

The Counterpoint Club

A Chamber Music Podcast

Opus 4 Episode 2 - Bend It Like Beethoven

Tips for Being a Respectful Colleague and Building Healthy Competition Experiences

Tip No. 1 - Compete with yourself

It's ok to be competitive, but be competitive with your past self instead of colleagues. Being competitive with colleagues can cause distrust and resentment. However, reframing competition as a means of improving your own playing can allow you to grow as a musician. Set a specific goal with every performance. This could be playing with more color and nuance in your sound, improving on your overall intonation, having no memory slips, etc. Challenge yourself with each performance to reach your goal. You might not always reach it, but the experience will always move you towards reaching it. Each performance is a new opportunity to tackle something specific, and the more performances you have, the more detail will be integrated. Having a mentality such as this will help you stay focused on our own playing, while also being more understanding and constructive in interactions with other musicians.

Tip No. 2 - Know your role

Every part in an ensemble has a different role to play, and every note is vital. These different roles are not necessarily better or worse, and each one contributes to the overall sound and effect of the ensemble. If someone else has more notes than you, more melodies, more interesting things to play, that does not mean they are better than you. Your role is just as important to the ensemble, wherever you are sitting.

Tip No. 3 - Learn from those around you

We can learn something special from every musician we encounter in our musical sphere. No matter what background or training level that person has, they have a personal and unique connection to and knowledge of music. Sharing about your own musical background and interests and asking others what they feel drawn to is a wonderful way to find out more about the people around us whether they are a peer, a student, a mentor, or a colleague. When working with others, what can you learn from their unique strengths? How might you start a meaningful conversation or meeting with others about their favorite aspects of music, and what can you take away from these interactions?

Tip No. 4 - Lead with strength

If you are in a setting where you are more advanced than your peers, avoid showing off. Use your strength, knowledge, and technique to help inspire those around you. By leading with strength, you can help guide your colleagues and enable them to play their best. They will have a much easier time figuring out how to adjust their playing when they can latch on to the strength in your sound.

