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## **How to Get Ready for a Chamber Music Course: Instructions for Music Students**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The habits of students when getting ready for chamber music lessons, which are a crucial part of conservatory education, influence their entire music career. The period of education can be very helpful if students know what to do before the chamber music lessons. This paper aims to specify what the students should do to be fully prepared for a chamber music lessons. Also the paper will include some advises about performing. Preparation will be examined in five stages: things to do before the first rehearsal, how to tune string quartet instruments, things to consider during the first rehearsal, how to be a leader in a group, how to set interactions within a group. To be able to explain the methods of practicing during the rehearsals, the paper will include samples from music scores.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Chamber music, Rehearsal, Performing, Tuning, Quartet*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In the current curriculum of conservatories and some Fine Arts High Schools, the students who play an instrument are obligated to take chamber music courses. Mostly, the students take this course when they are able to play their instruments.

Working within a group is different than playing solo. Students can get confused at the beginning of the course finding themselves making music with a group of people as they have only played alone and corrected the mistakes with the directions of his or her instructors. Playing with others in the group and playing together at the same tempo, managing hard passages, hearing their intonation clearly in a group can be counted as some of the differences.

Learning the principles and the disciplinary of playing in a group will be a valuable asset for the learners throughout their musical careers. The basic rules of making music with in a group include essential principles will help students in other areas of their professional lives. Therefore, the reason and the main aim of this paper will try to explain how a student can get the basic rules of rehearsing and getting ready for the lessons. This paper will be helpful for both the students and the instructors.

### **2. WHAT TO DO BEFORE THE FIRST REHEARSAL**

Having knowledge about the composer is the first thing to do. Players have to search the period of the composer, whether he or she composed any other chamber music pieces, if yes,

for which instruments the pieces were composed. Also, they have to think how to phrase according the performance practices of the composer's period.

To understand the piece perfectly, all the players must have the score of the piece. Knowing about the other parts of the piece will be helpful for the performer to be confident about his or her parts. Players have to be sure about the reliability of the version of the score and search which version is commonly used throughout the world.

After having a copy of the score, the students should work on the score in depth. First of all, if the score does not have bar numbers, they should be written on the piece with a pencil so that the players can find the right place when rehearsing without spending any time. Then players should listen an audio recording of the piece while following the score and have a clear idea about the interpretation of the piece. Players also have to learn the form of the piece and the main lines and should translate the musical terms and write the meanings of the terms on the score and their parts. (Figure 1.).



**Figure 1. Claude Debussy, String Quartet, First Movement, Bar Number 97-99**

All players should carefully practice their music, write the necessary fingerings and work with a metronome for the fast or hard passages so that they can be ready for the rehearsal. After getting their part at the required tempo with a clear intonation, players should consider the musical characters and decide on how to approach to piece.

### **3. HOW TO TUNE STRING QUARTET INSTRUMENTS**

At the beginning of the rehearsal after tuning all the strings, the violins should play an open E and the violas and violoncellos should play the open C together. Then the E and C strings should be tuned until the both strings sound the right interval. After tuning the both strings according to each other, the other strings should be tuned accordingly. This tuning method is called narrow fifths tuning and it produces better results in terms of intonation. Before the concerts at the backstage, players must tune as explained above. At the stage tuning must be done on the edge of the bow by touching the strings gently. Players can check the strings

quickly and quietly so the audience is not distracted. During the performance instrument's strings may change because of the temperature, playing *pizzicato*, chords, or *fortissimo*. Players should feel free to tune on stage between pieces.

#### 4. THINGS TO CONSIDER DURING THE FIRST REHEARSAL

The piece, if it is possible, should be played all the way through After the first reading it students can talk about the bowings and phrasings. Bowings and phrasings have to serve the pace and the musical characters of the piece. Discussing about the musical characters is essential for the mood that students want to create for the audience. A list of different feelings can be helpful when deciding on the mood or character. The table below lists some of the sample emotions (Table 1.). Some emotions can be chosen and written on the piece.

Grief	Forgiveness	Childishness	Love
Achievement	Courage	Excitement	Craziness
Dread	Trust	Admiration	Hopelessness
Clemency	Loneliness	Hope	Timidity
Astonishment	Affection	Boredom	Regret
Enthusiasm	Excitement	Longing	Happiness
Rage	Peace	Unrest	Sadness
Aggrieved	Freedom	Decisiveness	Indecisiveness
Chaos	Unhappiness	Joy	Hatred
Anger	Fear		

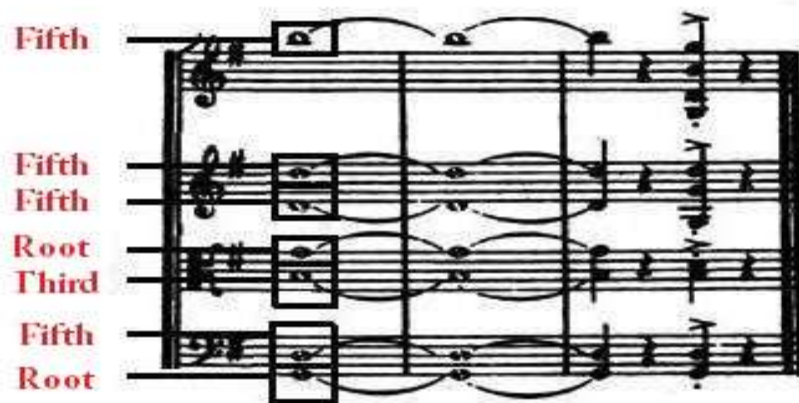
**Table 1. List of Emotions**

Later the possible problems can be defined; for example, whether the dotted rhythms are short enough or not, if the triplets are distinguished from eighth notes etc. Balance is also another issue to discuss. Melodies or the main line should always be more dominant. If accompanying parts are dominating the melody, the players of those parts should play less (Figure 2.).



**Figure 2. Claude Debussy, String Quartet, Second Movement, Bar Number 56-59**

Another important matter is to understand the form of the piece. To create a contrast, the first and the second theme should be defined if available. Harmonic changes and cadences should be found and the frame of the piece should be structured according to the form. Each player has to hear his individual sound as well as the tonality for a clear intonation. Out of tune chords should be corrected. To be able to tune the chord the players should find the root the third and the fifth of the chord. Then they play the notes beginning from the root to the top adding one note at a time. This approach will help the students to hear and tune the cord easier. Always the root of the cord should sound more than other notes. (Figure 3.).



**Figure 3. Claude Debussy String Quartet, The Fourth Movement, 351-353**

The unison parts should be adjusted to the bass line. The bass line player has to play louder than the other parts. An example is given below (Figure 4.).





Figure 4. Claude Debussy, String Quartet, First Movement, Bar Number 182-184.

## 5. HOW TO BE A LEADER IN A GROUP

Leadership is not always the responsibility of the person who plays the first part. Player whose parts has the main line should have to lead. The leader gives the entrance while gesturing in an observable fashion. Generally, the gesturing is a deep or short breath according to tempo. The leaders should be determined and noted on the score and the part as seen in the example (Figure 5.).



Figure 5. Arnold Schoenberg, String Sextet,, Verklarte Nacht First Movement, 97-99

## 6. HOW TO SET INTERACTIONS WITHIN A GROUP

The groups which make chamber music generally do not sustain their professional togetherness because of personal controversies. It is a vital importance to be sensitive and respectful when being warned or criticised. The players who do not express their ideas clearly should be encouraged to be fully participated. When criticizing, the focus should remain within the musical frame and personalization should be avoided. People can only criticize each other within a group only if it is about the music.

Many times even the professional musicians might have disagreements. This might be about personal preferences or sometimes about basic issues. People should be open for the new ideas and be understanding to each other. Abiding by the decision of the majority and adopting those decisions when applying are crucial. It is quite usual and essential for the musicians to warn or criticize each other during the rehearsals. However, direct and harsh criticism should be avoided and general comments should be made. For example; rather than pointing out colleagues' intonation problem, underlining the intonation problem occurring in some parts of the piece would produce better results.

Nevertheless, the people who come to the rehearsals without studying his/ her part, constant late comers and the uninterested ones during the rehearsals should be warned. Those issues cause waste of time and play a crucial role in the quality of rehearsal.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

For music students, their success in the musical careers both as a student and at later times as a professional, depend on how well-prepared they are for the rehearsals and the concerts and how professionally they act. These factors can also be taken as the criteria to assess a musician.

Taking these issues seriously in consideration, students will be well- prepared for a chamber music course and for their whole professional life. Being ready for a course which are for a group will make the students get some professional habits to be used throughout a musical path.

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## FIGURES REFERENCES

- i. Figure 1. Debussy, C. (1933). String Quartet, No. 1, Op. 10. New York: Edwin. F. Orchestral Scores.
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