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Herbert von Karajan started his career in the 1930's with prodigious skills, hard-work and ambition, but that's not what made him a multi-millionaire Super-Star. What made him achieve unparalleled greatness in the world of classical music is the amazing standard of Leadership he attained.

At the beginning of his career in the 1930's, he was a highly-demanding and "directive― conduct explaining in great details to his musicians how he wanted them to play, and then rehearsing dozens of times the difficult parts of symphonies and operas. Extreme hard work‹ (watch www.youtube.com/watch?v=6R-rV2VWhK0)

While he was still young, Karajan started to learn how to ride horses. One day, his trainer told him "tomorrow, you will learn how to jump obstacles with your horse―. Karajan did not sleep the whole night, as he could not figure out how to have such a huge animal take off in the air and pass over a 1.50 meter-high hay‹ The next day, he rode his horse towards the obstacle, quite terrified and unable to do anything‹ and the horse just jumped over the bar‹ all by himself. The lesson Karajan learnt was of tremendous importance for his career: "there is so much an orchestra can do if you trust it to go for it all the way; the conductor really has only to manage 2-3% of the time.― (watch www.youtube.com/watch?v=PjLhOnWzP0I)

And indeed, the vast audiences watching Karajan conduct in the second part of his career were amazed to see him so restrained in his gestures. Musicians were also surprised at the beginningâ€! Traditionally, brass players are the †loud mouths' in orchestras, and once, in London, a trumpet player dared to ask him: †Maestro, with all due respect, when should I start playing my tune?―, as Karajan's gestures were limited and rather impreciseâ€! And the Chef just answered †when you ca hold it anymore―â€! Journalists were also mystified. And one questioned Karajan: †Maestro, why do you give precise indications to your orchestras?― Karajan finally shed light on the apparent magic: †because that's the worst damage I could do to them: then musicians would not listen to each other (watch www.youtube.com/watch?v=uaGkyeL82xA)

While fully empowering his orchestras, Karajan remained highly demanding all his Life. But he knew really well how to thank his players for the extra hard-work he commanded, with sincerity and wit (watch www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mGXqi0DNUA)*

A poignant testimony to Karajan's exceptional leadership is his last concert, when he was extremely weak already (he died a few months later). Although his body could hardly move, the orchestra played a music that all critics deemed divine…

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