capable of familiarising himself with the score in short order. Having thus painlessly gotten an over-all picture of the score, the conductor can proceed to invest it with the tricks of the trade, the oomph the public expects from the virtuoso conductor.

This business of conducting without a score has a curious origin. It is due mainly to the fact that Toscanini's eyesight is poor and he became compelled some time ago to conduct without the score. This he offsets by studying his scores with the utmost care until he really knows them. The great Italian's misfortune was turned into a fad, and nowadays most conductors of position consider it their duty to avoid being seen in public with a score.

Players Under Strain

Needless to say, this silly custom sets various limitations on their freedom of action. They may know a work in its broad outlines, but can seldom master its details without the orchestral score, hence the players do not benefit from subtle and precise guidance, but get only the obvious cues which they do not need, but which the public will instantly recognise as a magic stroke of the baton. In turn, the players are under a strain, as they can never fully rely on help from the leader. Another natural consequence of this concession to showmanship is the narrowness of the conductor's repertory. He will know the staples—and in our well organised standard repertory he can go a long way with a couple of dozen works—and will avoid any new works if he can. (One approved way out is to let the composer conduct his new work; this looks like an honour, whereas it is likely to be plain indifference and laziness.)

The committing to memory of the orchestral score of a large symphonic work is a gruelling and unnecessary task, not to be confused with the relatively simple memorising of compositions for a solo instrument. Memorising a piano sonata or a violin concerto is considerably aided by the physical memory of the fingers; as a matter of fact, there are many celebrated performers whose digital skill and memory are vastly superior to their musical talents. No one is altogether at ease when conducting by heart; the score should be there to be read so that the complete picture of the work is constantly before the maestro.

Opera Calls the Bluff

In contradistinction, we seldom, if ever, see a conductor in an opera house lead a performance without a score, for the very simple reason that such bluffing as is done in the concert hall would soon end in disaster. The well-organised symphony orchestra can muddle through without a mishap even if it does not get much help from the conductor—the New York Philharmonic Orchestra used to play every piece to the bitter end even under Stransky. In the opera everything depends on the conductor. The singers, who sing from memory, need his constant vigilance, and the orchestra, usually less efficient than a good symphony orchestra and much less rehearsed, is not free to shift for itself; it must keep its pace with the stage. The really great conductors are made in the opera, and some of our most celebrated heroes of the concert hall would not last half way through *Hansel and Gretel*. Those leisurely gestures, elegant grimaces, expressions of rage or grief which hypnotise the unsuspecting public are of no avail in the opera pit; the conductor must watch his prima donna lest the lady—seldom altogether sure of her music—will start too soon or too late, and a down beat must be a down beat for her, a pirouette won't do.

To be sure, a good performance is immeasurably aided by a fiery and enthusiastic conductor, but we must not forget that the motions of the baton are not for the purpose of churning up an ethereal whipped cream; every one of those motions is part of a basically very simple pattern of beating time. In the 18th Century French orchestra the conductor whacked his desk with something resembling a baseball bat — Rousseau called him "the woodchopper." After a while this practice was abandoned as being too noisy and conductors led their forces with a rolled sheaf of music paper, later, from about Mendelssohn onward, settling on the present-day method of the silent baton. Still, in a way, that pounding was very practical compared to the senseless baton meanderings of some of our conductors.

Breakdown at Boston

Most of our eminent orchestral leaders know just how far they can go in their showmanship without endangering the performance—or at least themselves. Some years ago I watched Koussevitzky gloriously at sea in the very first chorus of Bach's *St. John Passion*. This music not being in his bailiwick he had the score in front of him, but his antics got him in trouble and he lost his way. Not so the Boston Symphony players, to whom this was a very simple task, nor the Harvard-Radcliffe choirs, superbly trained in their difficult parts by expert if unglamorous musicians. The piece ended with both conductor and performers still together—but it was they who led the conductor. The public does not notice such little contretemps, which are not unusual, but the musicians know it instantly and come to the conductor's rescue. It is ironical, indeed, that the ethics of the trade forbid even mentioning such weaknesses in the armour of the knights of the baton.

Our musical life would gain much if we could return to the eminently professional, and of course artistic, customs of the days of, say, Karl Muck (since we have singled out the valiant Bostonians), but a conductor with a score and an unequivocally intelligible beat has no such chance until our public will realise the value of artistic integrity in conducting, and will place it above histrionics.

AUNT DAISY arrived in New York on May 9. En route, she went ashore at Colon, where she saw nylon and silk stockings in the shops. In a letter home she comments on the well turned out appearance of the women and children in that city. These now fabulous types of hosiery were priced at three-and-a-quarter dollars and five-and-a-quarter dollars a pair.