



***“Working!
Day and night,
if necessary.”***

A feature on the preparations to
“The Two Towers Live to Projection” concert

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In March 2009 Middle Earth came to Switzerland, Lucerne: **The Two Towers** performed live to the movie on big screen.

Back in 2008 musical director Ludwig Wicki and the 21st Century Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, the Boys' Choir of Lucerne as well as countless soloists celebrated a huge success with the live performance of the complete film music of **The Fellowship of the Ring**. One year later, the fellowship continues their fateful journey in the concert hall. And again this year they were accompanied by over 200 musicians and the composition of Oscar®-winner Howard Shore. But what does it need to prepare such a broad concert venture? Let's take a look behind the scenes of this musical world premiere and project.

Photo: Basil Böhni



Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse

It's Wednesday evening, December 10th 2008. While traffic thins out on the streets of Lucerne, after the evening rush hour is over, the 21st Century Chorus meets up for the kick-off rehearsal. From the Spitalmühle – a nice rehearsal room, which belongs to the Lucerne music school, and is located in an old house near the Pilatusplatz, Howard Shore's music from *The Two Towers* resounds. It's here, under the musical direction of Andreas Wiedmer and Ludwig Wicki, that the 21st Century Chorus will be practicing the notes and lines from Shore's music in the upcoming weeks. Just nine rehearsals are planned before the choir will gather with Howard Shore and the 90 piece orchestra in the great concert hall at the KKL Lucerne for the final rehearsals. So they won't have more than two days before the world premiere for combining all the elements needed. The orchestra won't have more rehearsal time either; the first rehearsal took place just ten days before the concert. For some of the participants though, work on *The Two Towers Live To Projection* already took up much of their time a couple of months earlier.

What is Ludwig Wicki's job?

In October 2008, while Sue Sinclair and her team work on the fine-tuning of the score on the other side of the big pond, Wicki receives a rough score, which he uses to start studying the conducting pattern. "I start familiarizing myself with the composition with the help of this rough score", Wicki explains. But the rough score still contains various, sometimes not insignificant mistakes. For instance, there's still music included that can't actually be heard in that particular scene in the final version of the film. For a first study of the music, the rough score suffices though. In January 2009, Wicki then flies to New York for one week to study the by now almost finished and elaborated score in detail and to remove any final mistakes. He does so together with Howard Shore, Sue Sinclair, James Sizemore (the technical manager) and Tim Starnes (the auricle programmer and music editor). Another main task during this week together is the programming of the conducting aid 'Auricle', which is indispensable for Wicki's live conducting pattern, and is also used by many Hollywood composers for their work. In 1987 the 'Auricle' technic won the Academy Award for Scientific Achievement. "The days in New York were very labor-intensive and serious", Wicki remembers. Each morning the conductor was picked up in front of his hotel close to Manhattan and was driven in an hour-long journey across the highway to Shore's offices and studios outside of New York. There they worked thoroughly and meticulously through the score, bar by bar, and programmed the 'Auricle'. In between, they were served meals from a catering service.

The work of Sue Sinclair

Sue Sinclair earned herself a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree majoring in Jazz Studies, summa cum laude, at age 19. She has a double applied major in oboe and jazz piano performance and she attended the Interlochen Arts Academy for one year, majoring in oboe and percussion. But her passion for the movies has always been a central part of her life. She fondly remembers movies like Warner Bros.' Bugs Bunny cartoons, "What's Opera, Doc" and "The Rabbit of Seville" as well as the TV-series "Lost in Space" from her childhood. In the meantime, Sue Sinclair has now been working for over three and a half year as a Music Copyist (a Music Engraver) for Howard Shore. She prepares music for performance (whether to be recorded or played live in concert) and „engraves“ the composer's manuscript via computer. This makes her one of the first people to get a look at a new work of a composer, which makes her job feel thrilling and like a privilege.

For this reasons Sue Sinclair is playing a major role during the pre-concert work for the "*The Two Towers* – live to projection" concert. She already started working on *The Two Towers* concert during summer 2008. „I began my work on *The Two Towers*, anticipating several trouble spots," says Sinclair. She tracks them down by comparing the score with the movie. For this work, she relies completely on her ears. She conducts the score with the film and puts a sticky note wherever she hears the music deviating from the print: a potential trouble spot. Those trouble spots can originate from the final edit made in post-production, where a scene gets shortened and the music is now a beat too long. For a live performance, the music needs to be without trouble spots. This means some passages might have to be shortened, or Shore even has to recompose some bars of his original composition for the live performance.

Top:
Choral rehearsal for *The Two Towers* (Photo: Basil Boehni)

Left:
Conductor Ludwig Wicki during choral rehearsal (Photo: Basil Boehni)

Down left:
Sue Sinclair at work (Photo: Gareth Hill)

Down right:
Conductor Ludwig Wicki (Photo: NLZ Zisch)



The omniscient oracle

The association of the conducting aid 'Auricle' with an oracle is quite fitting. The 'Auricle' is a conducting aid, placed right in front of the conductor, Ludwig Wicki, during the live performances. On a little screen the movie *The Two Towers* is shown to the conductor, the same way, the audience is seeing the movie on the big screen, but the conducting aid is extended with colored marks, stripes and appearing flashes, punches. The colored stripes and marks appear on the left side of the screen, pass by and vanish again on the right side of the frame. As soon as the stripe has passed the screen, a (new) piece of music has to start, or the music that is playing needs to be stopped, or there is going to be a radical change in pace and/or sound. There are, according to Wicki, four different colored stripes – green, blue, red and violet. The appearing flashes and punches provide information about the beat. Talking about the color of the stripes, Wicki jokes about the violet one. This one was supposed to be yellow, but because the yellow color looked very similar to the red one, it was sometimes difficult to tell them apart, and so the yellow was changed to violet. "That's because I don't really like the color violet. So it was fitting to use it for the purpose of warning me about an upcoming radical change in pace and/or music," says Wicki, laughing.



The final cut

On February 9th 2009 Sue Sinclair had finished preparing the final score sheets (the so called print master) for the Lucerne-performance – a document, almost a thousand pages in total, containing all instrumentations. The final score sheets got to Lucerne right at the beginning of the rehearsal period (March 5th 2009), where orchestra and chorus could use the remaining days for intensive practicing. It was a challenge, not only for the conductor and the 200 participating musicians, but for the technicians as well. On the verge of the concert they had some tricky problems to solve. Patric Hofstetter was attached to the extensive synchronisation process needed. For the live performance the sound tracks of *The Lord of the Ring* films were limited down to four to six tracks only (without the music, of course). Several microphones were installed on the stage. Six of them for the soloists alone. For the projection two digital beamers in size of travelling cases were delivered. But with *The Two Towers* concert, the screen and the beamer could not be installed until the day of the world premiere: Friday, March the 13th 2009. For the rehearsals Ludwig Wicki had to settle with the conducting aid 'Auricle'. For the rehearsal on Thursday everything but the screen and the beamer was installed as it was supposed to be for the concert. But because the KKL is usually booked solid the whole equipment had to be deinstalled for a concert of the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra (LSO) that evening before the world premiere. In a night shift right after the LSO-concert everything was prepared anew for the big final rehearsal on Friday morning and the concert on Friday night. A hell of a job and a very long night for the technicians.

But especially during this busy time the collaboration with Howard Shore was very pleasant, says Wicki. In the final stages, Shore and Sinclair (among others of Howard Shores staff) were present at every rehearsal and helpfully supported the conductor. "You really get to know how much this live performances mean to Howard [Shore]", says Hofstetter. Despite the challenging project Ludwig Wicki never had the slightest doubt about the feasibility of the performance. In case of troubles and problems the device was: "Working! Day and night, if necessary."



Top/right:
The 21st Century Symphony
Orchestra and Chorus
during *Fellowship of
the Ring* live to projection
concert
(Photo : © Art Productions)

Down left :
Howard Shore and Ludwig
Wicki after the world
premiere of *Fellowship*
back in February 2008
(Photo: © Art Productions)