

The Counterpoint Club

A Chamber Music Podcast

Opus 3, Episode 5: “Play It Like Chamber Music!”

Bringing Chamber Music Technique to the Orchestra

There are some techniques we talk about a lot in chamber music that can really help when it comes to playing in an orchestra. Here are some of the most useful!

1. Leadership from Every Seat

One of the best things about chamber music is the egalitarian nature of chamber music playing. We can bring that mindset to orchestra playing by taking initiative and playing actively and proactively, engaging and playing with colleagues across the orchestra.

2. Body Movement and Breath to Engage in Communication Across the Orchestra

Communicating across the orchestra by breathing and outwardly demonstrating body language, just like one would do in chamber music, will influence others to do the same, and makes for a dynamic and interactive experience.

3. Swapping ego and competition for being a supportive colleague

This starts with treating the people directly around you with love and support. It may mean asking how you can be a better colleague to your stand partner or the people sitting next to you. It also means using the body language and direction of sound in your playing to be sonically supportive. It is important to discard the ego about placement within the orchestra and focus on how to be the best colleague one can be from the seat where they are sitting.

4. The orchestral layer cake of sound

Just like in Opus 3, Episode 4, “Let Them Eat Cake,” the layer cake of sound is important in orchestra. It may just be a larger cake with more layers, or it could be that multiple instrument groups comprise a layer together (meaning they need to be extra supportive of each other!). We often hear, for example, a doubling of the bassoons and celli. Knowing what role in the layering of sound one is and using a collective ear to hear what is happening at all times is imperative for great balance in orchestra.

