

Q&A with Jason Lai Conductor of Orchestras

Our Vine pupils have asked some interesting questions. Here are Jason's answers...

What inspired you to conduct an orchestra?

I first started to play the cello, then the piano at the age of 10 and I've always loved orchestral music so I couldn't wait to join an orchestra. As my interest in the orchestra grew, I wanted to try and conduct some of this wonderful music that I was playing. When I went to university, that's when I started to conduct and that's when I knew that that was the job I wanted to do!

Do you ever get bored of your job or find it difficult?

I never get bored of my job, every concert brings about new challenges and there is always something to learn. Yes, occasionally my job becomes difficult and I have to sort out some problems but in any job that's what you will do. There will always good days and not so good days. The important thing is that I still love doing my job and helping others to enjoy classical music.

Which parts of your job do you enjoy the most?

I enjoy learning a new piece of music I have never conducted before and seeing how I can express this through my arms, hands and face. It's like reading a book and then acting that out for an audience. I do the same for the music; I look at the music score and then have to make it come alive for my orchestra by demonstrating it through my whole body. That's why conductors move around so much!

How long have you been conducting an orchestra?

I have been conducting for over 25 years.

What advice would you give to becoming a conductor?

Learn an orchestral instrument and be curious about music. There are many questions that you may have about things in life, don't be afraid to be curious about those things.

What is the stick conductors wave around and do you use one?

We call this a baton and it's a light, white stick that has an end that is made out of solid wood or cork. I have a cork bulb one.

Do you have to be able to play lots of different instruments to be a conductor?

No you don't but you should know how the instruments work and what is difficult about playing those instruments. Then you can help the musicians do their best when you're rehearsing them. Musicians like it when conductors understand the problems that they might face.

(TIP: Q&A means Questions and Answers)