

The Counterpoint Club

A Chamber Music Podcast

Opus 2, Episode 4: How To Train Your String Quartet

Three Useful Techniques for Rehearsing and Coaching Chamber Music Ensembles

These techniques, discussed in the interview with Annie Fullard, are designed to help your ensemble sound like a single organism!

Live-Breathe-Die

- Develop true leadership in each member of the ensemble.
- Lose your personal ego, as in “to let your ego die, in the service of focusing on the other members of the ensemble, making yourself vulnerable but open to possibility.
- Give 100% of your energy to your colleagues at all times no matter your role, and always respond to that energy 100%.
- Connect with your colleagues; it is paramount that your eyes and ears are totally focused outside of your music stand!

Use Expressive “Shakespearian” Counting

- Count/Vocalize your part like you are the greatest Shakespearian actor!
- Create all dynamics, musical markings and gestures through the counting.
- Make sure you are counting precisely together including articulations (beginnings and endings) on every note; rhythmic alignment while speaking is key!
- Choose the same type of vocalization across the group (la-la-la, da-da-da-da, do-do-do, etc.)
- Notice the composite rhythms that your parts create together; not just your own part as separate from the whole.

Move Together Like a Pendulum

- Create a human metronome with your body; move back and forth together in the ensemble to the pulse of the music. Entrainment is the scientific term for what happens when objects (people in this instance) start to come together and synchronize their movements.

