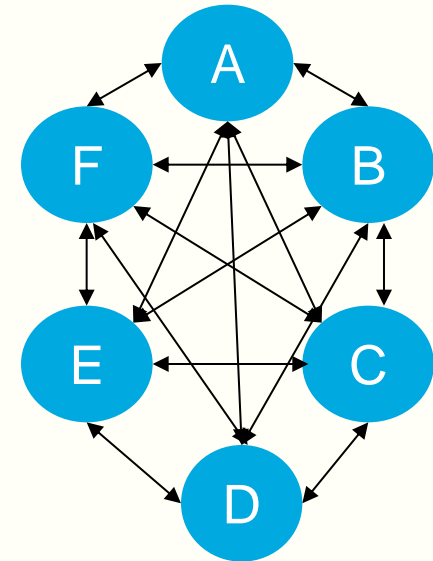- **performing both with and without guest conductors**

Classic leadership vs. shared leadership

"A dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals"
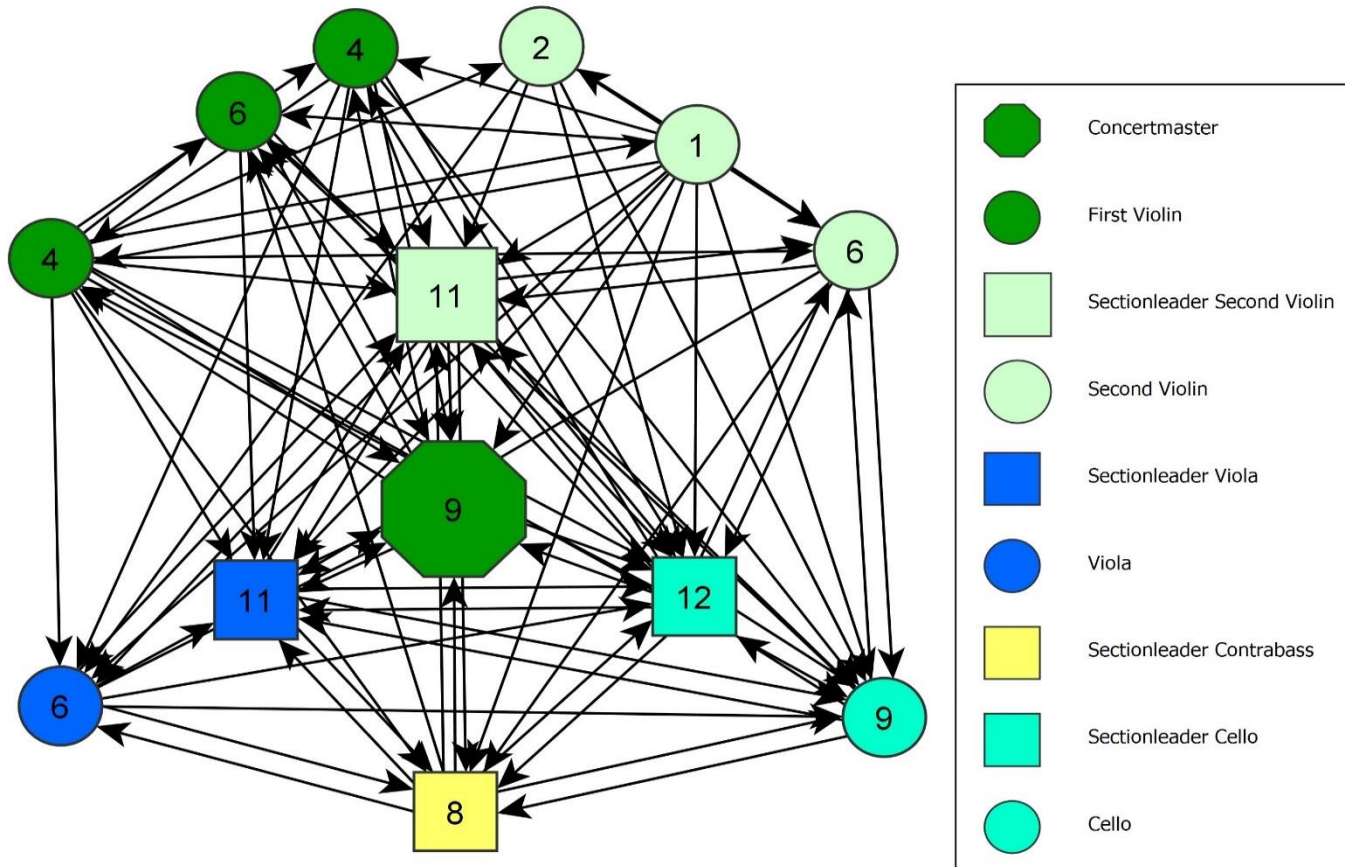
Pearce & Conger, 2003

Classic Leadership

Shared Leadership

Shared leadership "Camerata Harmony": Incoming leadership nominations

How much do you rely on this person for leadership when performing?

3. The *Orpheus Chamber Orchestra:* Democratic leadership

■ **founded 1972 as a chamber music ensemble in New York, today: 28 permanent members**

■ **starting point: frustration of orchestral musicians ("Tuttischweine" (rank-and-file members))**

■ **bad experiences with grassroots democracy:**
   "In critical moments, chairs were flying."

Source: Firlus 2001; Seifter & Economy 2001

Democratic leadership

"*The 2013-2014 season marks Orpheus Chamber Orchestra's 41st year of making internationally acclaimed music while reinventing the way the world thinks about collaboration, outreach, and democratic leadership.*"

Source: www.orpheusnyc.org. 23.September 2013

The Orpheus Process

The principle of the *"core group"* **-**

shared leadership responsibility

- ■ one member per section
- ■ developing an artistic concept, rehearsal and budget plan
- ■ afterwards presenting and discussing the concept with all musicians

The principle of *"rotating leadership"* **-**

temporary leadership responsibility

- ■ new core group gets selected for every piece
- ■ over time every musician can be at some point part of the core group

Source: Firlus 2001; Seifter & Economy 2001

The Orpheus Process

The eight Orpheus rules

1. empower those who are doing the work
2. encourage people to take responsibility
3. define roles clearly
4. establish shared and temporary leadership responsibilities
5. foster cooperation at different levels
6. learn to listen and to talk
7. seek consensus (and establish a creative environment which fosters consensus)
8. passionate dedication to the work

Source: Seifter & Economy (2001)

The Orpheus Process – A model for democratic leadership?

"The Orpheus Process, an original method that places democracy at the center of artistic execution, has been the focus of studies at Harvard and Stanford, and of leadership seminars at Morgan Stanley and Memorial Sloan-Kettering Hospitals, among others."

"The Orpheus Institute offers musicians, university students, and business leaders experiental training in collective leadership through the Orpheus Process. "

Source: www.orpheusnyc.org. 23.September 2013

4. Reflections: "From Orchestra to Higher Music Education"

Ensemble	Focus on Leadership	Findings	Features
Symphony orchestra	Formal	Directive transformational + team spirit	Large ensemble
„Camerata Harmony"	Formal & informal	Shared leadership	Very small ensemble (13)
Orpheus Chamber Orchestra	Formal	Democratic (shared & rotating)	Small ensemble (27)
Academy of Music	Formal & informal	???	Large organization

Commonalities and Differences

	Orchestra	Academy of Music
	objective: "positive synergy" highly professional members	
	differences:	
	extremely high task interdependence	moderate task interdependence
	extremely high need for coordination	moderate need for coordination
	independent subtasks (compositions)	overlapping subtasks
	clearly defined tasks and roles (score)	often ill-defined tasks and roles
	positive-sum game!	zero-sum game ?

Findings on leadership effectiveness in higher education (department level)

- Clear sense of direction/strategic vision

- Being considerate

- Treating academic staff fairly and with integrity

- Allowing the opportunity to participate in key decisions/ encouraging open communication

- Communicating well about the direction the department is going

Source: Bryman 2007

Findings on leadership effectiveness in higher education (department level)

- Acting as a role model/having credibility

- Creating a positive/collegial work atmosphere in the department

- Advancing the department's cause with respect to constituencies internal and external to the university and being proactive in doing so

- Providing feedback on performance

- Making academic appointments that enhance department's reputation

Conclusion

- In orchestras, different forms and styles of leadership can be found, depending on their size and type.

- Comparing orchestras with academies of music, there are similarities (e.g., high degrees of professionality) and differences (e.g., (different levels of task interdepence)

- Considerations on leadership in music academies should include both formal and informal leadership roles and different leadership styles.

The End

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Backup

Empirical study: method

Written survey (orchestra based questionnaire)

to measure…

- transformational leadership of the conductor
- team spirit in the orchestra
- artistic quality of the orchestral performance

Sample

- 208 musicians from 22 German symphonic orchestras (A/B)
- average age: 40 years
- average work experience: 15 years

Empirical study-
operationalization of transformational leadership

Charisma

- "The conductor has charisma"

- "We are proud to work with him"

Inspiring motivation

- "The conductor illustrates his visions with the help of symbols and gestures."

- "He makes clear, what he is expecting from us."

Intellectual stimulation

- "He makes completely new, convincing proposals on the interpretation."

- "He enables us to look at known pieces in a different light."

Empirical study-
operationalization of cooperative group climate

8 Items to identify the mutual assessment of orchestral participants and the level of conflict

- ■ "likeable"
- ■ "incompetent"
- ■ "get along well"
- ■ "friendly"
- ■ "lazy"
- ■ "existing tensions in professional procedures"
- ■ "individual groups within the orchestra stick together"
- ■ "not able to assess"

# Empirical study-
operationalization of orchestral quality

3 Items to measure orchestral quality

■ "The audience assesses the quality as …"

■ "Soloist who are playing with us, assess us as …"

■ "In comparison with other orchestras of the same quality we've been assessed as …"

Conclusion: effects in the orchestra

☺

- decentralized self-determination by the musicians instead of heteronomy by the conductor

- increased motivation and satisfaction of musicians
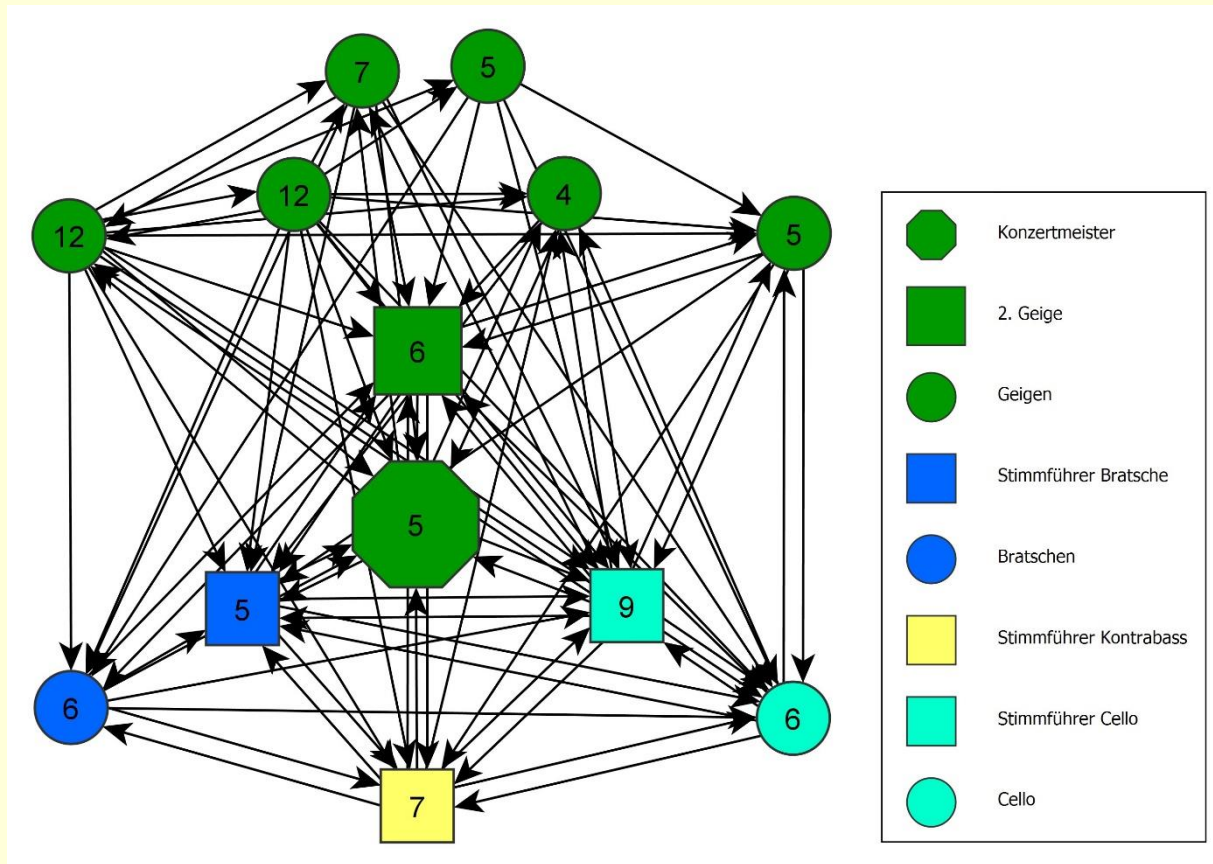
- increased commitment of the whole orchestra

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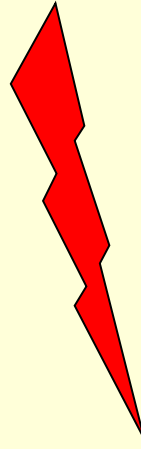
- complicated decision-making processes

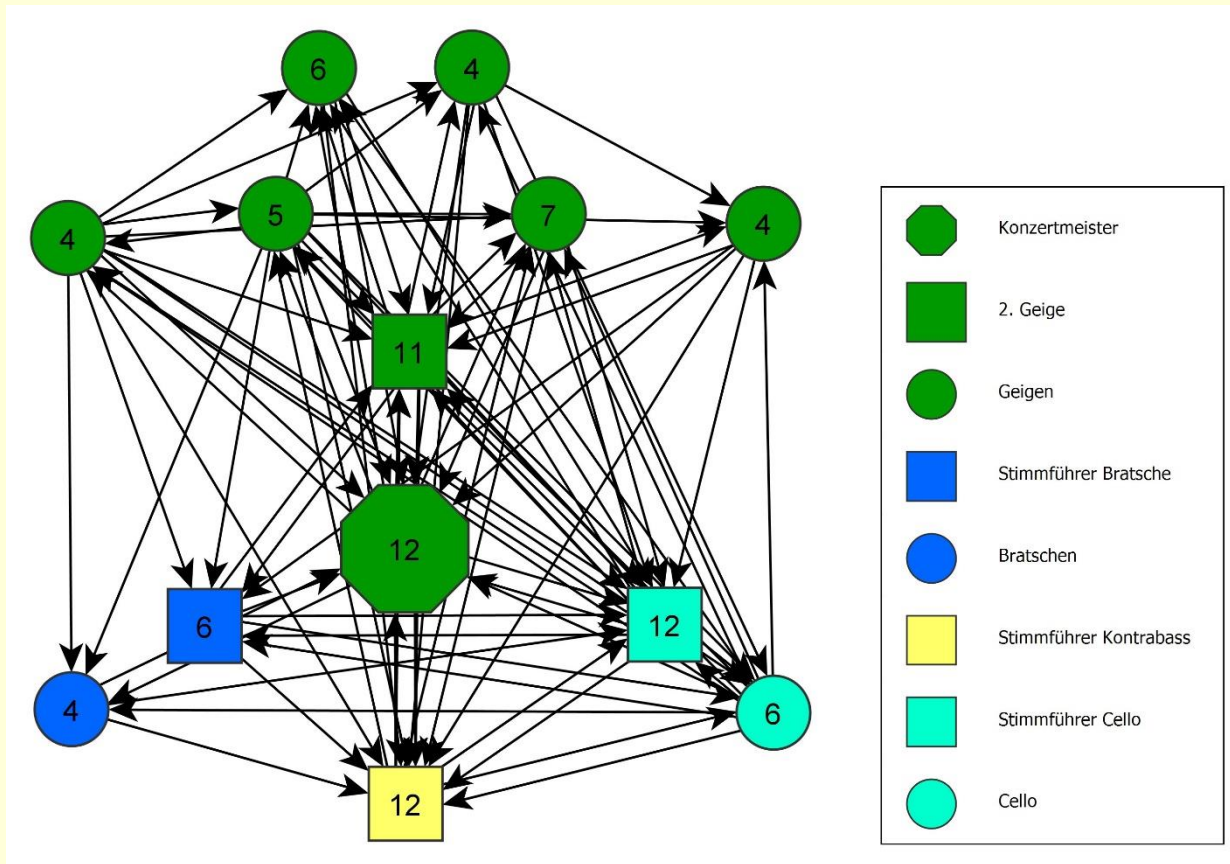- increased time requirements

- limited repertoire

Conclusion

"*This is the last monarchy in this world, aside from convents (…) theatre is an authoritarian business, and there have been attempts to democratize, (…) you surely know that, those orchestras without conductor, it didn't work out. … If everyone takes part and wants to have a say, in most cases it turns out to be terrible (…). (…) in my opinion those common concepts of democracy just don't work.*" (choirmaster)
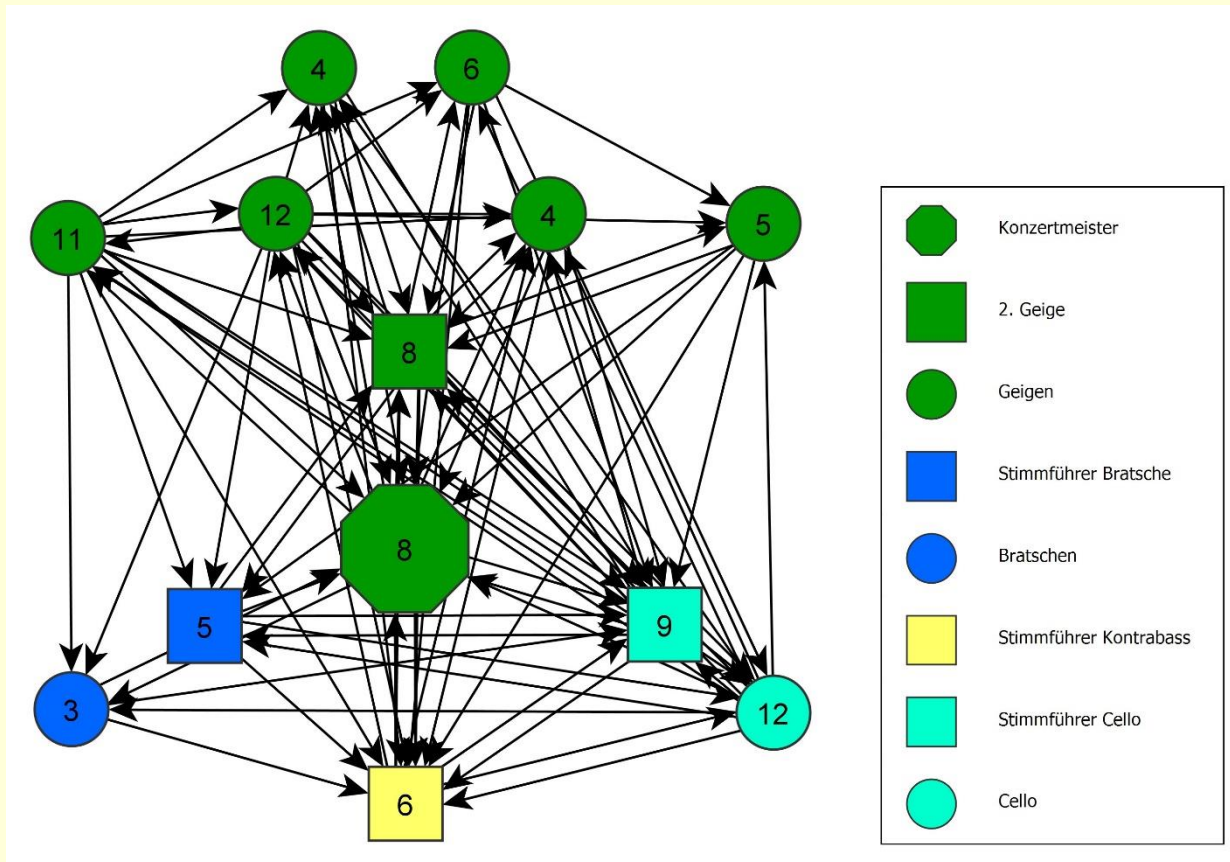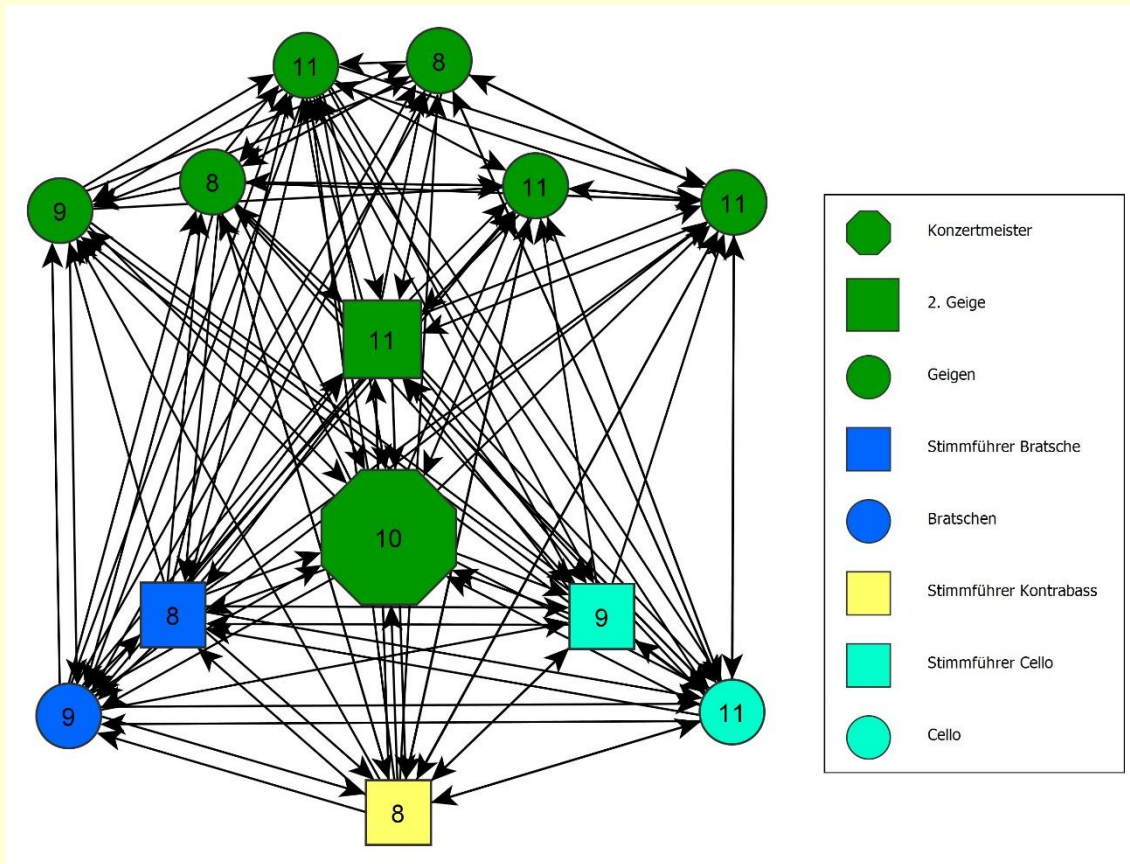
Source: Boerner 2002

Musiknetzwerk Outgoing

Orga Incoming

Orga Outgoing

Liking Incoming

Liking Outgoing

Legend:
- Konzertmeister
- 2. Geige
- Geigen
- Stimmführer Bratsche
- Bratschen
- Stimmführer Kontrabass
- Stimmführer Cello
- Cello