

Giuseppe Stillitano | PEOPLE

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ESSERE UN DIRETTORE D'ORCHESTRA

dai Conservatori di Calabria a Londra

How has your experience as a musician influenced your decision to conduct an orchestra?
How does this personal experience translate into your interpretation and communication with the musicians?

I am pleased you used the word “musician”, because there is a substantial difference between simply playing the notes and truly bringing the music to life.

The path that led me to conducting was long and varied: I have always sung in both amateur and professional choirs; I used to play the glockenspiel in wind orchestras and the violin in my secondary school’s symphony orchestra; I played the organ in the cathedral during liturgical services, and eventually I obtained my diploma in piano from the conservatoire.

I was fascinated by conducting from an early age, the first time I heard a live orchestra. I completely fell in love with it when I listened to –and watched– Herbert von Karajan with the Berlin Philharmonic (sadly, not in person!).

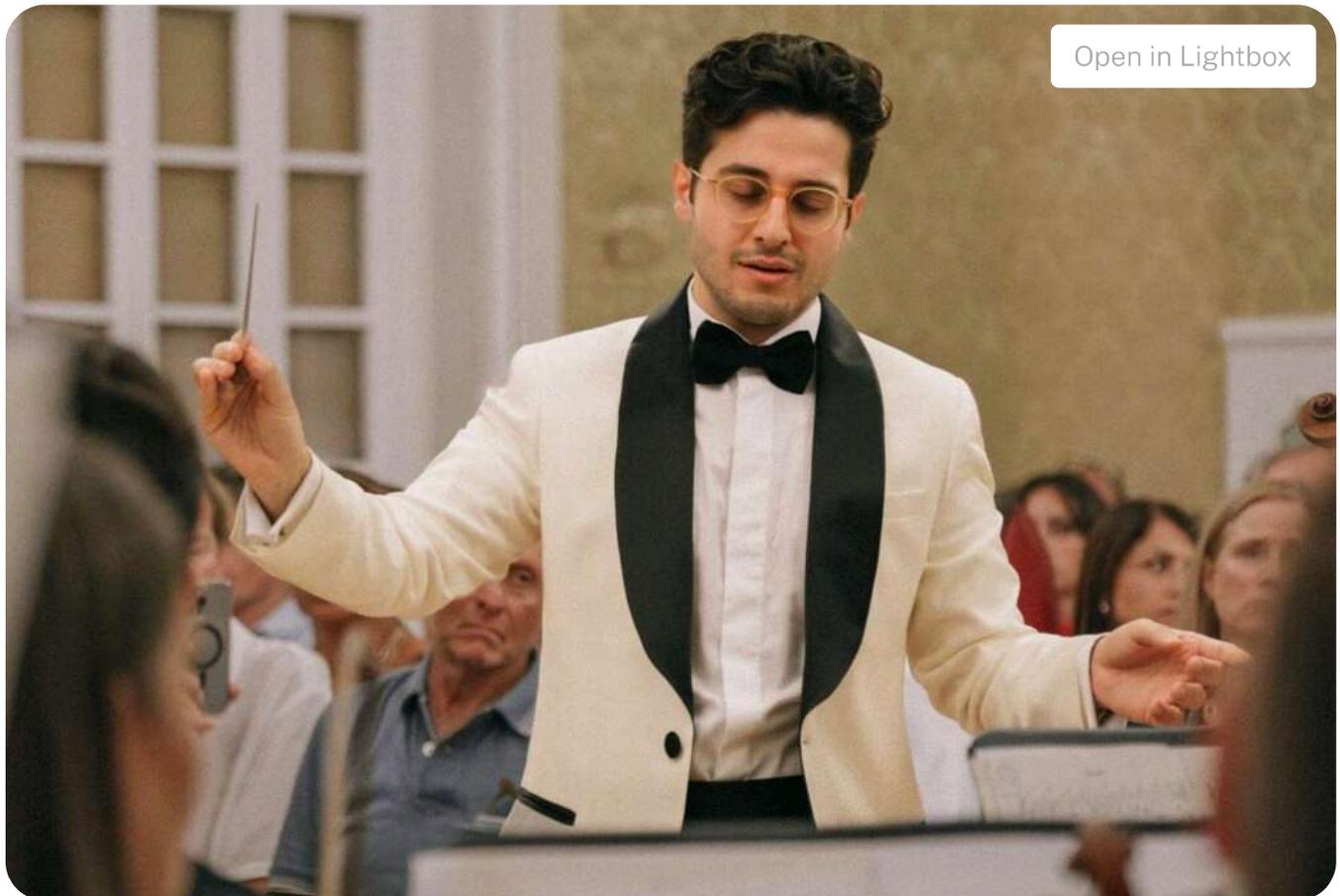
The experience and musical journey I have lived naturally and spontaneously translate into how I work with musicians. Rehearsals are fundamental: they allow you to build an almost spiritual connection with the orchestra, to work together, to express your personality and your authenticity. It is a constant exchange of ideas, of emotions. I am always learning from them!

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How can classical music be made accessible and engaging to a non-expert audience, while preserving its complexity and depth?

It would be wonderful if children were introduced to classical music already in primary school – even in small doses, or perhaps through Disney films. However, that alone is not enough: teenagers also need to summon a bit of courage and let themselves be carried away by a different kind of music, free from prejudice. I was not born with opera playing in

my headphones... I got there on my own, step by step, one piece at a time. Curiosity is essential, without a doubt.



But then again, imagine how romantic it would be to go to the Opera with your partner! I met one of my first loves at the Arena di Verona, during a performance of *Turandot*.

That said, this is a global issue: we are constantly bombarded by music of all kinds –in cafés, in cars, in supermarkets –where trap, rap, metal and the like are played nonstop. It has become almost an imposition by the system, which, consciously or unconsciously, “forces” us to listen only to this kind of music –and in the end, we even learn to enjoy it!

The only opportunity people are usually given to vaguely savour a bit of classical music is through television or radio adverts. By the way –did you know that the *UEFA Champions League* “anthem” is actually based on a coronation anthem composed by George Frideric Handel for King George II? ;-P

I will suggest some classical pieces on Spotify, if only to bust a few myths!

How does a conductor refine and interpret gestures to guide a performance with sensitivity and authority?

Gestures are essential –they are undoubtedly the conductor’s most authentic tool of expression.

Animals communicate through sound or physical signals, plants through chemical substances, humans with words –but the conductor speaks through the baton, facial expressions and body language as a whole.

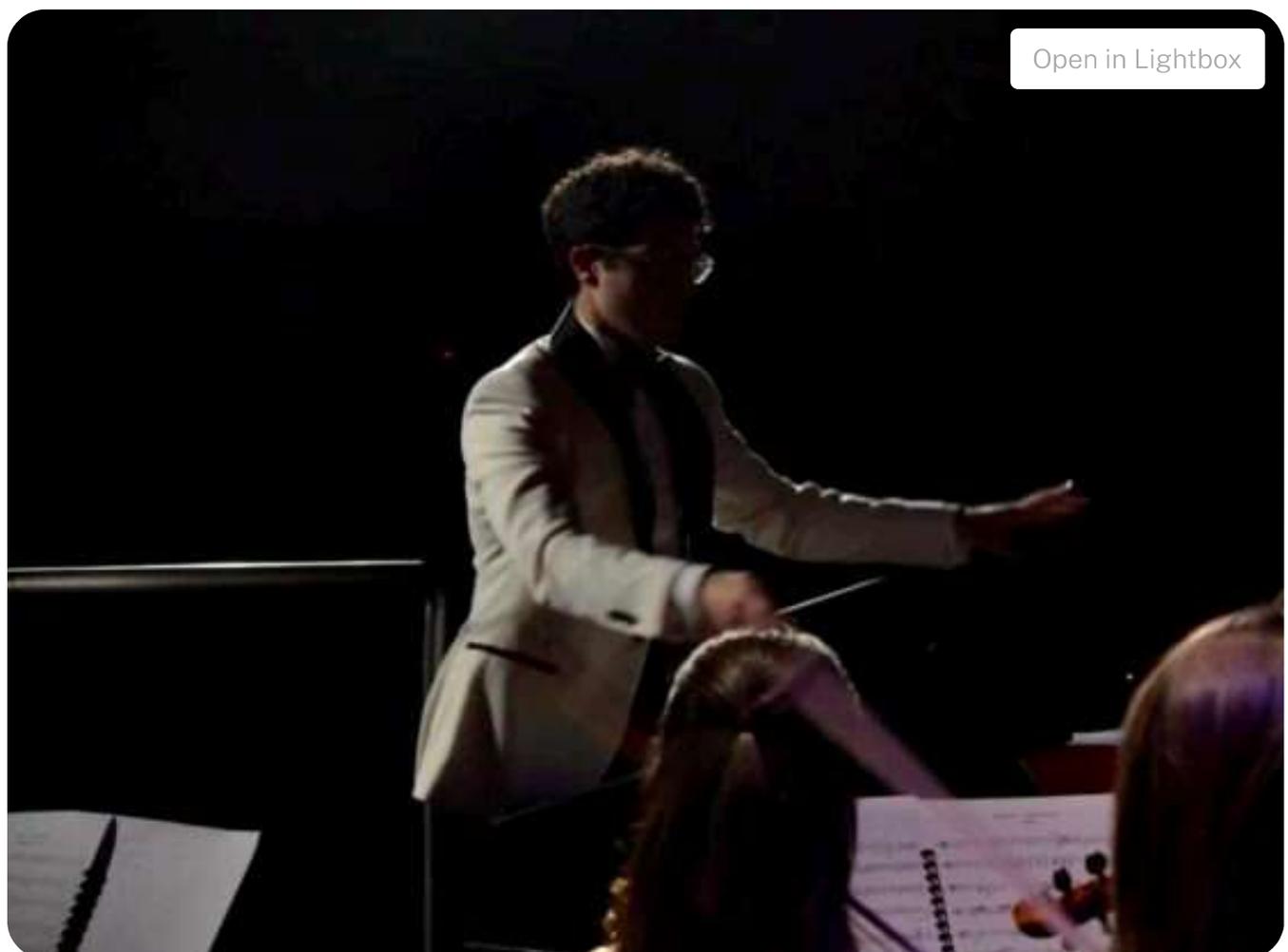
The gesture is tasked with expressing and telling the story of the piece being performed. It is the final outcome of the conductor's deep and thorough study of the score.

From a purely technical point of view, there are certain “codes” that the orchestra picks up and responds to. It is an abstract language, if you like –but it becomes tangible and concrete the moment a sonic response is given.

Naturally, the conductor already imagines the colour, character and intensity of the sound they want to create well before “conducting it” –both during the study phase and immediately before raising the baton.

What criteria guide the selection of pieces for a concert programme, and how does this choice influence the overall narrative of the performance?

It is worth mentioning that, in general, it is not the conductor but the programmer who is responsible for selecting the repertoire. The programmer's task is to structure artistic programmes by taking into account trends, audience expectations, the budget, and the identity of the venue.



That said, there are situations where the conductor is called upon – or allowed – to choose the concert programme. In those cases, what I personally find most exciting is creating a “fil rouge” between the pieces, giving the programme a deeper, extra-musical meaning – perhaps by combining classical repertoire with contemporary works.

I love the idea that the audience can fully immerse themselves and embark on a journey that is not only auditory, but also imaginative.

What are your main sources of inspiration outside the musical world? Are there books, films or artists that have had a significant impact on your work?

That is a wonderful question. I must say that, in addition to my teachers and great figures from the world of music, one particular person has served as a model of inspiration for me: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom.

Reading her biographies and watching films about her, I have always recognised and admired her sense of duty, perseverance, dedication, and sacrifice – because “Duty comes first”!

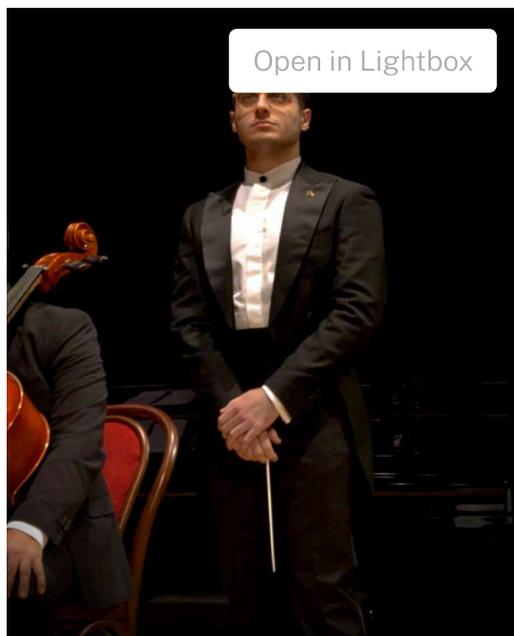
There’s also a well-known motto in England that she upheld from the very beginning of her reign: “Ich dien”, which literally means “I SERVE”. Her entire life was devoted to the service of God and her people.

In the same spirit, and also thanks to the moral legacy of my Maestro Roberto Giordano, I have sought to shape my own path and career – “whether it be long or short” – in service of Music.

Chi è Giuseppe Stillitano?

Born in 1998, Giuseppe Stillitano studied violin at the Liceo Musicale in Cinquefrondi and earned his piano diploma at the Conservatoire of Reggio Calabria, later graduating in orchestral conducting from the Milan Conservatoire and refining his training with Donato Renzetti at the APM in Saluzzo.

He began his career in 2021 and has collaborated with orchestras such as I Musici of Parma, Wiener Festspiele of Vienna, Sinfonica of Milan, Polska Filharmonia Bałtycka of



Gdańsk, Giovanile della Magna Grecia of Taranto, Kaunas City Symphony, Royal Oman Symphony of Muscat, among others.

A former “Patron of Culture” of the Treccani Foundation and recipient of the title “Knight of the Order of Merit of Savoy”, he has been recognised as a “Conductor of the Future” by Opera Charm Magazine and an “Italian Excellence Abroad” by Music Paper Magazine.

Since 2023, he has been assistant to Gianluca Marcianò across Europe and Asia and has worked with soloists Elly Suh and Cihat Aşkın, as well as with opera singers Sondra Radvanovsky and Piotr Beczała.

Giuseppe currently lives in London, where he holds a scholarship for a Master’s in Conducting at the Royal College of Music.

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