

Igor stravinsky essay essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Horrible “ Great” Conductors Composer Igor Stravinsky has written a passage that discusses orchestra conductors. Stravinsky uses language and rhetorical devices to express his point of view. Through the tropes, the exigence, and the audience he shows how horrible “ great” conductors really are.

Stravinsky uses tropes to enhance his argument against conductors. The language he uses is very harsh. In a few places, he goes beyond his arguments into simple criticisms and attacks the conductors. “ The conductor is encouraged to impose a purely egotistical, false, and arbitrary authority, and that he is accorded a position out of all proportion to his real value in the musical, as opposed to the music-business, community,” he says in one of such places. It is obvious that Stravinsky holds a personal grudge against the conductors. Being a composer, he must have come across them many times. He says, “ Conducting, like politics, rarely attracts original minds.” Stravinsky uses the word “ original” in a different way than it is normally used. “ Original” is usually thought of as meaning first, or new. Stravinsky uses “ original” to convey the meaning smart and coming up with resourceful ideas. Stravinsky says that, more or less, almost all conductors are stupid. The whole passage is more of an insult to all conductors, rather than an informative text. Secondly, Stravinsky uses comparisons to politicians in order condemn the conductors. “ Conducting, like politics, rarely attracts original minds “!

His first skill has to be power politics,” he says in the first paragraph.

Politicians are always thought to be corrupt, dishonest, and sinister.

Furthermore, Stravinsky fails to note exactly how a conductor is similar to a

politician. In another quote, he compares the effect of the public on the conductor's ego to the effect the sun has on a tropical weed. This argument is based more on emotion than logic. In spite of that, it manages to convince the reader that conducting is not a profession to be admired. It is clear that Stravinsky is not appealing to the logic of the reader, but to his emotions. Another strategy Stravinsky uses is sarcasm. He shows a quote naming a conductor to be a " titan of the podium, and is such very nearly the worst obstacle to genuine music-making." Furthermore, he names the conductors to be " great," and he discusses the " cult of the great conductor." After spending an entire passage criticizing conductors and their so-called " greatness," praising them seems ironic. Even in the last sentence of the essay Stravinsky includes sarcasm: " If you are unable to listen to the music, you watch the corybantics, and if you are able, you had better not go to the concert."

What bothered the author and influenced him in writing this passage is that a conductor must be scheming to get his way to the top, as in politics. He goes on to explain that conducting is a career based on who the conductor knows and how many people he caters to. These people for the most part, are high-class women who sponsor them. The conductor is given a high position in music even though his actual importance to it is small. These " great" conductors have the worst trait for music, adapting the music to themselves rather than themselves to the music. Those who support the conductor tend to look at him during performances and interpret his gestures as the meaning of the music. Doing this takes away the actual meaning of the music relating to how it sounds. As a result of this, the

important part of the performance is no longer music but gesture. Stravinsky is furious about these things. The exigence gives way to the author's main purpose or goal.

The main audience this passage was written for is the upper-class who regularly attends performances. Stravinsky wants them, especially women, to stop going to performances in which the music has no effect on the audience as it is intended to. The secondary audience would be anyone who goes to the performances. They do not want to be one of the people he describes as not being able to understand the music. The audience believes that by attending these performances they are intellectuals. He is telling them that attending performances with supposed “ great” conductors shows that they do not understand the actual meaning of the music. The upper-class, especially women, naturally do not want others to think this of them.

Stravinsky's argument is based on the fact that people mistake the conductor's gestures for the meaning of the music and place more emphasis on the conductor's looks rather than the way he makes music sound. This makes people think the conductor is “ great” while the conductor is actually unfit for his role.