

## Are you ready for your Chamber Music Rehearsal?!



Chamber music is one of the joys of life – playing incredible music with other passionate, committed musicians is an amazing experience. In chamber music, we are usually the only one on our part, and have the excitement and responsibility that comes with it. In return, we get to make vital and inspiring music with others.

Because we're working with others, our preparation affects not just ourselves, but everyone involved. If we play our best, we're adding to their experience as well; if we're underprepared, we run the risk of letting down our colleagues and making music at a lower level than we would like. We're all putting in time and effort – be sure that you're respecting the time and effort of everyone involved.

So preparation for rehearsals is incredibly important! What does this entail?

### How to prepare *before* first rehearsal:

- 1) Make sure everyone is playing from the same edition. Do NOT show up with a different copy at the next rehearsal.
- 2) Number all measures in the LH margin of each system. Figure out all page turns.
- 3) Agree upon an approximate tempo before the first rehearsal
- 4) Listen to recordings (different ones)
- 5) Learn ALL of your part, be able to play it up to tempo. Basically, you should be DONE learning your part of the music before the first rehearsal
- 6) Have a score available, write in cues, generally know the other parts

As you can see, you should be basically **DONE** learning the piece before you even show up at any rehearsal. Rehearsals don't exist for you to practice your part. They are to learn how to play together, and to make musical decisions together. Remember to respect your colleagues' time, and to behave professionally at all times.

**During rehearsals:**

- 1) Start with any questions or clarifications that you came up with when practicing
- 2) Write down *everything* that is talked about – it wastes time to cover ideas twice
- 3) Decide if you are practicing the piece or if you are *running* the piece. The first is to get to know the piece, the second is to prepare to perform the piece.
- 4) During practice, maintain eye contact often. Also, communicate with body language and with musical gestures (accents, lengthening)
- 5) If it seems as though everyone isn't together, it can be helpful to say beats out loud. For example, if you play on beats 1 and 3, but rest on 2, then you will say "2" out loud. This way, everyone can confirm that they were also on beat 2.
- 6) Unless you're running the piece, stop immediately and often to make corrections or musical decisions. If you keep playing, you are likely to either forget your musical idea, or continue playing incorrectly together
- 7) You should, ideally, never be off from each other for more than a beat or two  
Longer means that you didn't do your homework and are wasting time
- 8) Record all rehearsals! Listen back together. Make observations and plans about the music.
- 9) Try some fun rehearsal techniques. These could include doing things wrong on purpose to test the listening and flexibility of the group: speed up and slow down in an exaggerated way, play while facing the wall so you have to communicate entirely by listening, try a passage different ways to see which way you all agree on, switch parts if possible.
- 10) Be kind and receptive and helpful to your colleagues. Attitude is crucial!

**Bottom line: Be completely prepared on your part, be communicative and attentive during rehearsals, take notes, and try to notice if you're doing anything that is compromising the rehearsal or making it harder to make good music.**

