The Counterpoint Club
A Chamber Music Podcast

Opus 3, Episode 2: R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Live. Breathe. Die.

This worksheet presents a step-by-step guide to respectfully trying musical ideas from every member of your chamber ensemble. These steps will help the group decide how to incorporate everyone's input during rehearsals. This process can be used for any kind of musical concept, (i.e. tempo, character, emotion, and dynamics), and is especially effective for the times when one of these factors changes (i.e. crescendo/decrescendo, ritardando/accelerando, etc.).

Step 1: Live, Breathe, Die

- One person in the group: Suggest an idea to try
- Everyone else: **Live, breathe, and die** for that idea. Make it sound like your own idea, so that everyone can hear its best possible realization, exactly as suggested.
    - Do NOT judge the idea. Do not comment on the merits of an idea, how hard it will be, or whether you think it's a good idea. It can be very tempting to start analyzing if an idea will work, but reserve any judgement until Step 3. This can be the hardest part of the entire process. Focus on making the idea happen. Live, breathe, and die for that idea, no matter what you privately think of it.
- If the idea just isn't working, rehearse and workshop the idea until it accomplishes the effect that the suggester had in mind and they are completely satisfied with the way it sounds.

Step 2: Try, Try, Try

- Repeat Step 1 with other suggestions from other members of the ensemble. Try as many meaningful ideas as you can.

Step 3: Debate and Agree

- After every idea has been fully realized, start debating which everyone prefers. Try more variations, possibly blending different ideas into one.
    - You'll be surprised at how frequently the idea that your ensemble settles on is a combination of the best parts of every individual's suggestions.
- "Finalize" a decision about which idea (or blend of ideas) works best. If everyone has truly lived, breathed, and died for every idea, it should be clear which ideas work better.
    - Remember, we always use pencils (never pens!) in rehearsals so that we can change things later, if needed. Your ensemble might arrive at their next rehearsal and decide that the "final" idea that everyone wrote down no longer portrays the effect everyone wants. Choose a different idea that everyone feels it will work better.

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