

The Counterpoint Club

A Chamber Music Podcast

Opus 3, Episode 1: The Plan

Organizational Ideas to Help Ensembles Plan for Success

Agree Upon Your Goal(s) and Timeline

It's important for the group to agree upon a collective long-term goal or goals.

Consistency

Find a consistent time of day, and ideally a consistent number of times per week for rehearsals or meetings.

Plan Time for Planning

Make sure to plan in consistent times for planning. There will always be emails to answer, and bids to respond to, so don't let those business items bleed into the creative time. Get it out of the way first so you have a clear headspace to rehearse!

Assign Roles

It's important to assign roles to avoid confusion, balls being dropped, or resentment around an imbalance in workload.

Scrum

This is a basic framework that helps small teams work better together. The idea is that the team deals with short "sprint" goals (usually 2-4) weeks, and there is a "servant" leader or Scrum master that keeps track of to-do lists, which break things down into small, achievable tasks. Skyros currently uses two apps, Trello and Slack, to organize their Scrum goals. Trello has cards that make it easy to assign tasks and view things according to project. We primarily use slack as a message board organized according to specific "channels," (e.g. emails, finance, etc.). This helps us avoid text threads that are a mile long! Below are the websites for the apps, if you'd like to check them out:

- Trello: www.trello.com
- Slack: www.slack.com

Plan Break Time

Much like planning in planning time, it's important to plan in breaks. We're humans, not robots, and it's important to look out for our mental health. Have some cookies and tea! This also helps with team bonding, which is especially good when you have to work in tight quarters with the same small group of people for extended periods.

- American Psychological Association article on taking a break and the positive effects on mental health: [Give Me a Break](#)

Rehearsal Arc

In the beginning of Opus 1 of The Counterpoint Club, we discussed the idea of the "Hourglass" approach to practicing and rehearsing. The idea is to start with the big picture, then focus in on "practice spots" or difficult passages. Then towards the end, try to incorporate those things you worked on in a final run-through (or run-throughs). The same idea holds true for the overall "Rehearsal Arc" leading up to a concert or engagement. In Skyros, we like to start with character development, and generally get acquainted with the pieces, then start focusing in on difficult sections. We try to plan our rehearsal arc that so at least 3 rehearsals before the concert, we are in "run-through" or "dress rehearsal" mode.

- [Hourglass Worksheet](#)

