



# Rehearsal Techniques

## BEFORE THE REHEARSAL

- Know your part perfectly
  - Sight-reading can only happen once.
  - Read EVERYTHING in the part, including dynamics and articulation.
  - Be able to play passages with different bowings and fingerings.
- Know about the music and the composer and be prepared to speak about both at Community Concerts
- Listen
  - Listen to the entire piece (all movements). This can be also be done together. Most things can be found on I-Tunes. Don't trust the quality of You-Tube.
  - Listen to other chamber works by the same composer.
  - Listen to multiple recordings of the piece. Formulate your own opinion about the piece you are performing.
  - Listen while you follow the score and mark solos and places where you play the same basic part as another player (for instance, mark "with viola" or "solo" in your part)
- Number your parts. Don't number repeats – end numbering just before 1<sup>st</sup> ending, resume at beginning of 2<sup>nd</sup> ending (don't include 1<sup>st</sup> ending in numbering). If there is a partial measure in the beginning start to number on the first full measure.
- Set goals
  - What do we need to work on?
  - Where do you need to ask for help, both individually and as a group.
  - Worksheet

## REHEARSAL BEGINS

- Arrive on time.
  - Don't make your partners wait.
  - Be sure you have all of your equipment: stand, music, pencil, mute, etc.
- Tune carefully.
  - Cellist gets "A" from tuning fork or tuner and tunes all his strings.
  - Share A with each instrument. Tune each instrument individually and ask if it doesn't sound right.
  - Viola and Cello check their C strings.
  - Violins check their E strings.
  - Everyone check your G's.
  - All C's and E's together for solid Major 3rd.
- How to sit
  - Sit so you have eye contact with everyone and you can easily read their body language.
  - Music stands should be as low as possible. Look down with your eyes but SIT STRAIGHT!
  - Cello or viola on the outside should angle toward the audience.
- Warming up
  - Warm up with unison scales. Do the scale of your piece. Play without vibrato. Use harmonic minor. Use whole bows.
  - Look at each other. Change bows exactly at the same time.

- Fun with scales:
  - The Drone: find the tone to tune to and have one instrument (usually the cello) hold the note while the other carefully tunes to the drone. Switch and try again.
  - Triads: Scales with some playing the third and fifth.
  - Rhythms: Scales with some playing 16<sup>ths</sup>, 8ths, etc.
- Discuss Rehearsal Plan
  - Discuss individual needs.
  - Discuss group needs.
  - Decide on what really needs to get done.

## REHEARSAL STRATEGIES

- How to cue – who leads?
  - Usually player with the melody line cues, but sometimes person with the fastest notes cues.
  - Person cueing has to be careful not to come in too early – give a moment for the message to get to the other players – then be sure to maintain tempo immediately.
  - Everyone breathe and move together. Try breathing out as you start playing instead of in – you will be more relaxed.
- The metronome
  - Use a metronome and computer speakers with discretion. Most metronome work should be done at home. SLOW practice and a gradual working to tempo will produce the best results.
  - Be certain everyone knows the tempo that needs to be worked on at home.
- The player(s) coach
  - When some players are rehearsing a passage, it is important that the others listen and participate in the rehearsing. What one person does affects the whole group.
- Fixing intonation
  - Lowest octave should be loudest.
  - Major 3rds higher, minor 3rds lower
  - Tune tonic, then dominant, then major or minor third.
  - Don't fish! Put finger down, make a decision higher or lower (or correct), then adjust it.
- Balance
  - Balance the quartet from the bottom (lowest voice) up.
  - Be certain one voice doesn't stick out unless you want it to.
  - Inside players generally have to play out more.
- Sound
  - Decide on the quality or color of sound you want. Vary sound color by choosing where on the string to play (close to fingerboard/bridge)
- Quartet Rhythms
  - A tricky passage can be played in rhythms together. Use rhythms that keep you in the same part of the bow (not dotted rhythms) -- use same part of the bow needed in piece. Down & up bows the same length and articulation.
- Settling Arguments
  - You must have a passion and concept of how you feel the piece should go.
  - If you don't have an opinion, you don't get a vote.
  - Make sure you give your best effort when trying another way.
  - Instrument playing the melody should have a weighted vote.
  - Compromise, but do not trade favors or keep score.
  - Bring it to the coach.
  - Encourage each other – keep the atmosphere positive.
- Record yourselves and listen – you will hear things you didn't hear when you were playing.