A Guide for the Novice Coach of the Undergraduate Mixed Ensemble: Coaching Procedures and Interpersonal Dynamics

Adriana Teodoro-Dier
University of Miami, adriana.collab@gmail.com
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

A GUIDE FOR THE NOVICE COACH
OF THE UNDERGRADUATE MIXED ENSEMBLE:
COACHING PROCEDURES AND INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS

By
Adriana R. Teodoro-Dier

A DOCTORAL ESSAY

Submitted to the Faculty
of the University of Miami
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Coral Gables, Florida

May 2013
A doctoral essay submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

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AND INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS

Adriana R. Teodoro-Dier

Approved:

Paul Posnak, D.M.A.  M. Brian Blake, Ph.D.
Professor of Keyboard Performance  Dean of the Graduate School

Santiago Rodriguez, M.M.  Alan Johnson, M.M.
Professor of Keyboard Performance  Assistant Professor of
Vocal Performance

Naoko Takao, D.M.A.  Margaret Donaghue, D.M.A.
Assistant Professor of  Associate Professor of
Keyboard Performance and Pedagogy  Clarinet
The purpose of this essay is to offer solutions to basic chamber music problems that novice coaches may encounter when working with collegiate chamber ensembles that include piano. Without having amassed years of coaching experience, recently graduated piano majors have few external resources to consult when confronted with the opportunity to coach the aforementioned ensembles. With the intent to fill a gap in the published literature, this essay is a “prototype” manual of strategies and techniques to which the novice coach may refer. The author interviewed nine professional teacher-coaches for their suggestions on how to solve common musical problems and manage the unique interpersonal dynamics between coach and college students. These findings are organized and juxtaposed with cursory references to relevant publications and musical examples when appropriate. A literature review and bibliography is included.
Acknowledgements

I would like to offer my most profound and sincere thanks to Michael Chertock, Lee Fiser, Tao Lin, Paul Posnak, Elisabeth Pridonoff, Eugene Pridonoff, Marina Radiushina, Sandra Rivers, and James Tocco for the generous and enthusiastic spirit with which they so graciously shared their time, experiences and insights.

I would like to thank my committee members for their unwavering belief in my endeavors. It is with humble gratitude that I appreciate all you have taught me.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Coaches of chamber music have a powerful and immediate influence over the artistic and personal growth of young musicians. As they guide ensembles towards unified interpretations of masterworks, coaches help students develop one of the most fundamental yet essential qualities of every sophisticated musician: the ability to listen deeply to others as well as to themselves. As the confluence of musical and interpersonal dialogues is a unique feature of chamber music, chamber music coaching contains its own specific sets of challenges. An effective coach possesses the technical wherewithal and diplomatic finesse to affect positive change in an ensemble, no matter the circumstance. In an academic setting where students have a myriad of different activities, a coach must be well-equipped with musical and interpersonally strategies to help a group of strangers work together quickly and easily.

While coaching does require extensive knowledge of the chamber music repertoire, stylistic understanding, interpretive parameters and performance practice, such knowledge is not the only defining factor. Musicians’ familiarity with the repertoire or expertise in its performance does not necessarily guarantee that they will be good coaches. For example, a musician who has devoted much time to studying chamber music may not know how best to coach a group in which there may be a dominant personality. Especially germane to working with ensembles with piano (hereafter referred to as “the mixed ensemble”), coaches must be able to communicate musical concepts in a way that transcends the mechanics of the individual instruments and to suggest
appropriate rehearsal strategies. One expects that such coaches develop their techniques for facilitating successful chamber music performances of years of practical experience, gathering insights on how to resolve common interpersonal or rehearsal problems.

Recent graduates degreed in piano performance may be at a disadvantage when confronted with the opportunity to coach college-level chamber music mixed ensembles, given their relative lack of experience coupled with the paucity of literature on coaching technique. Though many graduates may refine their lecturing and teaching skills through teaching assistantships or curriculum-based opportunities, few have the chance develop their basic coaching technique while in graduate school. Those with little or no coaching experience have few external resources to consult beyond their own experience. Few publications address the art of coaching, as most publications pertaining to chamber music focus on performance-related issues: specific repertory, performance practice or performance skills.

A recent inquiry by the author reveals that many academic positions include coaching duties, for both adjunct and full professorships alike. With the number of young graduates with advanced degrees increasing, the likelihood of pianists becoming coaches before having the opportunity to amass years of experience seems inevitable. Though a recent graduate with a degree in piano performance may have a fairly good knowledge of the repertoire based on their own studies and performance experience, knowing how to deal with other potential areas of difficulty will better prepare the graduate for becoming a more effective coach. Though nothing can replace the practical experience gleaned from years of coaching, neophyte coaches would greatly benefit from an *a priori*
awareness of common problems as well as basic coaching technique for working with the collegiate mixed ensemble.

As recently degreed graduates in piano performance majors may not have years of coaching experience yet, learning from the experiences of sagacious teacher-coaches is extremely beneficial. In an attempt to access this body of information, the author conducted interviews of established collegiate teacher-coaches regarding basic coaching issues: on coaching procedure or mechanics as well as on interpersonal dynamics. This essay is a presentation of the interview results along with critical commentary and relevant excerpts from the current academic discourse as well as other supplemental materials.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this essay is to fill a gap in the published literature by offering clear and specific solutions to basic chamber music problems which the young or neophyte coach may encounter when coaching a collegiate mixed chamber ensemble. In order to provide insights into these problems and to maximize applicability, the author presents multiple viewpoints and solutions, in the hope that the reader will adapt the offered information to fit their own style of coaching. As the essay is intended for future pedagogues, cursory references to learning styles and communication strategies are included when applicable. Though the essay focuses on issues pertaining to the mixed chamber ensemble, other non-pianist coaches may also benefit from the information in this essay.
LIMITATIONS

This essay focuses on the issues which arise in an academic chamber music setting; that is, when the coach works with the same group over an extended period of time. Though much of the information may also be useful in a masterclass-style setting, the author leaves the identification of such relevant information to the reader.

The total list of possible issues and problems which may arise in a coaching session is exhaustive and to cover all of them would require at least one dissertation per issue. However, building on several printed resources as well as the practical experiences of those who were interviewed, the author is able to present a few key topics in some detail. Also, due to a lack of strong data, information on inadequate student preparation and passive personalities will not be discussed at present.

The choice to limit the inquiry to techniques for the college-level ensemble arises from the lack of attention to this area in the literature. Several publications which will be mentioned in the Literature Review already target coaches of middle school or high school chamber music ensembles: groups without a previous exposure to chamber music. In many cases, the information in this essay may also apply to advanced high school mixed ensemble chamber groups; again, the author leaves identification of such material to the reader. Though young high school and undergraduates groups may experience similar musical or interpersonal problems, the way in which the coach addresses such issues must take differences in maturity and social development into account.

This essay is not intended to replace or to cover comprehensive knowledge of the repertoire for the mixed ensemble. Though examples from the chamber music literature are occasionally shown to better illustrate interviewees’ assertions, repertoire-specific
issues such as style and performance practice are outside the scope of the current discussion.

METHODOLOGY

The interviewees, the majority of whom are pianists, include university professors who have significant interest and experience in coaching and performance of mixed ensemble chamber music. The author conducted the interviews either in person or via Skype. When necessary, exchange of additional information took place over e-mail. The lengths of the interviews ranged from one hour to six hours, sometimes occurring in non-contingent sessions based to the availability of the interviewee. As per IRB regulations research investigations, the interviewees were read a verbal letter of consent before the interview.

In alphabetical order, the featured interviewees are:

Michael Chertock, Chair of Piano Department, University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (Cincinnati, OH).

Lee Fiser, Professor of Cello, University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (Cincinnati, OH).

Tao Lin, Artist Faculty at Bowdoin International Music Festival (Brunswick, Maine) and visiting professor at Shanghai Normal University School of Music (Shanghai, China).

Dr. Paul Posnak, Professor of Keyboard Performance and Director, Collaborative Piano, University of Miami Frost School of Music (Coral Gables, FL).
Elisabeth Pridonoff, Professor of Piano, Duo in Residence, University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (Cincinnati, OH).

Eugene Pridonoff, Professor of Piano, Duo in Residence, University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (Cincinnati, OH).

Dr. Marina Radiushina, Concert Pianist, Adjunct Faculty, Florida International University (Miami, FL).

Sandra Rivers, Professor of Collaborative Piano, University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (Cincinnati, OH).

James Tocco, Eminent Scholar in Chamber Music, Professor of Piano, University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (Cincinnati, OH).

The interview questions were presented in these two general headings: Coaching/Rehearsal Procedure and Interpersonal Dynamics. Under Coaching Procedure: score issues; rehearsal tempo; flexible time; balance; cueing/breathing; intonation. Questions under Interpersonal Dynamics included the following topics: role and profile of a coach; inadequate student preparation; interpersonal communication; soloist vs. chamber musician mentality; dominant/passive personalities. Though the author followed the same general list of topics and questions, the questions were not fixed and the conversational nature of the interview afforded the author flexibility to pursue additional information. Most of the interviewees requested the list of questions before the interview took place. Due to time constraints or as per individual request, not all interviewees provided information for all of the aforementioned issues. The original names of topics were further categorized in order to efficiently organize and present the results of the interview. The modified topics are described below.
ORGANIZATION OF ESSAY

Chapter II is a literature review of sources related to Coaching Procedure and Interpersonal Dynamics and is organized following the structure of Chapters III and IV.

Chapter III, titled “Coaching Procedure,” discusses the initial approach to a chamber piece: Guiding Rehearsal Preparation (Comparative Editions, Score Study, The Score in Rehearsal, Rehearsal Tempi) and the dynamic process through which the ensemble masters the work: Guiding Musical Communication (Pulse/Flexible Time, Listening: Considerations for the Pianist, Listening: Considerations for the Ensemble, Non-verbal Communication). Chapter IV, titled “Interpersonal Dynamics,” explores the complex human interactions which may occur in a coaching situation as well as certain conflict resolution strategies. The topics include: Communication Strategies (Developing Positive Rapport, Delivering Criticism); Diplomatic Challenges for the Coach (Opposition to Authority, Disparate Levels, Dominant Personalities, Handling Conflict Within an Ensemble, Coaches’ Advice on Difficult Collaborators) and Possible Coaching Roles (Facilitator, Authoritarian, Combination of the Two Roles).

Two forms of bibliography follow: one listed by topic and the other listed alphabetically. Appendix A is an extensive discussion of musical examples from Chapter III. Appendix B includes the IRB Exemption form for the study, the IRB Verbal Consent form and the IRB approved sample list of interview questions.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review discusses sources which relate categorically to the topics covered in Chapters III and IV. Many of these sources also included in following chapters to provide support or contrast to the findings of the interviews.

COACHING PROCEDURE: GUIDING REHEARSAL PREPARATION

A very limited number of sources discuss rehearsal preparation. In his article, titled “Plays Well with Others,” composer, educator and chamber musician John Steinmetz mentions basic procedures of score preparation including editions and the importance of consistent measure numbers.1 Steinmetz also offers tips on how to structure and plan rehearsals. Ross Harbaugh, professor of cello at the Frost School of Music, briefly covers the merits of obtaining good editions and of performing background research on the composer in his article titled “Ensembles: An Owner’s Manual”.2

Margaret Berg, professor of Collaborative Piano at University of Colorado at Boulder, in her article “Promoting ‘Minds-On’ Chamber Music Rehearsals” explores ways in which coaches can guide young students towards becoming increasing more independent throughout their first chamber music experience.3 Berg devotes much time to how a coach can guide the students’ attention musically and how to structure the first rehearsal with multiple student groups in a classroom setting.

1 John Steinmetz, “Plays Well with Others,” Chamber Music America 29, no.2 (Summer 2012), 28-32, 90.
COACHING PROCEDURE: GUIDING MUSICAL COMMUNICATION

Sources on Guiding Musical Communication for the mixed ensemble fall into three broad categories: sources on coaching technique, sources on rehearsal procedure, and sources on playing within a specific mixed ensemble configuration. In the case of the latter, coaches may adapt certain rehearsal procedures to the coaching session or may use the information to inform their students of appropriate rehearsal procedure.

Four sources which directly address coaching technique are a chapter from Abram Loft’s *How to Succeed in an Ensemble: Reflections on a Life in Chamber Music* titled, “Teaching Chamber Music,”4 Roger Tapping’s article, “In the Studio: Quartet Coaching Strategies,”5 Susan Leshnowers’ article, “Member2Member—Coaching Ideals: Teaching Leadership Through Chamber Music,”6 and Charles Villarubia’s article, “Tips for the Small Ensemble.”7 The first two offer many helpful insights on the mechanics of coordinating string players; the latter on coordinating brass and woodwinds. Loft, a violinist and violist, gives an overview of his personal pedagogical philosophies, helpful teaching tips, and coaching anecdotes. Unlike the other three sources, Loft does refer to two common problems of coaching the mixed ensemble; however his treatment of these issues is somewhat peripheral and brief. Roger Tapping, chair of chamber music at the New England Conservatory in Boston, MA and a former member of the Takacs Quartet, offers string-specific strategies, though some of his suggestions on general musical issues such as eye contact and critical listening can apply to coaching the mixed ensemble.

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The other two aforementioned sources address how to coach specifically homogenous groups. Leshnower, a faculty member at Midland College (Midland, TX), describes the coaching strategies of the Cassatt String Quartet, the quartet-in-residence at University of Pennsylvania and Syracuse University. Motivated by the desire to foster students’ leadership qualities, the Cassatt Quartet use certain musical exercises which challenge students in a string quartet to develop their musical communication skills and to build collective trust. Villarubia, professor of tuba and brass chamber music at the Butler School of Music (University of Texas-Austin) and a founding member of Rhythm and Brass, advocates the coach using extra-repertoire exercises to synchronize and strengthen certain fundamentals of ensemble playing. These exercises involve group members performing exercises in unison, such as clapping rhythms and counting out loud; Villarubia believes these skills must be practiced even at the collegiate level.

Sources which address the beginning ensemble include articles written by Seattle Conservatory teacher Karen Iglitzen,8 and chamber music coach Gillian Rogell at the New England Conservatory,9 Berg’s dissertation10 and her aforementioned article. Briefly, Iglitzen advocates that students work alone on problems before being coached, Berg recommends keeping an ensemble practice log, and Rogell has formed a personalized style of chamber music coaching, branded “Musical Alchemy.” All authors suggest phrases and wordings that are tailored to younger, pre-college students.

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As mentioned above, several sources which concern rehearsal procedure contain useful information for coaches and for students. Though many sources of this type address issues specific to the string quartet, the following sources contain information adaptable for the mixed ensemble. Many individual techniques from these sources are included later on in this essay, juxtaposed with the interview findings in an effort to illuminate multiple coaching possibilities and options.

In his aforementioned article, Steinmetz offers more than fifty tips on many important cornerstones of rehearsal procedure, including ensemble coordination and non-verbal communication, gleaned from his personal experience as a chamber musician and coach. Steinmetz presents suggestions in a universal fashion, as none of his examples refer to specific instruments or repertoire. Harbaugh describes how to play and rehearse in an ensemble in his “Ensembles, An Owner’s Manual.” He explores multiple solutions to seven common rehearsal problems including un-coordinated entrances, un-coordinated rhythmic passages, and faulty intonation. Bill Scharnberg, Regents Professor of Music at the University of North Texas in Denton, TX and principal horn in the Dallas Opera Orchestra, offers suggestions on synchronizing beat placement in his article “Out of the Bell: Chamber Music Awareness 101.” Though the article makes no mention of coordinating these instruments with the piano attack, Scharnberg’s comments offer insight as to the interplay between individual’s perception of the beat and how to use

11 John Steinmetz, “Plays Well with Others,” Chamber Music America (Summer 2012): 28-32, 90
mechanics of their instrument when coordinating attacks for different combinations of
wind and brass instruments.

Wenger, the professor of Collaborative Piano at University of Missouri in
Columbia, MO moderated a panel of professional musicians, including two string
players, a pianist, and a singer, reporting the findings in an article titled, “Focusing the
Rehearsal: Tips and Tricks for Students and Coaches.” Though Wenger’s interviews
provided some inspiration for the current essay, the author’s approach departs
significantly from Wenger’s. First, judging from their wording and tone, the majority of
the strategies and techniques in Wenger’s discussion seem better suited to beginning
ensembles, i.e., “movin’ to the groove.” Second, Wenger’s approach does not present
diverse opinions, as she explores a single person’s response to a single topic. Though
Wenger can cover many topics, her approach does not reveal multiple solutions to a
given problem.

Lastly, sources which center on a specific mixed ensemble configuration include a
chapter from Martin Katz’s The Complete Collaborator: The Pianist as Partner, an
interview with the Beaux Arts Trio by David Blum in The Beaux Arts Trio, and Joyce
Grill’s Accompanying Basics. All of these sources contain information tailored for
pianists. In a chapter humorously titled “Is there life after singers?,” Katz describes
different issues a pianist will face when working with different families of instruments
such as timing, articulation and the retaken bow, as well as practical insights as to how a

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17 Joyce Grill, Accompanying Basics, (San Diego: Kijos West, 1987).
pianist can blend their sound with these different instruments. Likewise, Blum’s interview of the Beaux Arts Trio (Daniel Guilet, violin; Bernard Greenhouse, cello; Menachem Pressler, piano) reveals both conceptual and technical approaches to the problem of blending and balancing the string with the piano sound.

In a somewhat limited capacity, Joyce Grill’s *Accompanying Basics* provides basic and introductory material to the pianist who is beginning to collaborate with other musicians. Grill, a teacher, conductor, and composer, dedicates only one chapter to instrumental accompanying and chamber music, despite the vast and varied nature of the genre. Although she mentions important issues such as breathing, balance and articulation, her discussion does not cover many issues such as choosing an edition, cueing, rehearsal tempi and so on.

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INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS: COMMUNICATION

The following sources contain communication strategies which the coach can adapt to the coaching session. As specific strategies from the following sources are discussed in some detail in Chapter III, a brief summary of these sources is offered here. Two non-musical sources in particular offer basic communication strategies which a young coach may find helpful. Dale Carnegie’s classic *How to Win Friends and Influence People* offers concise, non-confrontational tactics for facilitating harmonious interpersonal relations. Dr. Marshall B. Rosenberg’s *Nonviolent Communication* also describes other communication strategies, in which the speaker combines accurately worded statements with empathy and compassion to create positive interactions.

On matters of communication that relate directly to teaching, Mary Tollefson’s article, “Coaching Thinking: Strategies for Developing Reflective Teachers and Students,” offers basic information about the practice of “cognitive coaching,” or how a teacher or coach influences the thinking process of students through different reflective activities. Susan Bruckner’s *The Whole Musician* offers verbal and non-verbal communication strategies. Bruckner also includes an interesting discussion on how a coach can use learning styles to inform his or her teaching technique. Likewise, Keith Golay’s *Learning Patterns and Temperament Styles* offers an accessible way that teachers can both interact and tailor their pedagogy to different learning styles.

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Alternate types of learning style theories are summarized in Phyllis Alpert Lehrer’s, “An Introduction to Learning Styles.”

Though indirectly related to coaching, sources which offer specific wordings or communication for chamber ensemble members include two aforementioned articles: Steimetz’s “Plays Well with Others” and Harbaugh’s “Ensembles: An Owner’s Manual.” Answering to popular demand, Harbaugh wrote an additional article titled, “What? You’re Not Getting Along? 26 Ensemble Savers,” which addresses ways to avoid interpersonal conflict while working in a chamber ensemble.

INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS: DIPLOMATIC CHALLENGES

While Chapter III addresses specific instances which require diplomatic intervention from the coach, a basic awareness of how unhealthy interpersonal interactions can form may help offer a different perspective. Certainly there are many possible sources and approaches one can use to understand this issue. In Harbaugh’s “What? You’re Not Getting Along? 26 Ensemble Savers,” he recommends consulting the following resources. Both Dr. Eric Berne’s *Games People Play* and Dr. Thomas A. Harris’ *I’m Ok, You’re Ok*, explain the principles of “Transactional Analysis,” a branch of interpersonal psychology in which interpersonal behavior can be understood by the interplay between people’s inner ego states (Parent, Adult, Child), regardless of the chronological age of the individual. For example, one person’s “Child” response may

25 Steinmetz, 28-32, 90.
trigger another’s “Parent,” and so on. The most healthy and productive interaction occurs when all parties involved interact with their respective “Adult” ego-states: the state in which the individual objectively processes information from another. 29 While both books are informative, Harris’ is more accessible for the layman.

In a unique article, Harold Robinson explores how therapy can improve the interpersonal dynamics of a chamber music group in his “Healing the Dissonance Within: Ensemble Conflict is a Family Affair.” 30 Robinson’s article reveals how a person’s familial role (older brother, only child, etc.) influences the way they interact with others, especially in the intimate setting of a chamber group. While solving such problems requires the possible intervention of a therapist rather than a coach, the psychological insights which this article offers are worth consideration.

INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS: POSSIBLE COACHING ROLES

A current trend in recent pedagogical publications is to explore democracy or democratic leadership as the modus operandi for the chamber music coaching session. Resources of this type include an article by Mark Rudoff and two publications by Louis Hanzlick. Rudoff, professor of cello at Ohio State University in Columbus, OH asserts that a coach must make a “constitution” for each group, with clear guidelines for communication and how to treat other group members. 31 Rudoff makes no mention if an implemented constitution does work in practice. Hanzlick, professor of trumpet at University of Connecticut in Mansfield, CT, has also studied and expounded on the

application of democratic ideals in a chamber music setting in two works: his dissertation\(^\text{32}\) and an article in the *ITG Journal*.\(^\text{33}\) Hanzlick focuses on the specific dynamic between coach and students, taking the democratic principle beyond the inner workings of the group and applying it to the student-teacher dynamic. After having observed the coaching of two different high school chamber groups, Hanzlick reveals in his dissertation that a democratic learning environment is the most effective.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Coaches may find a wealth of practical information on rehearsal procedure in autobiographical or biographical materials about famous performing ensembles like the Beaux Arts Trio, the Guarneri Quartet and the Emerson Quartet. Though not directly related to coaching, discussions on the interpersonal dynamics of these professional ensembles are often engaging, humorous and enlightening. Coaches may also want to consult non-musical materials as well. For example, Phil Jackson’s book *Sacred Hoops* offers insight into the basic challenges of being a NBA basketball coach; that is, knowing how to convince highly driven individuals to regard teamwork more highly than personal achievement.\(^\text{34}\) Please see the bibliography for further examples.

This review of the literature reveals the relative scarcity of consolidated information on the art of coaching for the mixed chamber music ensemble. Those publications that do offer coaching techniques for the mixed ensemble have limited


\(^{34}\) Phil Jackson, *Sacred Hoops* , (New York, Hyperion: 2006).
content on rehearsal procedure and technique, interpersonal dynamics and coaching philosophy, and questionable applicability for the college-level ensemble.
CHAPTER III COACHING PROCEDURE:

GUIDING REHEARSAL PREPARATION

This first section titled “Guiding Rehearsal Preparation” concerns basic steps which ensembles must take in order to lay a good foundation before focusing on purely musical matters. Coaches may wish to discuss some of these issues with their students before the first ensemble rehearsal. These issues include Comparative Editions, Score Study, the Score in Rehearsal, and Rehearsal Tempi. Relevant musical examples recommended by the interviewees are included with commentary.

COMPARATIVE EDITIONS

When playing standard chamber music repertoire for the mixed ensemble, students often have the luxury of choosing from a variety of different editions. Some coaches believe that choice of edition is of the utmost importance; for others, the particular edition is less crucial, given a certain degree of musical maturity and stylistic understanding. Though not inclusive, the following table summarizes the interviewees’ editions of choice and those to approach with caution for frequently-encountered repertoire.
Table 3.1. Preferred editions for standard repertoire of the mixed chamber ensemble

<table>
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<th>PERIOD OR COMPOSER</th>
<th>EDITION</th>
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<td>Mozart</td>
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If students choose to use a less-preferred edition, coaches must make them aware of the associated problems with these editions, especially with works from the Classical era. For example, Lin brings up a stylistic inconsistency in the Peters editions of Beethoven:

Peters editions seems to always round out the edges. They take away all the subito things that Beethoven originally put in. Even though Beethoven never used the word ‘subito,’ he always liked to write a whole phrase in forte and then the next phrase in piano. That’s always in Henle edition, that’s how it is. And that seems to really go with what is reported to be his personality; his musical personality has this sort of shock-value. In Peters editions, very often you see a little diminuendo at the end, into the piano. So that is one very specific case that I feel Henle is more likely to be correct and Peters is probably wrong.35

In this instance, the editing renders the Peters edition inconsistent with the current scholarship about performance practice of Beethoven’s works. Likewise, the interviewees advised caution when using Schirmer editions, as they are quite heavily edited.

In other cases, one edition may be suitable for one style period but not for another, even if the edition is Urtext. Note that while interviewees indisputably

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35 Tao Lin, interview by Adriana Teodoro-Dier, tape recording, Miami, FL, February 8, 2013.
recommend Henle Urtext for German Romantic repertoire, the same does not follow for
Henle’s rendition of Classical. Posnak reports:

Very often, especially when you’re dealing with scores of the Classical era and
earlier, they [Henle editions] are very often full of erroneous markings, based
upon comparisons of the manuscript with the first edition, English edition, French
edition, etc., where choices are made based upon an incomplete understanding of
contemporaneous performance practice.36

A similar dichotomy of utility applies to the International edition: while most
interviewees would not recommend it for the German Romantic literature, most would
recommend International for Russian or French literature.

Additionally, once students have formed their own interpretation, Posnak
recommends that students consult the more “personalized” editions such as Schott or
those edited by Leonard Rose or Leopold Auer for additional ideas about phrasings,
bowings and so on.37 Having students compare and contrast a heavily edited edition with
an Urtext edition is also an interesting way to explore different musical possibilities.
Though some editions may be more reputable than others, the author would advocate that
coaches encourage their students to think critically when using any edition since printed
errors occur even in the most highly regarded editions.

While most interviewees prefer for students to use Urtext when possible, not all
believe that choice of edition is vital to a successful performance. Lin states the
following:

My personal opinion is that editions go with the time period. What’s considered a
good edition 50 years ago is sort of considered something that’s quite terrible
right now in present day. And then maybe in 20 years it will come back in fashion
again. It’s entirely possible because 50 years ago we all thought that Artur
Schnabel’s edition of Beethoven was something that’s brilliant and totally worth
studying. And today we completely worship the Urtext, with no edition from

36 Paul Posnak, interview by Adriana Teodoro-Dier, tape recording, Miami, FL, February 9, 2013.
37 Posnak interview, February 9, 2013.
anybody else. But who is to say that decades later, that trend might come back. People want to see individuality and individual input from so-called ‘great artists’ of the past. So I really think it could even be a generational thing.\textsuperscript{38}

Because of this, Lin does not mind when students work from non-Urtext editions. In a similar vein, Tocco cautions that Urtext editions sometimes encourage a stylistically-inappropriate literalism. To illustrate this point, he offers the following anecdote:

I remember once doing the [Franz] Schubert Eb Trio with two musicians in Germany and we were all playing from the same Henle edition which was the Urtext and in the first movement there’s a set of repeated notes that start out in the strings ‘yum, pa-pa-pa-pa-pum, pa-pa-pa-pa….’ And there are two measures of strings announcing this rhythm and then the piano comes with the theme \{\textit{sings the theme}\}. The strings started off ‘yum, pa-pa-pa-pum’ and the moment I came in, they started doing ‘yaaaah-daaah-daaah-daaah-daaaaaam-daaah-daaah-daaah-daaah’ \{\textit{with no separation between the notes}\}, the whole thing became like a leaded weight. I said, ‘What’s going on?’ ‘Well, in this edition, in our Urtext edition of Henle, there are two measures with dots and then the other measures don’t have dots.’\textsuperscript{39}

Example 3.1. F.Schubert, Trio no.2 in E\textsuperscript{b} major, op. 100, 1\textsuperscript{st} movement, mm. 48-51.

\begin{figure}[h]
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\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{38} Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
\textsuperscript{39} James Tocco, interview by Adriana Teodoro-Dier, tape recording, Cincinnati, OH, February 28, 2013.
Clearly a good edition does not compensate for an absence of stylistic understanding, especially for certain repertoire from the Baroque or Classical eras where the Urtext editions tend to have few to no articulation markings.

Likewise, a gifted musician may work from a “bad” score and still produce a highly-regarded interpretation. Tocco states:

On the other hand, great musicians like Schnabel and Serkin or Casals, musicians of the past, often had editions that we would consider inferior to work with. But they had the advantage of having years of experience and a whole tradition that was passed onto them. Not just through the music but through oral tradition that they got from their teachers that they got from their teachers. Eventually you go back to the source. So, editions are important but they’re not the be-all and end-all. 40

Lin shares a similar anecdote about Arthur Rubenstein, who apparently liked to work from Schirmer scores because they were inexpensive and easy to acquire. Lin argues,

So obviously somebody who is really gifted and has a great understanding of music can probably make any edition sound reasonable and good, just like they can make any piano sound nice. So for me that’s kind of another strike against this fidelity regarding editions.‘”41

However, there is a marked difference between the great artists of the past and current students who have access only to recordings and written descriptions of performance practice. To help students bridge this gap, some interviewees recommend that students develop their musical literacy before approaching the score. Eugene Pridonoff recounts from his own experience,

So if I were doing a piece of chamber music in [a certain] style, well, it’s not just going to be a matter of hearing the lines, I really have to have a sense of how this music works stylistically. So I have to study it, I have to listen to it; I have to listen to their orchestral works. You have to familiarize yourself with style... We

40 Tocco interview, February 28, 2013.
41 Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
have a very low musical literateness even amongst some of our advanced pianists. They don’t know the music beyond what they study.  

Few would disagree that students must understand the stylistic context of the piece in order to construct a viable interpretation. Harbaugh also recommends that students research not only the composer’s life but also the historical context of the piece. If students take time to augment their stylistic awareness and musical literacy before studying the score, they will then be able to make more stylistically-informed decisions once they have begun work on the piece itself.

With the exception of Lin, the interviewees strongly disapprove of students using internet editions, as the sources for these editions are often unknown or unreliable. Such sources are often unusable; a colleague of mine discovered that a foreign publishing company was deliberately printing editions with wrong notes and incorrect markings in order to avoid copyright or licensing fees. Certainly one would expect that those student musicians who are interested in authenticity are more selective as to their choice of editions. However, the increasing accessibility of inexpensive or free digital scores helps encourage students to choose the electronic option. Printed scores can be quite expensive and cumbersome to carry around, especially for those students who must travel internationally.

Coaches can encourage students to view buying scores as investing in their future, especially if the students are planning to perform the work in public. Rivers offers,

At some point you buy the score…I am not letting anybody get up on stage with a library copy or a photocopy. If this is good enough for you to want to put on a

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42 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff, interview by Adriana Teodoro-Dier, tape recording, Cincinnati, OH, February 28, 2013.
recital, this is something you will have for the rest of your life. So why wouldn’t you put out a little money and have this and you don’t have to buy it again?44

For the non-pianist, buying scores may seem excessive, since they pay for the full score and other parts besides their own. However, for pianists, having one’s own score with markings and fingerings is especially helpful for those occasions where the pianist must perform the work on short notice. If students are unwilling to purchase the scores, Posnak suggests a compromise: the students can print out the online scores, compare them to an Urtext edition from the school library and change all markings from the printed score to match the Urtext.45

As an additional consideration, although some coaches assert that “textual differences” between editions do not often occur, I have found the reverse to be the case in my experiences as a student. I once worked with a quintet on a standard work where all used the Henle edition except the violinist, who was using a heavily edited edition (the publisher was not listed on the part) since the Henle violin part had been lost. Rehearsal was often spent checking and debating the expressive markings in the violin part, many of which were inconsistent with the Henle edition. I have also encountered a similar problem when playing a Brahms violin and piano sonata. The non-Urtext violin part was significantly different from the Henle which I was using; placement of ritardandi and other expressive markings were not consistent between the two. Though my colleagues and I might have found comparing the differing editions interesting outside of rehearsal, the time we spent dealing with inconsistencies from different scores detracted from more important ensemble issues.

44 Sandra Rivers, interview by Adriana Teodoro-Dier, tape recording, Cincinnati, OH, February 4, 2013.
45 Posnak interview, February 9, 2013.
SCORE STUDY

Most of the interviewees believe that studying the score outside of rehearsal is essential for understanding the work as a whole. Though busy students can easily neglect score study, several of the interviewees report that high caliber players will take time to know the score and figure out how their part relates to the whole. Tocco states:

When I’m coaching, I do insist that all the players look at and study the score. It’s very important because with few exceptions, the great body of chamber music literature, even string quartets and string trios, were written by pianists... So pianists have, as kind of a general rule, not only the horizontal concept of the music, they have a very strong vertical orientation.46

While pianists may be more used to thinking about multiple lines at once, other instrumentalists may be less accustomed to doing so. Posnak offers the following explanation:

They’re used to orchestra parts, they’re used to playing parts, and they don’t very often have the kind of training that we [pianists] do. We constantly have a score in front of us, whether it’s solo literature or not, and they don’t. So it’s less common to find an instrumentalist who has the background and knowledge and score comprehension, knowing how to read the score as we do. So we have to be aware of that and be helpful.47

Encouraging the instrumentalists to study the score rather than simply learning their own part is one way that the coach can help develop the instrumentalists’ ability to play chamber music. Both Tocco and Rivers offer one explanation a coach may give to the students to demonstrate the importance of score study: like an actor in a play, the chamber musician must understand his or her part in the context of the work. An effective actor reads the entire script and studies how each character interacts with the others. In chamber music, the same applies. Tocco states, “You have to know what’s going on around you, to know what the other people are saying and how you are expected to

46 Tocco interview, February 28, 2013.
47 Posnak interview, February 9, 2013.
respond. It’s the same thing with a part in chamber music. You have to understand the motivation behind your response.”

Another strategy which coaches might endorse is for the students to listen to recordings while studying the score. For example, Tocco states, “If it’s a standard work, I certainly would not be against listening to a recording, especially a recording by recognized…experts in that particular genre or style.” This strategy is most beneficial if the students have already started rehearsing the piece, and most importantly, have begun to form their own interpretation. However, the majority of interviewees caution against depending on recordings to learn a piece, as learning through imitation provides only a superficial kind of knowledge. I have worked with colleagues who relied heavily on learning from recordings, and they tended to be very inflexible when playing chamber music.

The “to listen or not to listen” debate is just as divided in the chamber ensemble setting as for solo students regarding the initial exposure to a piece. Some disagreement as to the merits of using a recording for the first exposure to a piece persists among the interviewees. Both Tocco and Rivers consider early listening to recordings prior to working on the piece permissible to form an impression of the general style, especially if a student has never heard a particular genre of music before. However, Lin argues that even this initial hearing may be detrimental to the learning process:

If you don’t look at the score, then there’s no foundation. Then you will think everything’s good and you will almost instinctively start imitating. That’s not because you want to or not, that’s human nature…And the problem is that once your ears start to get used to that process and used to that sound, it’s extremely difficult to readjust your ear to kind of go back to hearing nothing and go from

48 Tocco interview, February 28, 2013.
49 Tocco interview, February 28, 2013.
scratch again. So that’s like a double effort and it prolongs the whole learning process.\textsuperscript{50}

In other words, the initial hearing strongly influences the students’ internal audiation and conception of the piece. If the students are relatively inexperienced and do not yet possess the ability to distinguish between a recording of high artistic merit and a second-rate recording, the problem compounds especially since students have access to many electronic recordings, artistically valid or otherwise.

However, one can infer from the statements of the interviewees that listening to recordings is a useful part of the learning process as long as one has taken the time to learn the score first. In such cases, the coach can recommend certain historical, or in Posnak’s words, “benchmark,” recordings to guide the students’ listening. As discussed earlier, if a student lacks an understanding of a specific style, Eugene Pridonoff recommends that the student listen to other non-piano works by the same composer such as symphonies or string quartets, as well the other works within the same genre.\textsuperscript{51} For example, if working on one of Beethoven’s violin and piano sonatas, the student could listen to and become familiar with the other nine. Even if the students avoid listening to the piece on which they are working, they will have the benefit of absorbing the stylistic context of the piece. Encouraging this type of musical literacy is a constructive way for students to take advantage of the availability of recordings without becoming dependent on them.

\textsuperscript{50} Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
\textsuperscript{51} Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 28, 2013.
THE SCORE IN REHEARSAL

From a practical standpoint, the interviewees agree that ensemble members ought to work from the same edition whenever possible. This way some members are not referring to letters, some to measure numbers and so on. Having uniformly synchronized places of reference is absolutely essential for efficient rehearsals and coachings. Correspondingly, some coaches request that students write the corresponding letters or measure numbers into the coach’s score to save time in coachings.

Even though the strategy of writing consistent measure numbers into the score is simple, encouraging students to do so introduces a good professional habit which will serve them well when playing engagements with particularly limited rehearsal time. As Chertock describes, for some professional chamber engagements, the musicians have far less rehearsal time than in a university setting, especially if the musicians have to travel to the venue. On average, the group might have two to three rehearsals and a short dress rehearsal for a two-hour program. In that case, making preparations to maximize every second of rehearsal time is essential. Also, professional chamber music musicians may often encounter the scenario where they are asked to play a piece with an ensemble using a different edition from the one to which they are accustomed. This scenario also occurs quite frequently with piano students, especially collaborative majors. If the player already owns the score, he or she may want to emulate Tocco’s practice of asking for the ensemble’s edition before the first rehearsal so that he can copy the letters or measure numbers in his part.

52 Michael Chertock, interview by Adriana Teodoro-Dier, tape recording, Cincinnati, OH, February 28, 2013.
53 Tocco interview, February 28, 2013.
Prior to the first rehearsal, Posnak also recommends that the students consult the score to systematically double-check for consistency between the score and their part.\textsuperscript{54}

Often, dynamics, phrasing or articulation markings are present in one but not the other.

Tocco offers a possible explanation:

And the important thing is that, with a composer-pianist like Beethoven, Haydn, even Schubert, even Chopin, often things got written by the composer into the piano part that didn’t make it into the string parts. I am speculating that, in the practical experience of playing this music with colleagues, the composer might think, “Ah! This has to be \textit{piano}!” So he might write the dynamic in the piano part, and neglect to write it in the other parts.

Sometimes in Baroque works, the reverse occurs: the parts will contain phrasing and expressive markings but not the score. Additionally, Posnak highly recommends that students consult the score to write cues in their parts as well. He states,

It’s very important for \textit{all} of the students, not just the pianist who has the full score, to study the score and to write in the cues in their parts before the first rehearsal if they can get pre-prepared….There are certain places where you just need to know that you have to watch out where you’re coming in on an off-beat and you have to know the violinist’s cue because there’s no way of really counting that safely… You can save yourselves a lot of time. Where there are counter-rhythms, where you have off-beat entrance or entrances, I even use eyeglasses and write “L.U.,” look up.\textsuperscript{55}

By extension, Katz advocates that pianists anticipate the kinds of cues their partners might give and practice looking up from their music for the cue, even before they rehearse with their partners. He writes,

With violin, viola and some cellists who prefer to sit to the right of the piano, we must use peripheral vision or turn our heads to the right…This alteration of physical focus can upset our applecart significantly, create a temporary loss of keyboard sense and seriously threaten our accuracy.”\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{54} Posnak interview, February 9, 2013.
\textsuperscript{55} Posnak interview, February 9, 2013.
\textsuperscript{56} Katz, 260.
Some pianists have a habit of watching their hands on the keyboard or using their eyes to gauge leaps; as Katz suggests, looking up from the keyboard momentarily to watch for a cue may unsettle this type of player. Katz advises pianists to “identify these musical moments requiring visual cues, analyze how she will need to behave physically, and practice, always assuming the worst.”

Though time-consuming for the individual, taking the time to perform these preparatory steps saves time in the long run because the coordination will happen more quickly.

Coaches may want to encourage students to bring a copy of the full score to rehearsal when possible. Steinmetz advocates obtaining a full score for all ensemble members stating, “This is an amazing time saver; it’s odd that not every group does this.”

Chertock, Rivers, and Tocco report that professional musicians will generally bring a full score (or at least a miniature) to rehearsals for their own reference, even when playing in a large group. In certain circumstances such as duos, playing directly from the full score in rehearsal can also promote a more complete understanding of the piece for the non-pianist members of the ensemble. Tao Lin reports that some professional string players do prefer to rehearse duos in this fashion:

…In rehearsals, they either bring the piano part with them or they literally play off the piano part… And the thing is, they don’t need to turn every page, they turn when they can. But the thing is, just to play off that score they know it better…I will never say that they know the piano part better than the pianists do but they really know it extremely well.

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57 Katz, 260.
58 Steinmetz, 30.
60 Rivers interview, February 4, 2013.
61 Tocco interview, February 28, 2013.
62 Lin, interview, February 8, 2013.
One might argue that playing from the score allows the instrumentalist to experience their part within the structural context of the piece firsthand, as Rivers and Tocco describe with their actor analogy. Lin states, “… [Playing from the score] gives them a much more organic feeling of the piece so that every entrance, there’s a point to it. It’s not just, ‘My time is now and I’m here!’ No, because it comes from somewhere and it goes into something else.”

Villarubia states,

> It will help if all players work from a full score. Too often students become engrossed in reading notes and do not listen to other players. A full score is awkward to read at first but gradually students will understand how their line fits with other players. In the process they will learn the music as well as their parts.

Rehearsing from a full score facilitates coordination between the visual and aural experience, stimulating a more complete awareness for the non-pianists. The literal experience of rehearsal from a full score will benefit those with a visual orientation, as seeing all the parts on the page can actually encourage them to pay more attention to their partners. For example, a colleague of mine with a highly developed visual memory claims to “hear the parts better” after studying scores. Having the other instrumentalist play from the piano part is also an effective strategy for vertical alignment issues, especially in places of rhythmic complexity or even different subdivisions. For larger ensembles where frequent page turns render this exercise logistically difficult, the players will benefit from rehearsing full score for shorter sections, especially in rhythmically complex passages.

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63 Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
REHEARSAL TEMPI

When learning a piece, many of the interviewees encourage the students to practice slower than performance tempo. In particular, Posnak urges the following:

First of all, I beat the drum until it breaks about rehearsing slowly. When you’re starting out a piece, there is so much information to take in and so many problems to solve, so many decisions to make, and it’s not physically comfortable yet. The tendency is to try to play things up to tempo as soon as possible. And it’s a big mistake. You should be able to think in the tempo of the piece and play it slowly both individually and together until it starts to flow naturally. Then you find the places that are more difficult and obstructive and you practice to equalize them.66

Using slow practice in an initial rehearsal gives students time to process how their parts line up vertically with the others. Additionally, students can gauge their tempo with a metronome, provided the metronome has sufficient volume. Posnak states:

… It’s good to have a work tempo, that you say, ‘Let’s do this as a work tempo and then see if next week we can bump that up. Let’s have a goal for two metronome markings.’ It’s smart, actually, and very often leads to a much better and quicker development of a performance. It gives you a finite goal.67

Students can perform this metronome-monitored practice either in a group or individually. Harbaugh reports, “This [individual practice] procedure saves hours of rehearsal time.”68 As with solo practice, students must still keep the rhythmic intensity and flow intact while rehearsing slowly; playing without rhythmic impulse will not yield the desired results at a faster tempo.

While taking the time to rehearse a chamber piece slowly is important while in school, coaches may want to inform students that such a luxury does not always occur in a professional setting. As a professional chamber musician, Chertock reports having far less time to rehearse compared to his experiences as a student. He says:

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66 Posnak interview, February 9, 2013.
67 Posnak interview, February 9, 2013.
It is anticipated that you’re going to show up at the first rehearsal pretty much ready. If the performance was that moment you’d be ready to go and all the work should be focused on getting the group together… We’ll say, “Let’s read it.” But it doesn’t mean [read it]; it means play it together for the first time. That was a big adjustment, because I was used to student groups where it was sort of accepted the first couple of rehearsals you didn’t really have to have your act together. But a lot of times in professional groups, you’re coming from out of town two days or a day before the concert so it’s sort of expected that you will know your part.69

Though a coach can still ask the students to practice slowly, the coach can still make students aware of this particular difference in rehearsal requirements and expectations. As a preparatory exercise for advanced students, a coach might assign that students learn and perform a specific work in a limited amount of time. Posnak finds standard violin or cello show-pieces suitable for this exercise.

Elisabeth Pridonoff, Tocco, and Lin all attest to the benefit of using slow practice in sections of rhythmic complexity or syncopation, such as in works by Igor Stravinsky70,71,72. Likewise, Posnak reports that slow practice helps with difficult cross-rhythms such as four against three. Elisabeth Pridonoff adds that occasional slow practice of fast passages can help ensemble members listen and gel with each other’s parts more closely.73 Specifically, Harbaugh recommends that groups “reduce the tempo of the passage by percentages, e.g., ‘Let’s try this passage at seventy-five percent of concert tempo.’”74 In cases where a group may want to have sharper rhythm, the group can take a slower tempo yet still play with rhythmic intensity. Doing this work for even a small section can dramatically improve the overall security of the piece. Posnak explains,

69 Chertock interview, February 28, 2013.
70 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 2, 2013.
71 Tocco interview, February 28, 2013.
72 Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
73 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 2, 2013.
In some of the great Beethoven sonatas...for example, the famous Scherzo in the Spring sonata where it’s all about syncopation...it’s very good to play [sings in a slow tempo] to really lock it in. But there are other reasons to go slow: one is to lock something in so that it has that sharp, agogic, rhythmic dynamism...And the way to practice that is with tremendous rhythmic exactitude at a slower tempo, and then you can metronome it up.\textsuperscript{75}

Example. 3.2. L. van Beethoven, Sonata no. 5 for piano and violin in F major, op. 24,\textsuperscript{3}rd movement, mm. 9-16.

Once the piece is learned, some interviewees did not necessarily advocate practicing entire pieces slowly, as too much slow practice can invite boredom and possibly cause certain members to become disengaged with the process. Tocco reports that if even one person loses focus and becomes bored, the practicing becomes counterproductive.\textsuperscript{76} Posnak offers the following:

The creative way to do that it is not necessary to play whole pieces slowly, but to pick out those spots or areas that are thornier and to practice them slowly. Take it

\textsuperscript{75} Posnak interview, February 9, 2013.
\textsuperscript{76} Tocco interview, February 28, 2013.
back a little bit just to center yourselves. Because sometimes, you just have to let certain things go in performance.77

From personal experience, I have also found that practicing slowly in close proximity to the performance makes for a careful but listless experience and that Posnak’s strategy works much more effectively. If certain group members would feel more secure practicing larger sections slowly, coaches can suggest that students engage in slow motion practice. Eugene Pridonoff suggests the following:

The danger is that the somewhat slower, and this goes for any slower-than-performance tempo, if you play it at that slow tempo mechanically, it’s pointless. So even very slow practice, the best and most productive slow practice is a slow-motion practice. You do exactly the choreography and the feeling… Control is not questioning every motion that you do, but moving freely.78

Kinesthetic learners and those are more easily bored may even enjoy the challenge of maintaining their focus and control during slow motion practice.

Some of the interviewees find rehearsing at multiple tempi helpful, to anticipate differences between performance and rehearsal tempi. For example, experiencing an adrenaline rush during a performance may cause a performer to play faster than planned. While not all players may react in this fashion, one can anticipate that it may happen to a fellow group member. In chamber music, one person’s nerves may have dire consequences for the others. According to Rivers, “In chamber music, you have to be so prepared. With yourself you sort of know what you’re going to do…. But with some other people, you don’t know… this one freaks out and the rest of you go, ‘Ok, that’s what it is...’”79 I have found that for wind players especially, performance tempi is crucial; if another member of the ensemble begins too fast or too slow, the wind player may end up

77 Posnak interview, February 9, 2013.
78 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff, interview by Adriana Teodoro-Dier, tape recording, Cincinnati, OH, February 2, 2013.
79 Rivers interview, February 4, 2013.
struggling through the piece. One possible strategy is for the coach to encourage the
group to prepare an approximate area of tempo rather a single metronome marking. This
way, the group approaches the performance with the confidence of feeling prepared in
case of a slightly different tempo. If the players can actively focus on being in control of
the tempo rather than the tempo controlling them, this strategy may be even more
successful. To that end, Rivers suggests:

    Definitely be very much in control [during rehearsal] because…you can’t simulate the feeling of when you’re on stage and there’s that pressure. You can’t make yourself nervous in a practice room…When you’re on stage, the audience is there, the lights, you just can’t simulate it so you just have to learn what the feeling is: “I’m in control.”

GUIDING MUSICAL COMMUNICATION

This second section titled, “Guiding Musical Communication” contains strategies
and techniques which a coach may use to address the different aspects of coordinating an
ensemble. Building on the interviewees’ references to specific oeuvres from the
repertoire, musical examples are mentioned. Please refer to Appendix A for a more
complete and rigorous discussion of musical examples.

PULSE and FLEXIBLE TIME

One of the potentially challenging areas of coaching chamber music is helping
students feel and play the basic pulse together, even before they can incorporate flexible
time. Chertock has observed that, “in chamber music, the one with the strongest sense of
rhythm and pulse dictates a lot of things while playing.”

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80 Rivers interview, February 4, 2013.
81 Cherock interview, February 28, 2013.
Pridonoff asserts that an essential component of coaching is to help an ensemble unify their basic sense of pulse. She states,

I find that 99.9% of what goes wrong with performance, rehearsals, whatever, [when] I coach kids, is the fact that it’s not that they don’t feel it together, [it’s that] they don’t have the same pulse...It’s very difficult when, especially with young kids when everyone gets together and they feel it, they don’t know what they’re feeling, they’re just feeling. And this one feels, “oh I love that note” and the other is, “wait a minute, I don’t have that note, I have it over here” so that everybody’s pushing and pulling and you get this chaos. And I think that that’s why it’s important to know where the pulse is.82

Though establishing a group pulse may seem like a basic exercise, the benefits for the group are numerous. First, establishing the group pulse provides a solid foundation from which the group can depart in order to incorporate areas of flexible time. Second, the coach providing a simple, singular focus draws the attention of the ensemble members away from their individual parts and more towards the communal effort. Eugene Pridonoff colorfully describes:

People let go of their ego and just kind of fall into the basic pulse of the music. Maybe it’s not subtle, maybe it’s not sophisticated, maybe it’s not that nuanced but again, starting with the basic. You’re outlining on the painting, you’re outlining the mountains, the trees, and the skyline-- you’re not getting all of the shadings at first. You’re getting basics, proportionally. And then you fill a little more and a little more. Then the subtleties start.83

To synchronize the group pulse, Elisabeth Pridonoff sings along with the ensemble, a strategy which may be very effective for aural learners. By contrast, Eugene Pridonoff conducts the group, a strategy well-suited for visual learners. To recreate feeling a communal pulse in rehearsal, coaches might suggest that players employ one of Steinmetz’s strategies and “designate one player to conduct by tapping a foot during a

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82 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview by Adriana Teodoro-Dier, tape recording, Cincinnati OH, February 1, 2013.
83 Eugene and Elisabeth Pridonoff interview, February 1, 2013.
This way of generating pulse from within the ensemble coordinates the players on multiple levels: visual communication, collectively feeling the pulse while still maintaining aural awareness. Beyond synchronizing the basic pulse, in more complex literature, the coach can help the ensemble pinpoint places to feel pulse together, especially if the pulse changes or is different than the superficial notation suggests.

Having helped to establish a strong sense of pulse, the coach can then work with the ensemble members on coordinating flexible time, namely *ritardandi*, *accelerandi*, *allargandi*. Some of the interviewees recommend conducting, singing, and playing. If there are two pianos in the room, the coach may play along on a second piano. Loft asserts, “the most direct and effective path is to sing or play the line, to demonstrate how it should sound.”\(^{85}\) For more experienced players or those who are kinesthetically oriented, the experience of being guided once through the flexible time may be sufficient. However, as Lin describes, the danger in employing teaching-by-rote methods as described is that when the group is away from the coach, recreating the feeling may prove to be difficult in rehearsal or perhaps even in performances.\(^{86}\) Following a coach who is singing or conducting does not require the student to analyze the exact pacing of the passage. Instead, the student may form only a superficial impression of how the passage “goes.”

Alternatively, as Posnak, Lin, and Steimetz advocate, another good pedagogical strategy for negotiating areas of flexible time is to have the students count out loud in subdivisions.\(^{87,88,89}\) For example, Posnak refers to the first movement of Johannes

\(^{84}\) Steinmetz, 32.
\(^{85}\) Loft, 237.
\(^{86}\) Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
\(^{87}\) Posnak interview, February 9, 2013.
Brahms’ Sonata no. 1 in G major for Piano and Violin, op. 78, as the movement contains certain instances where counting out loud helps to clarify the proportional tempo reduction. This strategy allows the group to maintain their autonomy in preparation for the performance with precise, consistent rhythmic coordination. Posnak explains, “[Counting out loud] is very important because if you do it right you can get the most extended ritard and rubato, for example, and it just sounds natural and perfect. It’s what you call that ‘delicious distortion.’”90 If counting feels unnatural or uncomfortable to the student, Lin offers the following argument:

Actually nothing is more liberating than counting because counting can be the most flexible thing there is. Because there is no flexibility unless you count. It’s one of those paradoxes. If you only have freedom, liberty, they are unstructured and don’t go with character; they don’t go with what’s written. So that is what I think of as superficial freedom and it can’t withstand scrutiny.91

In the same manner that establishing the basic pulse can secure the basic collective rhythm, employing counting can produce a tangible way for students to perceive and execute flexible time in a coaching as well as in a rehearsal setting. Lin advises that students must take care when practicing on their own to count with musical stress and inflection, as counting mechanically is counterproductive.92 If students still feel uncomfortable counting out loud, the coach can have one of the players lead the area of flexible time by playing constant subdivisions, an exercise which members of the Cassatt String Quartet use in their coachings.93

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88 Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
89 Steinmetz, 32.
90 Posnak interview, February 9, 2013.
91 Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
92 Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
One particular mannerism which many interviewees encounter is the tendency of one player to insert a *ritardando* at the end of his or her material, though the true structural conclusion may happen later. The reasons for doing this may vary; Chertock suggests that the musicians who do so are simply unaware of the larger structure.94 Eugene Pridonoff has found that some students will perform *ritardandi* at the end of every phrase in an effort to play musically, and that pianists tend to be the biggest transgressors. He states, “…Playing chamber is such a great learning experience because all of a sudden, just feeling it the way you want and playing it isn’t good enough. Which of course pianists are guilty of that more than anybody.”95 In my observation, both pianists and instrumentalists can have this tendency and unfortunately, they tend to be unaware of this mannerism. However, if the coach can point out the tendency or suggest practicing with a metronome, the students can easily break the habit.

**LISTENING: CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PIANIST**

Coaches may want to teach specific pianistic skills required for collaboration with other instruments. These skills involve how to blend, how to anticipate and solve balance issues, and how to negotiate problematic repertoire. While most of these chamber music skills for pianists involve do a certain technical know-how, these skills are contingent on the pianists’ ability to listen. The chamber music repertoire for the mixed ensemble contains countless places of pianistic and collaborative difficulty. The musical examples presented in this section were recommended by the interviewees, though many other examples can demonstrate the interviewee’s points equally well.

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94 Chertock interview, February 28, 2013.
95 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 28, 2013.
Coaches may encounter pianists who have strong solo skills but may struggle with listening and responding to the other members in the group. The ability to play chamber music is not an innate ability for every pianist. Eugene Pridonoff recalls a frequent guest of Marlboro Music Festival saying, “Playing chamber music is not like playing solo. We have many fine pianists who come to Marlboro, wonderful soloists, but they can’t play chamber music. They don’t know how to listen to other people. They only can listen to themselves.” He elaborates,

Even not terribly advanced string players, they’re playing in orchestra and by necessity, they’re always listening to other parts. We spend most of our time alone. So pianists generally have a harder time with that than other instrumentalists. And then you even see, when I coach the groups, usually at least the string players have played in some quartets, so they get used to listening to each other. It’s like they’ve learned that language from birth.

Lin adds,

It’s hard to listen to ourselves...[Piano is] more of a mechanical instrument than other instruments, so we have less of a personal contact with it. So we are always imagining what we want to hear and not what’s really coming out. But in chamber music, you’re forced into listening to what’s actually happening since you’re not the only one playing.

Radiushina cites “a lack of experience or good guidance” as a possible reason for students having difficulty making the transition from solo to chamber. She also recounts,

There are also some instances when very well-established and wonderful musicians who are mostly soloists, get accused of playing like soloists when they do chamber music. A lot of times, I find that actually it may not be necessarily the case; it is just how they hear the music, how they hear their own instrument and, let’s say, in terms of dynamics, of what their ideal sound is.

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96 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 28, 2013.
98 Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
100 Radiushina interview, February 10, 2013.
To solve this problem, Lin suggests that the coach demonstrate, stating, “Once the ear is able to pick up the difference, the change comes pretty quickly.” However, a coach may have to exercise patience, as Lin adds,

But very often what you will find is that students will not be able to hear the difference [after a teacher demonstrates] because they have such a strong inner hearing that they really think they have already heard it. Except that what they heard is imaginary, it’s not actually coming out. So there’s this distance between reality and the imaginary. To bridge that gap sometimes takes some time.

In addition to coachings, rehearsals and careful preparation of one’s own part, pianists can incorporate certain activities into their individual practice sessions to improve their listening skills. The interviewees suggested doing the following while playing the piano part: singing the instrumental lines; hearing the multiple instrumental parts internally; or if possible, incorporating the instrumental part into the piano part similar to the way one might practice a fugue.

Though not all chamber musicians choose to do so, young pianists may want to explore ways to modify sound production when playing with certain instruments because the piano’s naturally percussive sound production can interfere with their collaborator’s legato lines. When playing chamber music with string players, one particular challenge for the pianist is to simulate their collaborators’ approach to legato, in addition to the basic difficulty of creating legato on a percussive instrument. In an interview with David Blum, Menachem Pressler, recommends that the pianist either rephrase a passage or reduce the directness of attack to help simulate the string legato. He states, “I try not to attack the keys suddenly, but to have the wrist come down into the instrument; the hammer itself then comes down at a controlled speed, slower than usual, and that

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102 Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
eliminates the percussive quality.”\textsuperscript{103} My own teachers have helped me to achieve a similar result using arm weight and a slower attack with the fingers beginning on the key. Pressler also advocates using a “Debussy pedal,” which he describes as “…a precise degree of release that is not quite complete, that breathes with the musical line without breaking it.”\textsuperscript{104} By “opening the piano” with the pedal even slightly, the piano sound becomes immediately much less-percussive and closer to the string sound. This same opened, “singing” sound also creates a beautiful effect with woodwind or brass instruments in lyrical passages. At the same time, pianists and coaches may want to explore the level of legato touches required. For example, certain passages where fast moving subdivisions provide harmonic filler, a non-legato articulation with pedal can also create a legato effect.

One particular concern for pianists when playing chamber music is to avoid overwhelming other instruments. Though a seemingly simple solution is to ask the pianist to lower the dynamics, balance problems cannot be solved with modification of dynamics alone. Oftentimes, the pianist can quickly solve the balance issue through using a different color or rendering the texture differently. However, the volume control required for playing chamber music does diverge from the volume control for solo. One skill which is useful for chamber music pianists to cultivate is careful modulation of the pedal. Of course, the pedaling will depend on the repertoire and on the relative projection of the other collaborators. However, in general, pianists playing chamber music must be sensitive to the way their pedaling influences the balance, as Chertock cautions that “the

\textsuperscript{103} Nicholas Delbanco, \textit{The Beaux Arts Trio} (NY: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1985), 211.
\textsuperscript{104} Delbanco, 210.
pedal accumulates a lot of sound.” Rivers and the Pridonoffs all agree that oftentimes a lack of clarity can create the illusion of increased volume. Rivers states that the pianist can better control the balance in the following way:

It can be how discreet you are using your pedal, cutting down the volume, just being more articulate, having a clearer sound, so it doesn’t sound “rrrrrr” like this…That always sounds like it’s getting louder and it might not be. But if it sounds muddy, people just assume it’s going to cover someone…If you’re cleaner, it’s not going to cover anything. I think it’s a perception.

Often, modulating the pedal (fluttering) or using half-pedal in places of thicker texture can create a sustained effect without becoming overly loud. Lin also claims that “heavy-handed” playing can cover up other players’ sound. In his words:

Sometimes… people tend to play notes instead of patterns. When you have a group of notes that’s obvious in a certain technical pattern, then it’s the effect of the whole pattern that the composer’s trying to get through, even though it’s still written in individual notes…But, especially with the better-trained pianists, the more likely it’s going to happen, unfortunately. It’s that they are so well-trained; their fingers are so independent that they automatically approach it, not literally as finger-exercise, with this inner desire to project each note evenly, independently and clearly, you know. But that’s exactly what should not be heard because you when hear so many notes, it becomes noise and it becomes very dense and that’s actually what covers [other instruments].

In general, Elisabeth Pridonoff points out that in certain works, thickly-textured passages in the piano can easily overwhelm lighter-timbre instruments. For example, Claude Franck’s Sonata in A major for violin and piano features many instances where contrapuntally complex textures are to be played under a lightly-scored instrumental line, often at extremely quiet dynamic levels. In Francis Poulenc’s Trio pour piano, hautbois et bassoon, the pianist must use discretion with dynamics and balance between the hands,

105 Chertock interview, February 28, 2013.
107 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 2, 2013.
109 Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
in order not to overwhelm the lighter-timbre instruments. Similarly, Sergei Prokofiev’s Sonata for flute and piano op. 94 (or the violin version Op. 94a contains places where the left hand writing and registration can easily cover the flute or violin melody if the pianist is not attentive to this problem. Again, please refer to Appendix A for additional discussion of these examples.

One way in which a pianist can avoid overpowering his or her partner is simply to tone down the right hand; in other words, to play with less projection in the right hand. This strategy is good to use with pianists who have more experience playing solo repertoire and may have difficulty understanding how to balance their texture within a chamber group. Elisabeth Pridonoff states,

As a soloist…one of the biggest issues is that your right hand is the main power. And it has the melody, it is what constantly needs to be projected and brought forth. As a chamber musician, many times…the violin part or occasionally other instruments has that role…So you have to use that right hand to blend in and allow them to go on top. [Then] you support then and follow their line.  

This strategy is appropriate especially if the right hand features a repeated chord texture in a naturally louder register of the piano (e.g. the bass or the middle range) as in the opening of the third movement of Prokofiev’s Sonata op. 94. Furthermore, the pianist must also be especially careful if the right hand plays in unison with the instrumental line, as in the end of the same movement.

Coaches can help pianists become aware of specific compositional devices which pose potential balance problems. For example, coaches must teach pianists to be sensitive to places where the instrumental melody crosses under the accompanimental piano texture, as in the second movement of the Franck sonata. The pianist must allow the instrumental melody to project, despite the dense piano writing which surrounds the

melody. Pianists must also be aware of how special effects such as melodic *pizzicati* or harmonics limit and therefore determine the compound dynamic. In order that the *pizzicati* or harmonics can be heard, the pianist must play more quietly or transparently, as in the first and third movements of Poulenc’s *Sonate pour violon et piano*.

As a general observation, according to Posnak and Elisabeth Pridonoff, Classical period repertoire played on the modern piano presents balance problems due to the more powerful sound of the modern piano. Composers who wrote for the early fortepiano often relied on texture to create volume and momentum. However, the same texture rendered on a modern piano can quickly become heavy and overpowering, as in the second movement from Beethoven’s Trio no. 5 in E♭ major for piano, violin and cello, or as Elisabeth Pridonoff mentions, in Johann Nepomuk Hummel’s woodwind trios. Coaches can help pianists counteract this problem by helping the pianists discover ways in which to lighten the texture: with voicing, color, pedaling, rhythmic grouping or articulation. Moreover, Eugene Pridonoff states that the bass on a modern piano can often overwhelm the texture in Classical period chamber works. As such, pianists must be especially careful when playing trios by Joseph Haydn, as the left hand often doubles the cello line. For this particular repertoire, Chertock and Pressler recommend that the pianist play the bass notes lightly in order to let the cello line come out. Again, please see Appendix A for a more rigorous discussion.

Though the Romantic repertoire usually adapts more easily to the modern piano, many of interviewees consistently reported that certain cello sonatas are difficult to

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111 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 2, 2013.
112 Posnak interview, February 9, 2013.
113 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 28, 2013.
115 Delbanco, 212.
balance. These examples include: Franck’s Sonata in A major (transcription from the violin); Brahms’ Sonata no. 2 in F major for cello and piano, op. 99; Frederick Chopin’s Sonata for cello and piano in G minor, op. 65; and Sergei Rachmaninoff’s Sonata in G minor for cello and piano, op. 19. The balance problems with these sonatas stem from the combination of piano-heavy writing with an instrument that is easy to cover: specifically when complex textures in the bass register of the piano threaten to cover the cello in its lowest, least-projecting register.

When teaching the aforementioned cello and piano repertoire, coaches may encounter students who insist that central focus of the piece is the cello, and that the pianist ought to assume a deferential role. However, as in the above examples, though pianists must always be aware of the total dynamic of individual textures, the cello and piano contain equally important material. Furthermore, the profile of the cello line is sometimes coloristic rather than melodic. Lin shares the following sentiments regarding the Rachmaninoff and the Chopin cello sonatas:

...I reject the idea that the pianist should try to try to play under the cello as much as possible because I think that’s actually against the intent of the piece. If it’s a strong piece, you just have to play strong and if there are places that the piano will inevitably cover the cello a bit, it might even be the composer’s intention. Because if the cello line is not that significant and if the piano line is so extravagantly written, then the piano is probably what needs to be heard…I’ve heard many a performance of these pieces where the pianists just try their best to hide behind the cello…The whole piece loses purpose, like, ‘what is the cello doing? There’s no support--just this one single thin line trying to hold up this whole big piece.’116

Along similar lines, some coaches believe that the standard Romantic string trio repertoire demands assertive, non-deferential playing from the pianist. Tocco describes this more “confrontational” approach when playing trios:

116 Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
But a piano trio is a different matter, not Mozart or Haydn necessarily, but from Beethoven on, the piano trio is an unusual combination because it’s a combination for three virtuoso instruments, three individuals. The whole tension of the music comes from, if I can put it this way, the competitive nature of the trio, you know, where one instrument tries to upstage the other one. And for that reason, especially when playing piano trios, the string players need to play out much more than they would normally.117

Luckily for the pianist, Chertock attests, “In a lot of big Romantic [trio] literature, about 10% of the time the piano and the violin are probably going to…threaten the cello.”118 In other words, the pianist can definitely assume a less deferential role. However, the pianist will still want to look out for problematic scoring such as unison passages and other aforementioned issues. For example, Isidore Cohen of the Beaux Arts Trio mentions Robert Schumann’s Trio in G major for piano, violin and cello, op.110 as a work where thicker scoring in the piano can overwhelm the string parts in their lower registers119.

Another factor which can influence balance is the height of the piano lid. In solo performance, the lid of the piano is always raised; however, the performance convention for chamber music is neither consistent nor well-established. Though some performance or even rehearsal acoustics as well as certain pianos may not permit this, an overwhelming majority of the interviewees find a closed lid mutes the true sound of the piano. Elisabeth Pridonoff states,

I think there’s a misconception of the piano lid. If you keep the piano lid down, the sound is more muted. It…has nothing to do with [playing] louder or softer, it has to do with the quality and the focus of the sound. When the lid is up, then you can focus your sound.120

However, many young instrumentalists may resist having the lid open, as the visual effect of the open lid causes them to believe that the “amplified” piano will compromise their

117 Tocco interview, February 28, 2013.
118 Chertock interview, February 28, 2013.
119 Delbanco, 213
120 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 2, 2013.
own sound. Ironically, if the clarity of the piano sound is compromised with a lowered lid, the pianist may actually feel compelled to play louder, which actually increases the chance of overpowering their collaborators. Coaches can encourage groups to experiment with different heights, bearing in mind that at the professional level, many instrumentalists as well as pianists insist on having the piano lid fully open. Lin states:

I always find that the truly experienced, first of all, have their own projection, whether it is sound or personality. They actually prefer a much more equal partner because that makes everybody sound stronger and they seem stronger. So more often than not, when you work with that caliber of a player, they actually insist the lid be opened. They almost couldn’t play with half-lid.121

Coaches and pianists may also encounter resistance to an open piano lid because the instrumentalist may not be able to hear the overall balance properly due to their positioning. According to Elisabeth Pridonoff, the cellist in a larger chamber ensemble does not truly hear balance correctly because they sit in front of open piano and are constantly bombarded with washes of sound.122 However, Lin and Chertock also suggest the lid may act as an amplifier for the cello, projecting the sound into the audience.123,124 With the French horn, the open lid can serve a similar purpose and is especially helpful if the horn is playing at a softer dynamic. Ultimately, as Eugene and Elisabeth Pridonoff suggest, the ensemble would benefit from someone sitting in the audience and offering feedback: the on-stage sound is often different than the sound in the out in the hall.125

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121 Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
122 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 2, 2013.
123 Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
125 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 2, 2013.
LISTENING: CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE ENSEMBLE

Playing chamber music in a mixed ensemble requires instrumentalists to make certain intonation adjustments which they would not necessarily make in a homogenous ensemble or even in woodwind/string ensemble, in which the players can still use relative or expressive tuning. Whereas in a string quartet or even a woodwind ensemble, rehearsals and coachings might devote a significant amount of time to perfecting relative tuning, the way in which the players must adjust to the absolute tuning of the piano renders this practice null. For the most part, although they would not dispute the importance of intonation, some of the interviewees prefer not to directly address tuning while coaching a mixed ensemble, especially if the errors occur only infrequently. Lin believes that advanced musicians will already be aware of their intonation issues and may simply need to fix them outside the coaching session.¹²⁶ However, if the coach wants to mention the intonation, Chertock suggests phrases which he learned from a very diplomatic recording producer: “At this spot I think we need more pitch” or “I think we need more center of pitch.”¹²⁷ This particular wording prevents the instrumentalist from feeling threatened or put on the spot, especially if the coach is a pianist.

However, not all instrumentalists will adapt easily to absolute tuning with the piano. For instance, I have played in ensembles with graduate students who insisted on adjusting their tuning to each other rather than to the piano. If the instrumentalists are more accustomed to relative tuning or if they have perfect pitch, matching an out-of-tune piano can be very disconcerting. This may require the coach to convince the instrumentalists to match to the absolute tuning of the piano. Fiser reports,

¹²⁶ Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
¹²⁷ Chertock interview, February 28, 2013.
My standard reply in my coachings, when you give them the A and the violins will tune sharp because they think it’s in tune--they play the A that’s in tune and they swear it’s flat- I will say, “Guys, the piano cannot change the pitch. You have to adjust to the piano. That’s what you do playing in a piano group. They have the A and you play in tune with the piano. End of story.”128

Lin suggests that the instrumentalists tune twice: once to the piano and then once with each other.129 He further suggests that while playing a piano trio, the cello focus on matching with the piano while the violin matches the cello. If tuning to the piano is still challenging, especially in rehearsal situations with a piano that is out of tune, Rivers suggests that instrumentalists practice matching pitches on different pianos during their individual practice sessions.130

As discussed in “Listening: Considerations for the Pianist”, pianists may make certain adjustments to their sound in order to accommodate the projection of different instruments as well as problematic registers. By the same token, string players make concessions for the mechanical limitations and tonal quality of the piano. For example, Tocco describes the following:

When string players play with piano, they don’t take into consideration the nature of the piano sound, which is...a strong attack and quick decay. String players too often sneak into the sound (a common practice in string quartet playing). I agree with those professional coaches who insist that the sound be focused immediately when it begins. That’s very, very important. Especially with piano.131

Fiser describes this execution for string players as going “a little bit more toward the clear articulation.”132 Bernard Greenhouse of the Beaux Arts Trio reports that a string player can “also use the left hand as an enunciating factor, which means a little bit of

129 Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
130 Rivers interview, February 4, 2013.
131 Tocco interview, February 28, 2013.
percussion simulating the piano percussion. We must take care to emulate the clarity of
the piano sound—for instance, in rapid passages.”

Conversely, some aspects of string playing are mechanically impossible to imitate
in the piano, such as a crescendo on the same note or an extremely soft sustained
dynamic, (which Tocco describes as “on the edge of audibility”134). However, the pianist
can still try to match the string articulation as much as possible. Doing so requires an
awareness of the string sound production as well as acute listening, as Eugene Pridonoff
explains:

With the bow, it’s amazing how little of an interruption there is in the sound. Or, if they have to play a portato, and we have the same marking, either \{makes a long, sustained sound\} with too much pedal or “bap” \{makes a short, dry, cut-off sound\}. On the piano, it’s extremely hard to do, whereas the string instruments, they go like this \{sings\} “yum” and the string keeps vibrating. And so we really do need to be aware of that: what they’re doing and how does the piano sound compared to that…They come off a note for the note value and there’s a shortness of it but there is a continuation of sound. That’s a huge factor…

Very often, having the students practice a passage in unison to match articulation is
helpful. Matching articulation may be easier for those students with highly developed
listening skills but less so for predominantly visual or kinesthetic learners who may rely
less on their aural faculties. Outside of demonstrating or pointing out specifically what
the student must listen for, a coach can also utilize descriptive imagery for the visual
learner or allow the kinesthetic learner to try different ways of articulating a passage until
the appropriate articulation emerges.

Although the same applies to playing with strings, a very salient issue for
ensemble playing with wind and brass players is the timing of attacks. According to

133 Delbanco, 211.
134 Tocco interview, February 28, 2013.
135 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 2, 2013.
Eugene Pridonoff, one must listen carefully for their onset of sound when working with double reed players:

Double reed players, they have issues with their reeds and sometimes, what I’ve found was that you have this sense of when they’re going to come in...There’s almost a split second where the sound takes whereas with a violinist it’s more immediate because of the bow.\(^{136}\)

While my own experiences resonate with Eugene Pridonoff’s assertion, I have also experienced a similar delay in between the preparatory breath and the onset of sound when playing with French horn or trombone students despite the different mechanics their instruments. The opening of the first movement of W.A. Mozart’s Quintet for Piano and Winds, K.452 presents a perfect opportunity to practice cueing and synchronizing the onsets of different instruments. However, even if the cue is strong, timing the piano attack with the different brass and woodwinds may still pose difficulties for the pianist. Though the pianist may believe they are playing exactly on the beat, the immediacy of the piano attack makes the entrance sound early. The coach can ask the pianist to delay their attack slightly, or conversely, encourage the wind and brass players to play more towards the front of the beat as Scharnberg suggests.\(^{137}\) Alternatively, without directly mentioning that the attack is off, the coach can resolve this problem indirectly by asking all the players to listen for a specific color or sound. As the group members heighten their concentration and listen more closely, the problem usually solves itself.

\(^{136}\) Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 2, 2013.

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

One essential consideration for pianists when working with wind and brass players is the accommodation for the breath. According to Lin, “with wind players, breathing is much more like playing with singers…They will literally need actual time at breathing points”\(^{138}\) I have found that individual players of the same instrument will have a unique breathing pattern, though the difference becomes less discernible as their level of proficiency increases. To this end, Eugene Pridonoff points out that individual breath control influences tempo and phrasing:

The breathing aspect very much affects tempo, because how long can the phrase be? So if they have a long line over four measures and there’s no chance to take a breath and it’s a slow tempo, and some pianist thinks it should be *Largo “laborioso,”* [saying] “Oh, I just feel it this way” and meanwhile the poor person’s turning blue…you’ve got to understand you’re playing with a wind instrument.\(^{139}\)

As with singers, the pianist must be aware of the individual capability of the wind or brass player, and anticipate that the breathing may change in performance. I have found that for many of my woodwind collaborators, the breathing pattern is among the first to be affected by nerves, though most wind and brass players work to counteract this.

Anticipating this phenomenon, the coach can encourage the instrumentalist to plan out and inform the pianist of possible places for emergency breaths.

Beyond the coordination of phrasing with wind and brass players for physical necessity, coordination of breathing for any combination of instruments is essential to facilitate phrasing for true ensemble playing. According to Elisabeth Pridonoff, a key

\(^{138}\) Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
\(^{139}\) Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 2, 2013.
factor of coordinating the ensemble is, “a matter of learning and knowing how to breathe
together.”\textsuperscript{140} Similarly, Rivers states,

If you’re getting some people who are not synchronized, I mean, obviously
they’re playing together but you just don’t get the feeling that [they’re] on the
same wavelength of how it is supposed to sound, how the phrase falls, you get
them breathing the same way, it’s just going to do it.

String players as well as wind and brass players tend to utilize the physical breath
differently than pianists. Though strings’ unique breath medium is their bow, many string
players will take breaths before and between their phrases. According to Elisabeth
Pridonoff, pianists most often forget to breathe between phrases.\textsuperscript{141} To counteract this
tendency, the coach can encourage the pianist to breathe together with their partners. As
Elisabeth Pridonoff reports, breathing together benefits not only the overall sense of
phrasing but also allows the musicians to sense each other on a different level beyond
intellectual awareness of the score.\textsuperscript{142} Emphasizing the importance of breathing together
is an effective method to use when working with kinesthetic learners as doing and feeling
a synchronized breath will resonate strongly with this physically oriented learner. Aural
learners may prefer to orient themselves to the sound of their partners’ breathing as they
start phrases together.

Additionally, teaching players how to give clear cues is also an indispensable
component of ensemble coaching and playing. I have encountered instrumentalists at the
collegiate level who do not plan their cues (whether to cue a full measure or subdivision)
and in the worst case, do not know how to cue at all. To that end, Lin describes the

\textsuperscript{140} Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 2, 2013.
\textsuperscript{141} Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 1, 2013.
\textsuperscript{142} Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 1, 2013.
importance of spending time discussing cues during a coaching session, even with advanced students.

How to cue is very important. We also talk about how to cue in the tempo, in the rhythm. You either give a whole beat or you give part of the beat but it always needs to be in the beat, so you don’t just, in a fast movement, give a slow cue or in a slow movement give a fast cue.143

In Wenger’s article, Elinor Freer refers this practice as “cueing in character;” that is breathing or giving body motion in mood or musical character of the passage.144

If groups are having difficulty with synchronization due to ineffective cues, the coach can either demonstrate the proper cue or as Hanzlick suggests, perhaps ask the receiving players to demonstrate the kind of cue they would like to see from the leader.145 Alternatively, Posnak encourages students to count off in rehearsal, which can be especially effective when working with an unfamiliar piece or partners.146 This strategy is especially good to use in a rehearsal session, as the students lead each other instead of following the coach. I played in an ensemble where one of the members was unable to give strong, clear cues. Using Posnak’s strategy made our rehearsals much more productive.

Many of the interviewees report that a small amount of physical gesture, either an upward movement with the head or instrument or if possible a forward motion with the smaller instruments constitutes a sufficient cue. From her personal experience, Rivers reports that small physical gestures can be extremely helpful, especially if the leader

143 Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
144 Wenger, 27.
145 Louis Hanzslick, “Fostering Democratic Citizenship: Chamber Music’s Ready-Made Space,”
146 Posnak interview, February 9, 2013.
breathes in a more subtle way.\textsuperscript{147} Katz observes that for brass and wind instruments, body language is really the only form of non-verbal communication available, as the mechanics of producing sound on these instruments are not as visually accessible as on stringed instruments. He writes,

\begin{quote}
I always encourage my partners in this repertoire to be physical enough for me to ‘read’ them with assurance…All we have, after all, are cues given with their breaths, with their instruments as quasi-batons and, we would hope, with subtle but clear arm and upper body motions: these will do the job once we have learned to interpret the body language of each of our wind or brass partners.”\textsuperscript{148}
\end{quote}

The importance of frequent rehearsal for students cannot be emphasized enough, because learning another’s body language takes time. In my own experience as a student, I have found that those performances in which my partners and I have had sufficient time to learn how to “read” each other were the most secure. To accommodate our busy schedules, we found that brief rehearsals albeit frequent rehearsals allowed us ample time to decode each other’s body language.

Though most of the interviewees recommend cueing with at least some body language, coaches may want to remember that different learners will respond to different types of cues. Visual learners may have an easier time following body language of their partners rather than aural or perhaps even kinesthetic learners. Loft states, “coordination is effected as much by hearing as by sight. The connection between voices and the succession of elements in the music is gauged on the run, by alert listening.”\textsuperscript{149} From my experience, my synchronization with my collaborators is most accurate when I rely more heavily on my ears; in fact, my timing and synchronization become inaccurate if I switch to watching visual cues, almost as if concentrating on the visual creates a delay. Again,

\begin{footnotesize}
147 Rivers interview, February 4, 2013.
148 Katz, 269.
149 Loft, 234.
\end{footnotesize}
while visual cues are absolutely necessary in some instances, coaches may find that ensemble coordination may be better achieved with a different technique. For example, asking aural-learners to focus on what to listen for rather than what to watch for may be more effective.

When working with string players, many of interviewees advocate watching the leading string player’s bow. Chertock reports, “I think with the string players,...you sort of treat their bow like a conductor’s baton.”\textsuperscript{150} In perfect agreement, Katz offers, “…Never lose touch with the bow; keep it in your sight at all times. It is the best of conductors, showing us attacks, releases, phrasing…”\textsuperscript{151} Rivers likes to watch the violinists’ finger during harmonic resolutions, as the finger contacting the string gives a clear indication of when the note will resolve rather than a potentially misleading gesture with the body.\textsuperscript{152}

Efficient cueing aside, the majority of the coaches discourage using extraneous body language to coordinate ensembles, as too much movement can be distracting. Lin suggests that body language is not entirely accurate: “…people tend to watch body language a lot but actually with body language, the timing is not really correct.”\textsuperscript{153} Fiser offers the following:

…There will be personal styles: some are more ebullient than others. I tend to sit, I don’t do too much. I used to do a lot but that was as much getting in my own way as I look back. I’ve certainly felt it but if you do it from the outside, you’re adding another huge variable to an already complicated process and more often than not, you get in your own way…you’ll start doing stuff with your hands and you’ll forget how your whole body works.\textsuperscript{154}

\textsuperscript{150} Chertock interview, February 28, 2013.
\textsuperscript{151} Katz,260-1.
\textsuperscript{152} Rivers interview, February 4, 2013.
\textsuperscript{153} Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
\textsuperscript{154} Fiser interview, February 28, 2013.
In situations with limited rehearsal time, too much body movement may actually be counterproductive. In situations where the players do not have the luxury of many rehearsals, strong cues with less extraneous motion in between may be best. For example, I once played a modern quartet for strings, clarinet and piano featuring mixed meter, irregular shifting accents with constant sixteenth notes (except in the middle section), while each part had a different rhythmic profile. We had only two rehearsals to put it together. One instrumentalist was using his entire body to show me the accents, but since I could not watch him constantly while playing, I was never able to figure out which motion corresponded to what rhythmic event. When he simplified and reduced his movements, our ensemble coordination improved.

Many of the interviewees believe that the use of eye contact depends on the particular situation. With limited rehearsals or new collaborators, eye contact may be indispensable. For instance, Rivers states,

[If] you’ve been playing with somebody for so many years that you know what they’re going to do before they do it, then you don’t have to have a lot of eye contact. But if it’s somebody you’re just starting to work with or you’ve just been working with a short amount of time, eye contact is definitely necessary.155

Chertock describes the individual preparation one must do in order to be able to utilize eye contact: “You should be almost to the point of having the piece memorized, I think, so that you are free to be able to look over a fair amount.”156 Although in some instances, eye contact may happen spontaneously in performance, Chertock also describes specific instances in which collaborators may actually plan to make eye contact and “put a pair of

156 Chertock interview, February 28, 2013.
glasses in the score.\textsuperscript{157} As one might anticipate, visual learners may naturally gravitate towards this form of communication as might kinesthetic learners.

However, several of the interviewees point that with a certain degree of professionalism, frequent collaboration, and careful listening, eye contact is not always necessary. Fiser shares the following personal anecdote:

I had an experience with a faculty member here [at CCM], we were doing the slow movement of the Beethoven 5th sonata, which is a very slow movement and at the end there’s just these static chords. And he was already right where I expected him, I thought I gave a cue and it turns out he’d stopped looking at me 30 bars ago! And there we were. I gave what I thought was a cue and he didn’t see it but there we were together. It was either something I was doing in the sound or we just felt the pacing or whatever it was. But I’ve had that experience.\textsuperscript{158}

The passage to which Fiser refers appears below.

Example 3.3 L.van Beethoven, Sonata no. 5 in D Major for piano and cello, op.102, 2\textsuperscript{nd} movement, mm. 77-81.

Fiser also observes from a video of the Heifetz/Piatigorsky/Rubenstein trio playing the Mendelssohn D minor trio that the players employ minimal body motion and even less eye contact and yet the ensemble plays with indisputably unified intention.

\textsuperscript{157} Chertock interview, February 28, 2013.
\textsuperscript{158} Fiser interview, February 28, 2013.
In extreme cases, some of the interviewees cite professional duos where the instrumentalist sits or stands behind the piano, so constant or frequent eye contact is not always possible. These teams include the Franco Gulli and Enrica Cavallo-Gulli as well as the David Finckel and Wu Han duos. Tocco describes his experience of hearing the Gulli duo as “…the most precise duo playing I’ve ever heard. In every respect: the balance…the precision-- rhythmic precision.”\(^\text{159}\) Clearly, eye contact was unnecessary at that stage, since the married duo had worked together for an extended period of time professionally. However, playing without eye contact is possible even if the partners are not long-time collaborators. Chertock states, “The funny thing is, I don’t actually think eye contact is necessary if people are listening very hard.”\(^\text{160}\) In my own personal experience, I have found this to be the case, even if my collaborative partners are new. In some instances, eye contact or watching visual cues actually distracts me from sensing and anticipating the actions of the collaborators that I can more easily detect through listening. Loft suggests that coaches ask players to play with their backs to each other, stating, “…This unaccustomed seating may make them play with more sensitivity to each other than usual.”\(^\text{161}\)

To really challenge students and test their ability to listen to each other, both Loft and Radiushina suggest that coaches ask students to rehearse sections while playing from memory.\(^\text{162}\) Radiushina offers,

… It’s something that has to be developed. It’s not easy, but it really works, for phrasing and being together, because it makes your awareness really acute…You start to realize how much attention to mechanics is in our playing. Particularly when we’re playing with the scores, there are large parts or areas of our brain that

\(^\text{159}\) Tocco interview, February 28, 2013.  
\(^\text{160}\) Chertock interview, February 28, 2013.  
\(^\text{161}\) Loft, 236.  
\(^\text{162}\) Loft, 236.
are busy with reading and interpreting and processing cues from the music, from
the other players… As a result, we are not going to be listening 100 percent to
sound only… If you completely open up your mind and your ears to the sound
only, you would notice so many things… You would really significantly improve
being able to be together, phrasing together, playing dynamically together,
slowing down, speeding up together, it really is an incredible tool. It’s difficult to
do, but it really works.163

As one would expect, individuals will improve their ensemble skills very quickly with
regular practice of this memorization exercise, even if only for short passages.

In addition to synchronizing ensembles, body language and eye contact can
communicate the experience of live chamber music to the audiences. Some audience
members may enjoy the visual “show” of chamber musicians using a lot of body
language or showy eye contact. Some groups even choose to choreograph synchronized
movements or gestures. However, Fiser offers a point worth considering for chamber
music performance: “Never promise people a good movie. Promise them a good
soundtrack.”164 Given the above information from the interviewees, perhaps coaches may
want to help groups strike a balance between tasteful non-verbal cues, natural motion and
above all, focused attention to each other’s sound

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CHAPTER IV. INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS:

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

The first section on “Communication Strategies” addresses ways to develop a positive coach-ensemble relationship in order to maximize the productivity of coaching sessions. Concepts from publications on interpersonal communication as well as pedagogical sources are offered in order to further expand the views of the interviewees.

BUILDING POSITIVE RAPPORT

Both Sandra Rivers and James Tocco like to create a relaxed environment which encourages students to play their best and feel comfortable enough to verbally assert themselves.\(^{165,166}\) Rivers in particular likes to create “a friendly, open atmosphere where we can throw ideas out.”\(^{167}\) Although the following statement of Tapping refers to rehearsal productivity, his words are equally applicable to a coaching session: “we should all remember how much easier it is to play when we’re feeling buoyed up and happy than when we’re sure we can’t do anything to please anybody.”\(^{168}\) However, not all coaches believe in promoting such a positive atmosphere: Rivers acknowledges that some coaches will deliberately intimidate their students and thus, inadvertently create a negative learning environment. However, she asserts: “I don’t believe you learn when you feel intimidated.”\(^{169}\) Her assertion as well as my own experiences can be supported by what is now considered to be a given among the previously mentioned “brain-based”

\(^{165}\) Rivers interview, February 28, 2013.
\(^{166}\) Tocco interview, February 28, 2013.
\(^{167}\) Rivers interview, February 28, 2013.
\(^{169}\) Rivers interview, February 28, 2013.
learning theorists: a positive learning environment creates the ideal conditions for optimum learning and performance.

Consistent with recent neurological research, experienced chamber music professionals find that creating a low-stress learning environment produces maximum benefit for students. Studies strongly indicate a clear link between the learning experience and emotional states: positive emotional states such as joy and pleasure produce the neurological conditions which are essential for learning, whereas negative emotional states do the opposite.\(^{170}\) Given this evidence, neophyte chamber music coaches may consider creating an environment which encourages positive emotional states to further promote the efficacy of their coaching. From personal experience, I have found that even one negative attitude from a student can inhibit the progress of a coaching session, as the truculent attitude of one student can easily spread to the rest of the group.

In order to create that “friendly, open atmosphere” that Rivers describes, coaches may consider adopting the technique of mirroring, a subtle yet effective interpersonal strategy for making students feel more comfortable in a coaching.\(^{171}\) In her book *The Whole Musician*, Susan Bruckner defines “mirroring” as a process where the coach or teacher copies or “keeps pace” with the student’s body language, facial expressions, voice, language patterns or any combination of the above.\(^{172}\) She posits that teachers and coaches can build instant rapport with their students by matching “…the speed, volume, pauses and pitch of someone’s speech pattern.” An additional facet of mirroring involves paraphrasing or summarizing students’ responses to questions. According to some


\(^{171}\) Bruckner, 69.

\(^{172}\) Bruckner, 69.
specialists in cognitive coaching, verbal mirroring instantly communicates respect.\(^{173}\) For example, “if a coach can summarize the student’s ideas, it shows attentiveness towards the student’s issue(s) and keeps the focus on the student.”\(^{174}\) Thus, mirroring can be a useful tool for chamber music coaches, who often operate in situations in which the coaches and students have limited time together.

Dr. Keith Golay, an educational psychologist, writes, “When we approach a person in a way that is compatible with his or her character traits, motivation and achievement of the student go up and problems go down.”\(^{175}\) Though they may not deliberately plan to do so, I have observed that effective coaches are able to transmit the same musical concept to different types of learners, modifying their explanations accordingly. For example, Loft writes, “You can use verbal imagery, visual analogy, literary allusion, body English, or any other technique to explain what you are after.”\(^{176}\) In an attempt to engage all students, Loft appeals to basic learning styles: aural (“verbal imagery”), visual (“visual analogy”) and kinesthetic (“body English”). In a more systematic fashion, Bruckner describes how a coach or teacher can use verbal cues to figure out the student’s learning style and tailor their explanations accordingly.\(^{177}\) For example, if the student uses the phrase, “I don’t see what to do here,” the word “see” indicates a visual learner, and the coach might explain how to solve the problem using visual imagery or words like “imagine” or “picture this.” Likewise the coach can engage the student’s five senses (“notice how you feel when…”) when interacting with a


\(^{174}\) Tollefson, 30.


\(^{176}\) Loft, 237.

\(^{177}\) Bruckner, 69-70.
kinesthetic learner and for auditory learners, the coach can use sound-associated words like “ring,” “resonate” or “sounds like.” In addition to understanding the concept, observing the coach employ multiple ways of explaining a concept may help students explain the concept to future collaborators or perhaps to future students of their own.

Another strategy which coaches may use to elicit a positive rapport is to express and to acknowledge consideration for characteristic mechanical difficulties of different instruments, especially for those instruments which the coach does not play. According to Lin, if the coach demonstrates knowledge of the instrumental mechanics, “[the students will] know that…your comments are…based on an understanding of what they need to do, what they have to do. So they will be more friendly [sic] to your comments.” For example, when working with string players, Lin points out that rehearsal strategies like slowing down the tempo may be impossible if the piece calls for certain articulations. “Different bowings do make quite a big difference and certain bowings you can only do at a certain speeds, like spicatto for instance, or up- or down-bow staccato…”

Similarly, in an interview on ensemble coaching with Wenger, cellist Judith Glyde states, “lower[stringed] instruments do not have the same amount of useable bow as upper instruments do. So when making ensemble bowing decisions, consider this difference and accommodate the cello and bass players!” Likewise, for wind players, the extent to which a tempo can be slowed depends on the individual’s breath control. If a coach makes demands which are contrary to the mechanics of the instrument, students can become extremely frustrated when asked to do something at which they simply cannot

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178 Bruckner, 71.
179 Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
180 Lin interview, February 8, 2013.
181 Wenger, 31.
succeed, especially in front of their peers. Such a situation can negatively impact the student-coach rapport. Students are more likely to learn and develop respect for the coach when the coach gives them musical tasks at which they can excel.

Though awareness of the mechanical limitations of instruments is an extremely valuable asset to a coach, awareness alone will not create a positive rapport between coaches and students. Even in lesson or coaching situations where the instructor and student play the same instrument, occasions may arise where students believe that what the teacher asks of them is physically impossible. Such feelings may arise during independent practice sessions as well and in many cases, being open to exploring “out of the box” options will reveal the key to the solution. All of this considered, it becomes increasingly more important that coaches must look for ways of establishing rapport beyond instrumental know-how so that students feel motivated to search for answers regardless of their instrumental specialization.

DELIVERING CRITIQUES

With the intention to build a good coach-group rapport, the coach may also want to explore ways to offer critiques in a non-offensive and constructive way. Rivers cautions, “when it’s time to make a criticism, you’ve got to be careful how you say things.”\textsuperscript{182} Posnak describes the coach’s dilemma as follows:

We have to watch out with our words. We have to watch out...[for] things that could be misinterpreted or hurtful...And on the other hand, you have to be as honest as possible: time is money. We don’t time to say “That was beautiful” all the time, because what we’re focusing on is what’s \textit{not} working more than what’s working.\textsuperscript{183}

\textsuperscript{182} Rivers interview, February 4, 2013.
\textsuperscript{183} Posnak interview, February 9, 2013.
Though pointing out weak areas is a necessary element of coaching, an overly critical attitude may elicit unwanted negative emotional reactions, especially if the coach seemingly directs all the criticism towards one student. Sometimes, even one or two non-positive comments can seem like all the criticism is directed towards one student, because students can become self-consciously sensitive in a peer-group situation. The extent to which college students can tolerate criticism varies. Though musically advanced, some college-level students may not yet have the maturity, self-possession and ability to accept criticism with equanimity, as I have observed from my colleagues. Though one cannot expect coaches to take responsibility for the emotional reactions of their students over which they have no control, a coach who can properly construct and deliver criticism in a non-threatening way and has the sensitivity to make modifying remarks if necessary will most likely inspire the group members to remain open to new information and suggestions for improvement. In other words, ensuring that students receive a coach’s comments well is just as important as the information itself.

Some coaches may find deconstructing the perception of criticism helpful. According to Dr. Marshall Rosenberg, in his book *Non-Violent Communication: A Language of Life*, a remark becomes interpreted as critical when the speaker indulges in generalizations, fails to offer specific information, or does not clearly distinguish between fact (observation) and personal reaction or bias (evaluation).\(^\text{184}\) Rosenberg states, “When we combine observation with evaluation, we decrease the likelihood that others will hear our intended message. Instead, they are apt to hear criticism and thus resist whatever we are saying.”\(^\text{185}\) For example, the following statement “Your performance is under-

\(^{184}\) Rosenberg, 26
\(^{185}\) Rosenberg, 26.
prepared” would naturally be taken as a criticism and may distract from any following constructive suggestions. The coach has not clearly expressed his or her expectations regarding preparation, nor of the specific elements which contributed to the performance sounding under-prepared. Consequently, the group members are more likely to resist any helpful attempts from the coach, because they have taken the comment as a judgment which nullifies their preparation. The dissonance between fact and opinion becomes even more pronounced if the group did in fact prepare extensively. In such a case, the group will most likely become frustrated or discouraged.

Rosenberg advocates that the speaker refer to specific events and take personal responsibility for evaluative statements. In the aforementioned example, the coach would be more effective with the following statements: “Consider paying more attention to your vertical alignment in the exposition. Also check for steadiness in measures 40-60. To me as a listener, these types of issues give off an impression that you are under-prepared, when I know that it isn’t the case.” The group is now fully aware of specific problem areas. Moreover, the coach has offered the suggestion in a way that encourages the students to take ownership of their presentation.

Coaches may also find Dale Carnegie’s basic ideas about giving positive feedback helpful. In his interpersonal classic, How to Win Friends and Influence People, Dale Carnegie advocates that one will achieve more successful results implementing praise and positive reinforcement:

> Abilities wither under criticism; they blossom under encouragement. To become a more effective leader of people…praise the slightest improvement and praise every improvement. Be ‘hearty in your approbation and lavish in your praise.’

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186 Carnegie, 220.
Carnegie argues that for this principle to work, the leader must offer only sincere, specific appreciation devoid of impersonal flattery. Therefore, coaches may find the group more receptive if they begin by offering truthful, positive statements about the performance before offering suggestions for improvement. Offering positive feedback first is simple to do but easy to forget, especially if a coach has many suggestions to offer or feels pressured by time constraints. Additionally, Bruckner encourages coaches to use purely positive wording as uniformly as possible. She states,

> When we say to someone, ‘Don’t think of the color blue,’ the brain works in a very logical and literal fashion. In order not to think of the color blue, we must first conjure up an image of what the color blue is…So it is much more helpful even to the adult brain if we can offer positive and explicit help about what we should focus on in performance.187

Students of all ages will improve faster if they can focus on what is wanted or desired. As Bruckner explains, statements like “Don’t rush” or “Do not play so loud here” invite continued attention to the mistake; if the student continues to focus on the mistake, they will very likely repeat it. A coach can easily redirect the students’ focus towards the desired outcome with the following positive statements: “Stay in tempo” or “Play softer here.”

An important component of using positive wording is to avoid coupling the positive statement with a negative remark. Bruckner writes, “The brain will tend to negate any phrase that comes before the word ‘but’ and only hear the words after.”188 On the same subject, Carnegie observes, “Many people begin their criticism with sincere praise followed by the word “but” and ending in a critical statement…The praise [seems]

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187 Bruckner, 74.
188 Bruckner, 74.
only to be a contrived lead-in to a critical inference of failure."\textsuperscript{189} Doing so causes the recipient to doubt their own contribution as well as the sincerity of the speaker. For an easy solution, Bruckner advocates using the word ‘and’ in place of ‘but’.\textsuperscript{190} For example, a coach might say to a group, “Your sense of rhythm is strong and can you listen more closely for intonation in measure five?” rather than, “Your sense of rhythm is strong but your intonation is off in measure five.”

In his assessment of personality types, Golay reports that criticism from authority figures can be harmful for certain personality types who are artistically gifted, as their “…creations tend to be an extension of the self and are strongly tied up with their identity. If their product is rejected in the slightest they are apt to be devastated.”\textsuperscript{191} When confronted with such a student, Carnegie’s strategy of correcting mistakes through indirect criticism is appropriate: “Calling attention to one’s mistakes indirectly works wonders with sensitive people who may resent bitterly any direct criticism.”\textsuperscript{192} Likewise, Rivers and Elisabeth Pridonoff advocate using requests such as “Can we try that phrase a different way?”\textsuperscript{193,194} rather than bluntly pointing out the problems in students’ previous execution. Additionally, an anecdote from Chertock illuminates a non-threatening way to work with sensitive personalities:

[This particular opera conductor’s] favorite expression is “Before we commit to that…” which makes it sound like “We’re on the way to do it but we haven’t…” He says, “Before we commit to that,” and he asks a question. And 99% of the time the singer totally comes around to his way of doing it. And it doesn’t threaten [them]. If somebody says that to me, “Before we commit to this

\textsuperscript{189} Carnegie, 200.
\textsuperscript{190} Bruckner, 74.
\textsuperscript{191} Keith Golay, Learning Patterns and Temperament Styles, (Fullerton, CA: Manas Systems, 1982), 40-42.
\textsuperscript{192} Carnegie, 200-201.
\textsuperscript{193} Rivers interview, February 4, 2013.
\textsuperscript{194} Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 3, 2013.
tempo…” it just makes me think that we’re going to have a little discussion. But what they’re really saying is, “I’m not agreeing with this tempo.”

The phrase “before you commit to that [tempo, phrasing, et cetera],” suggests to the students that other options may be more beneficial. Even though the coach is subtly guiding the student towards a better musical choice, using this wording allows the student to feel in control of their options.

Alternatively, many of the interviewees advocate leaving out the word “you” altogether from comments, so that the students will not take the criticism personally. In Eugene and Elisabeth Pridonoff’s words, in doing so the coach avoids having an “ego-fight” with the student. Fiser advocates avoiding statements such as “You’re rushing!” or “You’re playing flat,” stating, “If you make it [the comment] about the person, then their whole personal history comes up from the time they were four years old. And so you don’t want to go there.” To counteract such an occurrence, in one of his articles on playing in a chamber ensemble, Harbaugh also suggests keeping comments strictly about the music rather than the person. Chertock offers: “I would try to stay very score-focused…[saying] ‘It wants to go here’ or ‘I think this phrase wants to do that,’” From these strategies, one may conclude that using objective, score-based comments will also promote receptivity and cooperation from students.

196 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 2, 2013.
197 Fiser interview, February 28, 2013.
DIPLOMATIC CHALLENGES FOR THE COACH

Just as a chamber group benefits from positive rapport with a coach, some musicians feel that the group members play well when experiencing a musical common-ground as well as positive, harmonious interactions with each other. For example, Jean-Pierre Rampal writes, “The harmony of friendship translates perfectly into the harmony of music, chamber music in particular…If you don’t love the people you play with, playing chamber music stops being interesting.”200 As with Rampal, personal connections with their chamber music colleagues may be a priority with some students. Consider also that composers such as Brahms and Schumann wrote chamber music for their close friends and colleagues. However, playing chamber music in a college setting does not always require friendship. In fact, working with friends in a chamber music setting is sometimes counterproductive; I have found that some of my colleagues are often unwilling to criticize a friend for risk of endangering their friendship. Moreover, as Fiser describes, “Even in established groups there are legions of stories of groups who didn’t get along but had very long careers. So do we do this or do we not? There is a way to transcend that. It may not be everyone’s favorite choice.”201

If the students are mature enough to put their differences aside and maintain a professional decorum onstage, the coach does not need to address the interpersonal conflict. Radiushina states, “I think unless things get really rough and somebody is openly rude towards somebody else, you let the people in the ensemble handle the situation because it’s also part of learning; trying to navigate through something we all

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201 Fiser interview, February 28, 2013.
have to go through."202 In the event that the coach must intervene with the interpersonal conflict, the interviewees offered solutions to the following problems: opposition to authority, disparate levels, dominant personalities, handling interpersonal conflict within an ensemble and difficult personalities.

OPPOSITION TO AUTHORITY

During coaching sessions, some coaches find that students will challenge their authority, in an effort to prove they know more than the coach. Though coaches may encounter challenger-students at any point in their career, young coaches especially may encounter this problem, as they may not be much older than their students. Students may see a younger coach, and as Eugene Pridonoff describes, have the following attitude: "Well, who are you to tell me how to play?"203,204 Luckily, as Pridonoff and Tocco report, this problem seems to go away as a coach becomes older.205 However, if a young coach is caught in the above situation, Pridonoff advises the following:

Whether it's any older person, or an "ego", one has to be diplomatic and respectful, but at the same time specific and definite in asking for compliance. Much of what we do is trial and error, but it's important to develop the language of our interpretive perspectives. The more that is established, the easier it is to convince people. As a young teacher, much of this challenge was also due to my lack of experience, so it goes both ways. There is no easy answer to that. It's one thing to have the conviction that you are right about something, but quite another to convince others other than to say "I'm the boss, so do it like I say!" 206

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203 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 2, 2013.
204 Tocco interview, February 28, 2013.
205 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 2, 2013.
206 Eugene Pridonoff, email to Adriana Teodoro-Dier, March 1, 2013.
If the coach wishes to persuade the student to their way of thinking, Carnegie suggests showing “…respect for the other person’s opinions. Never say, ‘you’re wrong.’” Eugene Pridonoff’s comments on facilitating disagreeing points of view may be helpful: “Say, ‘I can see that point of view too and my perspective is to come at it this way.’ So that you give them credence and yet you say, ‘I hear it differently.’” While coaches may need to adjust their approach depending on the individual case, if the coach is sure of his or her own convictions and can assert them while respecting and acknowledging the challenger’s point of view, the challenger may be more cooperative, as Eugene Pridonoff described.

**DISPARATE LEVELS**

Although a small amount of disparity in levels or ability between players can be beneficial for the weaker player when learning repertoire, extreme disparity may prove uncomfortable for all parties in a performance situation. Elisabeth Pridonoff claims, …Being a team is difficult…Partially it has to do with the other people or person you’re playing with. You have to be very in tune with them. …All of this starts falling apart [with] those who are not equal in abilities. I mean, if you as the pianist are stronger and more into your abilities…and you have someone who is lesser, then it’s very difficult. And then you’re talking a different set of rules completely, because you can’t be the one that overpowers and over-shines them.

Stronger players may find it difficult to maintain their musical integrity if the other members have decidedly less-developed abilities. Elisabeth Pridonoff uses a well-known saying to describe this situation: “The relationship is only as strong as the weakest

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207 Carnegie, 220.
208 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 2, 2013.
link.” In my experience, the situation becomes especially frustrating for all involved if those in leadership positions (in terms of their musical roles) do not have the ability to lead. If the stronger player tries to lead but their part is accompanimental, the inequality can become even more obvious to the audience.

Rivers states that when players with extremely disparate levels of chamber music experience are preparing for a graded performance such as a recital, the coach may need to facilitate a change of personnel, especially if the players are friends. In fact, in Rivers’ experience, students’ preference to work with friends increases the likelihood of mismatched ability: sometimes students will put together chamber groups for their own required recitals without ever having heard all of the members play. In one circumstance where a less-experienced player was potentially jeopardizing a pianist’s required recital, Rivers took the less-experienced player aside and gently explained the situation to them, using the following wording:

I want to work with you in the future. But this is a required recital for the pianist and right now I know your experience is lacking in chamber music. So therefore you shouldn’t put yourself in a situation where it’s so pressured for you because everybody is more advanced than you, experience-wise, with this music.

With this wording, Rivers allows the dignity of the student to remain intact even though she clearly states the problem with the current arrangement.

Another solution might be to offer additional private sessions to the less-experienced player to help the player catch up, especially if the player and the coach play the same instrument and ample time is available. Rivers and Posnak will often work on chamber music with a pianist in a one-on-one setting, to work out technical and musical issues.

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211 Rivers interview, February 4, 2013.
212 Rivers interview, February 4, 2013.
difficulties outside of the coaching.\textsuperscript{213,214} Rivers finds this use of time very productive especially when working with larger mixed ensembles. “Say it’s a piano quintet and I’m always talking to the pianist because this is going on, and the string players are just sitting there. While if I can see the pianist alone, we can get certain things cleared up.”\textsuperscript{215} In addition to solving technical problems, Rivers also will forewarn the student of places where the pianist must be especially sensitive to balance.

**DOMINANT PERSONALITIES**

As mentioned in the previous section, a small degree of disparity between levels can actually be a positive experience for those involved, especially if, as Eugene Pridonoff says, “[the dominant or advanced player] is diplomatic and knows how to bring the others along.”\textsuperscript{216} Likewise, Rivers states, “if I see it in a group, sometimes it helps if that [dominant] person can really carry that group along and is sort of raising their level.”\textsuperscript{217} If the ensemble works together solely for the purpose of learning repertoire without the pressure of a public performance, again, the difference in levels is not necessarily problematic.

However, in the instance where the most advanced student tries to dictate exactly how everyone else “ought” to play, does not allow the others to participate in decision making, or does not really listen to the other members at all, the coach may consider intervening for the sake of the group’s progress. The coach’s objective in this situation is to acknowledge the student’s strength and inspire the student to use their strength in a

\textsuperscript{213} Posnak interview, February 9, 2013.
\textsuperscript{214} Rivers interview, February 28, 2013.
\textsuperscript{215} Rivers interview, February 28, 2013.
\textsuperscript{216} Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 2, 2013.
\textsuperscript{217} Rivers interview, February 4, 2013.
constructive manner so that all members will participate and improve. Somehow the coach must convince the advanced student of the importance of teamwork. Eugene and Elisabeth Pridonoff as well as Rivers advocate speaking to the advanced student privately, in order to avoid humiliating the student in front of the other group members.218,219

When addressing the advanced student privately, Eugene Pridonoff suggests using the following approach:

… ‘You’re more evolved as a musician and you seem to have a grasp for how this music needs to go. And I really need you to work with me and to work with the group, allowing them to understand your point of view without creating tension because, you know, they’re youngsters and sometimes they’re insecure…’ In other words, you try to get that person to understand psychologically and to be encouraging [to their colleagues].220

Eugene Pridonoff’s statement appeals directly to the student’s sense of empathy. A similar statement from Elisabeth Pridonoff invites the advanced student to act compassionately but in a more subtle fashion:

“You know, you have some amazing ideas and I would really love to incorporate a lot of what you do; but we’re not quite there yet…Let’s see if these others can come up with something [on their own, since] you are already so much more beyond or ahead…Help them to catch up with you.” 221

Rivers also suggests encouraging the student to inspire others during rehearsal. Speaking directly to the student, she says:

‘You know what, you are such a strong leader, why don’t you make the others step up? If you’re that good at taking control, take control of making the others say something.’ Say, ‘I know I’ve offered this interpretation, what do the rest of you think? Make the others talk, don’t you be the one that’s talking all the time.’

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218 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 1, 2013.
219 Rivers interview, 4 February, 2013.
220 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 1, 2013.
221 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 1, 2013.
Rather than negating the actions of dominant personality, these strategies redirect the dominant student’s energy towards helping the other less-advanced group members rather than taking responsibility for making all the group decisions. It is equally important for the coach to keep a respectful tone of voice to avoid sounding patronizing.

In order to elicit cooperation from the dominant personality, as with offering criticism, the coach may want to make a positive statement about the advanced player’s leadership abilities first. In Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff’s experiences, the dominant personality may also have an inferiority complex and may actually feel insecure about their own abilities. Elisabeth Pridonoff believes, “if you give them the fact that they’re so good, then they don’t need that anymore. Therefore they back off the others.”

Though this explanation may not apply to all cases, in any event, the coach will likely encourage the dominant personality to refocus his or her leadership abilities in a positive direction.

Additionally or perhaps alternatively, coaches may prefer a less confrontational approach and insist that all members participate in discussions, thus counteracting the dominant personality’s tendencies to speak for the group and to contribute his or her individual opinions exclusively. Rivers uses the following approach: “I would make sure the others are talking… I’ll ask and somebody talks and I’ll say ‘I didn’t call on you.’ I just let it be known that I expect to hear from everybody, not just one person.” If dealing with those who are less inclined to talk in front of others, Radiushina advises being insistent, saying, “‘What do you think? What do you think? What do you think?’

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222 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 1, 2013.
223 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 1, 2013.
[You] actually make the introverted people speak up." Expecting every single member to contribute to the group discussion also sets a good example for rehearsals; coaches may wish to remind the group as such.

HANDLING CONFLICT WITHIN AN ENSEMBLE

Both Chertock and Elisabeth Pridonoff emphasize the importance of minimizing interpersonal conflict within a chamber ensemble. If possible, group members must avoid forming antagonistic alliances. Elisabeth Pridonoff states, “You have to at all costs avoid any kind of intrigues or fights because no one’s going to win.” Furthermore, Chertock advises that students avoid the following: “two or three people ganging up on the third player or the player they don’t know as well. I’ve seen some people in a trio situation; they love to make one person the bad one, the problem, the scapegoat. That’s not good.” I have personally found that when antagonistic alliances form, they can sometimes compromise performances. With different combinations of individuals upset with each other, the lack of interpersonal harmony affected our willingness to blend and to adjust to each other’s sound and spontaneous musical ideas.

If the group has a performance deadline, some of the interviewees insist that the coach must intervene. Rivers states, “…First of all, what’s the music going to sound like? The victim here is the music. Because if there’s so much tension and you’re resenting the person next to you, you’re not thinking about the score.” Rivers also asserts that palpable interpersonal tension between group members on stage detracts from the performance. Rivers, Eugene and Elisabeth Pridonoff advocate that the coach address

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226 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff, interview, February 1, 2013.
228 Rivers interview, February 4, 2013.
interpersonal tension in a chamber group openly when the coach senses that the tension is preventing the group from functioning well. Elisabeth Pridonoff states:

People that don’t get along, that is something that is very important…and you address it immediately. When you feel tension, I’m of the belief that you immediately direct it and say, ‘I’m feeling that there’s some tension here between you guys, and let’s talk it over! What’s up?’

Similarly, Rivers might ask an ensemble outright: “Explain to me what’s happening. Is it a matter of you can’t ever agree on anything in the score or you just don’t like each other?...Let’s get to the heart of the matter.”

Elisabeth Pridonoff offers the following insight as to why interpersonal conflict occurs: “Usually tension comes from miscommunication. And we have seen a lot of that. And much of it has to do with how you perceive of things versus how they perceive of things.” She also explains that when combining students of varying cultural backgrounds or styles of communication, misunderstandings naturally arise. She continues, “If one person resents the other because one said something and that person took it in a completely different way than what the other person meant it, but...nobody speaks up because nobody wants to say anything, you as the coach have to clear the air.” Eugene Pridonoff offers, “No matter what the situation, I think that we each want to feel that what we think and what we express matters. In other words, that it’s received with a sense of respect.” When the coach is facilitating the discussion, the coach can set an example to the ensemble by validating all of the students’ points of view.

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COACHES’ ADVICE ON DEALING WITH DIFFICULT COLLABORATORS

In some cases, a student may approach a coach with an interpersonal problem, asking the coach for advice. Many of the interviewees offered advice on dealing with difficult personalities as collaborators. In the case where the student finds their partner hard to get along with personally, Rivers offers,

Then you just have to be strictly professional and it’s just about the music. You know, one instrumentalist and I were not best friends…She didn’t adore me and that was ok, she didn’t have to. She may have not been crazy with me as a person but she respected me. And that’s what you need. You need the respect; you don’t need to be adored.236

The coach can encourage students to not expect friendships with every single collaborative partner. Elisabeth Pridonoff and Rivers, if collaborating with a difficult personality for a limited amount of time, will decide to rise above the situation, and be accommodating for the sake of the performance.237,238 Rivers states, “As a player, I decide that I am going to be the flexible one. If this person really wants it that way, and this is not going to be a 20, 30 year relationship…I will be the flexible one but you know, I won’t do it again.”239

For extremely egotistical or bossy personalities, Chertock offers the following strategies. For example, a student might try using persuasive wording in rehearsal:

If you’re got a really egotistical person you’re working with…you can use that to your advantage, like, “I really, really want to give you sufficient support here because of such and such…I wonder if we did this if I would be able to do that better.” That’s better than just “You’re wrong” or “I don’t agree with you” or that kind of thing.240

238 Rivers interview, February 4, 2013.
240 Chertock interview, February 28, 2013.
Again, the collaborator will be more likely to agree to a suggestion if the suggestion is to their benefit. For a bossy or pushy personality, Chertock advises that the student refrain from trying to please or even to negotiate with them. Rather,

If they say a bossy thing, don’t really respond to it. If they speak to you in a collegial manner, engage in that…Then, sort of mirror back to them, ‘Oh, it sounds like you’re really frustrated.’ [the collaborator replies:] ‘Oh, I’m not frustrated.’ ‘Oh, there’s just very strong energy coming out when you’re saying that.’

From that point, the person will most likely realize what they have been doing and will back off. This approach is effective because it neither threatens nor attempts to please the bossy personality. According to Chertock, attempts to please bossy collaborators will not win their respect. However, reflecting their partner’s sentiments back to them will not only render the interaction productive, it also helps both students maintain their equanimity and personal integrity without compromise.

POSSIBLE COACHING ROLES

As one would anticipate, each interviewee has a distinctly personal style of coaching. However, I have extracted roles or approaches that these master-coaches use in order to help the students become independent thinkers and better chamber musicians. In order to facilitate student development, coaches will most often use a combination of different roles and approaches. Along with these ideas, analysis and supportive examples from the published literature are offered when appropriate.

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THE AUTHORITARIAN

This style of teaching is similar to that of a traditional classroom teacher, in which a master-teacher disseminates information to disciples, with the coach as the primary focus. Rather than guiding students through problem-solving, the coach will point out the problems and their solutions directly. Very often, the Authoritarian coaches will teach a particular piece the same way to all groups regardless of the specific needs or deficiencies of the group. In extreme cases, the Authoritarian coach makes all of the musical decisions for the group, so that the group achieves a unified interpretation through adhering to the convictions of the coach. Since this type of teaching is common across many different pedagogical situations, many beginning coaches may use this technique by default, imitating their own teachers without exploring other options.

Though one may perceive immediate musical results from the approach, in the worst case scenario, the Authoritarian coaching style encourages dependence on the coach. I have observed that under these circumstances, the group will perform best in the coaching session, because they have learned to rely heavily on the coach to lead. I have also observed that with few exceptions, groups under this type of instruction often fall short of demonstrating ownership and authority during performances. Another by-product of the Authoritarian coaching style is that the coach does not allow or help to develop the individual’s musical flexibility; the students gain working experience of one interpretation, rather than being encouraged to explore different possibilities. Additionally, I have also observed that the Authoritarian coach-focused style of teaching neglects key deficiencies in an individual’s chamber music skills.
In academic setting, students may encounter multiple Authoritarian coaches at the same time. If preparing the piece for a recital, the students may receive input from studio teachers as well as chamber music coaches. Multiple perspectives can be helpful for the group until the coaches’ opinions start to conflict. Elisabeth Pridonoff states:

Chamber music has become a perfect example of what happens when you have all these individuals who have to be right. So then who’s the most right? Does it become the coach or the teacher? Everybody’s fighting over this need to be right instead of looking at it as the good of the group, the good of the music that the group is trying to share.242

Young students may feel conflicted about which musical choices to make for the performance, especially if all of the coaches are present at the recital. The students may base their musical choices on whoever is grading, regardless of whether these choices actually resonate with the group. A very secure group of students will bravely make their own decisions and risk displeasing one coach or teacher; however, not all students are equally self-assured. Again, consider that the Authoritarian coach works very well with students happy to simply accept the directives of the coach without question. If the students are receiving multiple “right ways,” the performance may become a patchwork of different interpretive decisions devoid of an underlying unification.

THE FACILITATOR

One possible coaching style which some of the interviewees described may be termed the “Facilitator coaching style,” as Facilitator coaches prefer to tailor their style of coaching to the specific needs of each group. These types of coaches tend to encourage the group to become better-informed, to think independently of the coach, and to form

242 Elisabeth and Eugene Pridonoff interview, February 2, 2013.
personalized interpretations. Rivers offers the following regarding the interaction between the coach and student:

[Students] find their way and you want them to have ideas and then you help guide them. You don’t want to say, “no, that’s wrong,” because you don’t want everybody sounding alike, you don’t want everyone coming out of your room playing it the same way…You want their personalities to come through and that’s where the coach comes in too, you don’t want to do everything by rote. So hopefully I am not talking one group the same way I am talking to another group because they are totally different people.\(^\text{243}\)

Rivers’ statement suggests that the coach will indeed adapt their approach to the needs and character of each ensemble. Coaching in a way that encourages a group to formulate their own personalized interpretation is a necessary component of the natural musical development of the group and the individual. Lin states:

A dogmatic musician can do tremendous harm. It’s my experience and observation that people rarely come up with horrible, illogical musical ideas themselves; they are usually injected into students' minds by some ‘teacher’, ‘coach’, or ‘expert.’\(^\text{244}\)

Moreover, allowing young students to become musically autonomous better prepares them for the professional sphere. Rivers states,

At some point, there isn’t going to be a teacher. Then what are you going to do? You’ve got to start having them think for themselves. And have them make mistakes and discover why maybe that won’t work. But don’t be too quick to say, ‘This is the way it is done. Ok, we’re going to do it this way.’ No. [Say,] ‘Here are some ideas, then you choose what works.’\(^\text{245}\)

In addition to developing their own independence, the students will be more likely to retain self-discovered information. Consider the following statement from group psychiatry experts Drs. Irvin D. Yalom and Melyn Leszcz:

It has long been known that observations, viewpoints, and insights arrived at through one’s own efforts are valued more highly than those that are thrust upon

\(^{243}\) Rivers interview, February 4, 2013.  
\(^{244}\) Lin, email to Adriana Teodoro-Dier, February 28, 2013.  
\(^{245}\) Rivers interview, February 4, 2013.
one by another person. The mature leader resists the temptation to make brilliant virtuoso interpretations but searches instead for methods that will permit clients to achieve self-knowledge through their own efforts.246

In a similar spirit, Radiushina offers a practical implementation of this pedagogical mindset:

A lot of times, it is important to trust the musicians that you’re working with and you can really say, ‘This is the sound that I have in mind…Can you show me how you can achieve it?’ or ‘What are the ways you can get to that point on your instrument?’ I find that that works really well. It is also a kind of a pathway, if you’re working with a new ensemble, to open up their trust.247

Though the coach provides the focus or the direction for the students, allowing the students to discover solutions for themselves also stimulates their sense of ownership.

Some of the coach-student interactions which the interviewees described intersect with a current trend in pedagogical publications, in which the coach functions as an egalitarian leader and uses discussion and debate to illuminate musical possibilities. For example, Louis Hanzlick, states: “teachers would do well to present themselves to students as one of many experts in the room…we are authorities and not authoritarians.”248 Similarly, Rivers states:

I like the person to think I have something to offer and that it’s not all coming from them. Some coaches don’t like anything coming from you, the student...I think you should give me the benefit of the doubt because I am more experienced than you, but none of us know everything.249

Also recall that both Rivers and Tocco like their students to engage in a discussion about musical ideas.250,251 Tocco in particular states, “I don’t like them to be uptight. I would like them to feel free to speak to me, to ask me questions, to challenge me if

251 Tocco interview, February 28, 2013.
necessary.”  

Loft also recounts becoming convinced of students’ interpretations after engaging in lively debates. However, if the students are less-inclined to participate in verbal discussion, or are more aurally or kinesthetically oriented, this strategy may be less successful. Again, another potential challenge is time-management, especially when dealing with a large group. To counteract this problem, Radiushina suggests setting limits on either the amount or number of times an ensemble member can speak, an effective rehearsal strategy as well. She describes one possibility for rehearsal as follows: “Each person speaks for no longer than thirty seconds and there are five times during the rehearsal that they can say something.”

The evolving process in which Facilitator coaches continually search for new ways to explain concepts to different students is of particular benefit for the coach. Abram Loft states, “You, the coach, might be able to learn something from your students. By seeking and find the most effective way of explaining a technical or musical detail to one student, the teacher adds to his own ability to educate all his students.” Also, allowing students to formulate their own ideas can sometimes illuminate previously unconsidered musical possibilities to the coach. Rivers reports, “sometimes you’ll get an idea from a student and you’re like, ‘Oh my! That’s worth pursuing! Let’s give that a chance.’” Given the above considerations, it seems that the group would benefit greatly if the coach inspired the group members to experiment and to explore different options on their own rather than to insist on a particular interpretation. In a facilitator guided group rehearsal, there are possibly just as many ideas as there are musicians.

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252 Tocco interview, February 28, 2013.
253 Loft, 237.
255 Loft, 238.
COMBINATION OF THE FACILITATOR AND AUTHORITARIAN

Although the Facilitative coaching style will eventually foster student independence, the Authoritarian style of coaching is helpful to use when a group encounters a new concept for the first time or if the group members are relatively inexperienced. However, in the long term, a coach may want to consider shifting from an Authoritarian coaching style toward the Facilitative style. Abram Loft believes that making this type of shift is the key to successful coaching:

Let me emphasize, again, that a prime responsibility of the coach is to gauge the readiness of the ensemble to make further progress on its own…The coach must know how to recognize achievement, move gradually into an advisory role, and allow the ensemble to assert an independent musical personality.257

In some cases, the profile of the group, the relative experience, abilities and group chemistry influence the extent to which the coach may transition completely into an “advisory role.” Under circumstances with extreme disparity of levels, extreme inexperience, or in the worst case, absence of musicality, the coach may need to continue to implement the Authoritarian coaching style. However, the coach subtly shift towards the Facilitative coach in small degrees. For instance, if a coach must tell a group how to solve a problem on one occasion (Authoritarian), the next time a similar issue comes up, the coach can ask the group members how they can solve this problem based on their previous work (Facilitator).

In conclusion, the impact of a coach on the individual college student’s musical, emotional and intellectual development is not to be taken lightly. Coaches have the power to catalyze positive change in their students including artistic transformation, intellectual advancement and emotional growth. Though holding their students to high performance

257 Abram Loft, 230.
standards, expecting students to have valid opinions, and offering generous amounts of encouragement, I have seen coaches transform my colleagues from being “good” students afraid to make mistakes into confident, daring performers. During coachings, I have also witnessed normally self-centered students become musically supportive and more receptive towards their colleagues. In an educational environment where students alternate between willful social isolation and fierce competition with their peers, collegiate chamber music coaches have the special privileges reconnecting students with joy: the joy of learning from others; the joy of contributing to a group; and simply, the joy of becoming part of something greater than any one individual.
BIBLIOGRAPHY: TOPIC LISTING

CHAMBER MUSIC COACHING


CHAMBER MUSIC REHEARSAL PROCEDURE

(Note: The materials in this section contain information for the mixed chamber ensemble. For string quartet-related information, see below under “String Quartet.”)


PERFORMANCE PRACTICE/SPECIFIC REPERTORY (MIXED ENSEMBLE)


PEDAGOGICAL MATERIALS


STRING QUARTET (PERFORMANCE PRACTICE/REPERTORY/BIOGRAPHY)


Kornstein, Egon F. “How to Practise a String-Quartet.” Translated by Dorothy Holland, Music and Letters 3 (1923): 32-34.


NON-MUSICAL SOURCES (INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS)


APPENDIX A

Appendix A is a presentation of musical examples which illustrate certain key concepts from Chapter III. Possible solutions are included for each example. The examples are presented under their original Chapter III heading (for example “Flexible Time,” “Listening: Considerations for the Pianist,” and so on).

FLEXIBLE TIME

There are two passages in the first movement of Johannes Brahms’ Sonata no. 1 for piano and violin in G major, Op. 78, where counting out loud can help the students negotiate the issue of flexible time. In the first example, counting out loud encourages the pianist to give clear subdivisions with his or her right hand.

Example A.1a. J. Brahms, Sonata no. 1 for piano and violin in G major, op. 78, 1st movement, mm. 67-70.
The next example from the same movement is challenging for the ensemble to coordinate because the proportional relaxation of the tempo occurs over different rhythmic subdivisions in the violin, while the piano contains consistent pairs of quarter-notes. Again, counting out loud will help the students coordinate the pacing of this section.

Example A.1b. J. Brahms, Sonata no. 1 for piano and violin in G major, op. 78, 1st movement, mm. 195-198.

LISTENING: CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PIANIST

The following examples demonstrate instances where the pianist must anticipate possible balance issues due to the following considerations: the register of the piano, dense or complex layers of texture, relative volumes or lighter-timbre instruments, or any combination of the above. For these issues, interviewees referred the following pieces: Prokofiev’s Flute Sonata in D major, Poulenc’s *Trio pour piano, hautbois et bassoon*; Franck’s Sonata in A Major. Additionally, Poulenc’s *Sonate pour violon et piano* demonstrates special cases of lighter-timbre accommodation.

The opening of the third movement of Prokofiev’s Sonata op.94 for flute and piano is a typical place where the pianist must lighten or lessen the right hand texture.
The right hands chords and the low bass notes in the piano can easily overwhelm the flute if played too loudly or aggressively, especially since they are scored in the loud middle range of the piano. The coach can encourage the pianist to characterize the repeated chords and the bass notes with crisp articulation rather than rely solely on volume to create energy.

Example A.2a. S. Prokofiev, Sonata op. 94 for flute and piano, 3rd movement, mm. 1-5.

Similarly, the pianist must also watch the volume of the harmonic figures when working with lighter-timbre instruments. In the climax of the second movement of the aforementioned Poulenc Trio, all three instruments play fortissimo possible (fff).

However, this dynamic must be relative to the collective sound; obviously the piano can achieve a much louder dynamic than either the oboe or bassoon, especially given the multi-voice texture in the piano. Leading up to this moment, the pianist must also
carefully balance the low bass notes and the inner voices to allow the oboe and bassoon lines to come through.

Example A.2b. F. Poulenc, *Trio pour piano, hautbois et basson*, 2nd movement, mm. 31-37.

Additionally, another passage in same movement poses balance problems due to texture and registration. The coach must bring the pianist’s attention to the double-note figures which occur in a naturally louder register on the piano. Furthermore, the pianist
must monitor the volume of the lower bass notes as well, as the low bass on a modern piano can easily overpower the bassoon or the oboe, even when the woodwinds play at louder dynamic levels.

Example A.2c. F. Poulenc, *Trio pour piano, hautbois et basson*, 2nd movement, mm. 41-44.

In addition to monitoring the projection of the middle range of the piano, pianists must be aware of the extent to which the bass texture can affect the balance. In the first movement of Prokofiev’s Sonata op.94, the pianist must monitor the low bass sixteenth-note figurations in the left hand. If the pianist plays these figures too heavily, the texture can easily overpower the flute or violin. One possible solution is to use a lighter touch in the lively galloping sixteenth-note left hand and keeping the bass figurations transparent by modulating (fluttering) the pedal.
At the very end of the Prokofiev sonata, the pianist must handle the final unison passage carefully. Though the flute plays in a higher, easily projected register, the topmost voice of the wide, repeated piano chords doubles the flute melody. Note that the left hand chords in loud mid-range register of the piano compound the balance problem. Again, the pianist must take care not to overwhelm his or her collaborator by playing the chords too heavily or loudly. Changing the pedal on each chord can also help lighten up the texture.
Example A.2e. S. Prokofiev, Sonata op. 94 for flute and piano, 3rd movement, mm. 170-174.

The Franck Sonata in A Major for violin and piano presents many instances where proper balance, let alone technical mastery, is difficult to achieve. The second movement \textit{Allegro} is particularly thorny due to its speed and complex contrapuntal writing. The following excerpt is perhaps one of most challenging spots in the repertoire, requiring high level of technical polish from the pianist. After figuring out a suitable fingering (Posnak likes to call this excerpt a “fingering rubics cube”), the pianist must control and balance four-voice contrapuntal textures at a lightning-quick tempo. In the following excerpt, the pianist must subtly bring out the canonic imitation between the hands (with bass octaves beginning in m. 131), while keeping the fluttering sixteenths in the right hand inner voice transparent and sustaining occasional long tones in the bass, all
with a feather-light touch so as not to disrupt the *pianissimo* violin descant. The pianist must practice to gain total control over each voice separately and in different combinations. For some students, redistributing the texture between the hands may work well. For example, the left hand can take some of the inner sixteenth-note figurations in mm.131-132.

Example A.2f. C. Franck, Sonata in A major for violin and piano, 2\textsuperscript{nd} movement, mm. 130-135.
Again, in addition to balancing a busy left hand figuration with a delicate right hand, the movement contains places where voice crossing can compromise the projection of the instrumental line, especially where the crossing occurs. If playing this sonata with a flute, the pianist watch the volume of the crescendo in m. 33 to accommodate the low register of the flute as the flute’s melody descends into the right hand texture.

Example A.2g. C. Franck, Sonata in A major for violin and piano, 2nd movement, mm. 29-33.

Coaches can help pianists become sensitive to areas where the use of certain effects limits the projection of the instrumental line. As in the voice crossing of the previous example, in Poulenc’s Sonate pour violon et piano, the pianist must be careful that his or part does not obliterate delicate coloristic effects in the violin. In the following
example, the violin is instructed to play “sur la touche” (close to the fingerboard) in order to create a wispy, floating effect. In the same rhythm and register as the violin line, Poulenc writes a figuration for the left hand in the full mid-range of the piano along with chords in the right hand, a texture which can easily drown out the single-note violin line. Additionally, the left hand figuration is pianistically awkward and can be difficult to play softly without sacrificing clarity.

Example A.2h. F. Poulenc, *Sonate pour violon et piano*, 1st movement, mm. 43-46.

In the third movement of the same sonata, the violin outlines the piano melody with *pizzicati*. Though interpretations vary, one solution is for the pianist to keep the off-beat chords light and must use pedal sparingly (if at all) so as not to cover the violin.
As discussed in Chapter III, certain textures from Classical period works become problematic when rendered on the modern piano, as the works were conceived on a different, lighter action instrument. The following works are representative of this particular problem: Beethoven’s Trio no. 5 in E♭ major for piano, violin and cello, op.70; Hummel’s Trio for flute, cello and piano, op. 78. The next excerpt from Beethoven’s Piano Trio Op. 70, no.2 is a typical example of figurations which easily become too dense on the modern piano. The thick four-note left hand chords increase in rhythmic intensity until they become repeated sixteenth-note chords. When coupled with arpeggiated figures in the right hand, the composite texture could likely have been appropriately balanced on a lighter wooden pianoforte with shallower key-dip and thin leather-covered hammers. However, on a modern piano, the texture becomes unwieldy, especially at the end of the excerpt where the left hand plays repeated sixteenth-note chords. Both hands must remain light and the pedal must be modulated. The pianist must voice the left hand chords to the top note and emphasize the chord changes every half-measure, lightening up the chords within the same harmony. Posnak calls this technique “pulsing”: through outlining or emphasizing only the harmonic goal points, the texture
remains unobtrusive yet full of rhythmic vitality. In case of an extremely loud or bright piano, the pianist can use the *una corda* pedal while playing *forte.*
Example A.3a. L. van Beethoven, Trio no. 5 in E♭ major for piano, violin and cello, op.70, no.2, 2nd movement, mm. 112-118.
Again, Hummel’s Trio for flute, cello and piano, op. 78 was written for an earlier “prototype” of the modern piano and the pianist simply cannot play the dynamics in certain passages exactly as written. In the following excerpt, the pianist would most certainly drown out the flute if one were to play the rapid sixteenth-notes at the indicated dynamic level (forte for the piano), especially since the piano sometimes plays in the same register as the flute. Instead, the pianist must reduce the dynamic and play with extreme clarity and lightness of touch rather than the bravura which the expressive markings and texture suggest.

Example A.3b. J.N. Hummel, Trio for flute, cello and piano, op. 78, 3rd movement, mm. 11-14.
In addition to the matter of rendering Classical period works tastefully on the modern piano, Haydn trios pose an additional issue for the pianist, as the piano left hand doubles the cello line almost constantly. The coach can encourage the pianist to play the left hand more lightly to let the cello come out. If the left hand texture becomes thicker, as in his Piano Trio No. 10 in A♭ major, H. 14, where the piano left hand doubles the cello in broken octaves, the pianist must be especially careful, as this texture can easily overpower the single line of the cello if played too heavily on the modern piano.

Example A.3c. J. Haydn, Trio no. 10 in A♭ major for piano, violin and cello, H.14, 1st movement, mm. 85-92.
Though written for an instrument closer to the modern piano, certain cello and piano duo works from the Romantic period also pose balance problems due to thick piano writing. These works include: Brahms’ Sonata no. 2 for Cello and Piano in F major, op. 99; Chopin’s Cello Sonata, Op. 65; Rachmaninoff’s Sonata for cello and piano in G minor, op. 19. Though certainly difficult pianistically, the Brahms Sonata no. 2 in F major for cello and piano, op. 99 poses difficulties due to coloristic effects rather than virtuosic demands. For example, the volume of the opening tremolos can be difficult to control, due to their density and scoring in the upper middle-range of the piano. The problem magnifies in the first movement recapitulation, as the composer adds an additional octave to the right hand tremolo. The pianist must release and retake the pedal by the second beat of m.128 to control the volume, while keeping the tremolo piano, relying on the pedal to create support. In addition to modulating (fluttering) the damper pedal, the pianist can also use the una corda pedal following the downbeat.
Example A.4a. J. Brahms, Sonata no. 2 in F major for cello and piano, op. 99, 1\textsuperscript{st} movement, mm. 128-133.

With Frederic Chopin’s Sonata for cello and piano in G minor, the reason for balance problems emerges largely from a similar issue to that of repertoire from the Classical period: the composers were writing for lighter-action pianos. Certainly on Chopin’s preferred Pleyel piano, dense texture with \textit{forte} octaves and full chords would have been more transparent, allowing the cello line to cut through as in the following example. However, this texture rendered on the modern piano is much less sympathetic to the cello. To solve this problem, the pianist can use a lighter touch and voice to the outer voices in both hands, and modulate the pedal, perhaps using half-pedal on the sustained harmonies rather than full.
Example A.4b. F. Chopin, Sonata for cello and piano in G minor, op. 65, 1st movement, mm. 154-159.
Balance problems abound in almost every movement of Sergei Rachmaninoff’s Sonata in G minor for cello and piano, op. 19, which Lin describes as “a piano concerto with cello.”

From the first movement, the following example features a duet between the rhythmic motive from the opening theme in the piano left hand and the countermelody in the cello. The right hand provides relentless right hand sixteenth-note figuration which must remain light within the context of the overall dynamic. The coach can suggest that the pianist play the figures one or two dynamic levels less, as the quickly moving sixteenths generate volume on their own, especially with pedal. In an orchestral fashion, the stratification between the bass octaves and the higher register right hand figurations allow the cello line to occupy its own discrete register in the middle of the piano texture, at least in the beginnings of each one-bar phrase gesture. However, the three-note left hand punctuation chords either double or cross the cello line. Again, the pianist must voice the chords appropriately, noting that voicing the bottom of the chord will provide harmony rather than doubling with the cello line. The pedaling must follow the articulation of the powerful rhythmic motive in the left hand.

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Example A.4c. S. Rachmaninoff Sonata in G minor for cello and piano, op. 19, 1st movement, mm. 196-201.

The next example from the slow third movement also features a duet between the cello and the piano. However, the lavishly scored contrapuntal writing in the piano can easily overwhelm the cello. As the two parts have similar dynamic profiles, the pianist must reduce the five-voice texture to match the volume and character of as the cello’s single line. The pulsing right hand melody and left hand low bass notes can provide most
mezzo-forte dynamic, with rich low bass notes giving support to the piano and cello melodies. The balance issue concerns the left hand: if played heavily, the inner line will compete with the cello, as the two parts occupy the same register. The left hand inner sixteenths can be played almost piano, to add a light wash of color. Passages such as these require the pianist to know the extent to which the cellist can project so that the pianist can plan the dynamic pacing accordingly.
Though Romantic piano trios do not generally pose balance issues, Isidore Cohen of the Beaux Arts Trio considers Robert Schumann’s Trio in G major for piano, violin and cello, op.110, difficult for the pianist to balance. According to Cohen, the ensemble
can lose clarity when the strings play in a lower register with the piano. In the following excerpt from the second movement, the cello plays in a lower register while the piano doubles both the string parts. Making matters more difficult, the left hand doubles the cello melody in octaves and the violin melody in chords. The pianist can accommodate both lines by playing at reduced dynamics, in this case *mezzo-forte* or *mezzo-piano* rather than *forte*, and voicing away from the doubled voice. For example, the pianist can voice to the bottom of both the left hand octaves and the right hand chords, since the top voices double the strings. With this voicing, the entire three-instrument texture expands richly into a seven-color texture, rather than a monophonic piano overpowering the strings.

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LISTENING: CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE ENSEMBLE

The grand opening chords of Mozart’s Wind Quintet, K. 452 require perfect synchronization of onset (as well as intonation) from instruments with different mechanics and immediacies of attack. Sloppy or unsynchronized attacks diffuse the majesty of these exposed, orchestra-like punctuations. The group must designate a leader to give a strong cue and must breathe together to execute these chords effectively.
Example A.6. W.A. Mozart, Quintet for piano and winds, K.452, 1st movement, mm. 1-5.
APPENDIX B

Appendix B contains the University of Miami IRB exemption letter in its original electronic form, along with the approved documents associated with the study (Verbal Consent Script and the Sample Interview Questionnaire follows).
VERBAL CONSENT SCRIPT

Coaching Chamber Music for the Mixed Ensemble: An Inquiry into Interpersonal Dynamics and Rehearsal Procedure

Hello, my name is Adriana Teodoro-Dier and I am involved in a research study called “Coaching Chamber Music for the Mixed Ensemble: An Inquiry into Interpersonal Dynamics and Rehearsal Procedure,” with Margaret Donaghue at the University of Miami.

PURPOSE OF STUDY:
We are asking you to take part in a research study because we are trying to learn more about coaching procedure for the collegiate mixed ensemble. The study focuses on how to work with an ensemble efficiently during a coaching session and what your particular approach is. You will be asked to participate in a one-hour, one-on-one, in-person interview. Do you have any objection to being audio-recorded? If not, you can still participate in this study. There are no risks involved in participating in this study.

You will not benefit directly from participating in this research study.
You will not be paid for participating in this research study.

You are strongly encouraged to read and edit the transcription of the interview as well as the final document in order that your point of view is presented appropriately. The contents of the transcript will be published in the final dissertation document, to be submitted to the University of Miami. Though you have the right to request that your interview be presented as coming from an anonymous source, the explicit identification of your opinions as an established chamber music professional is of more value to the study.

You have the right to review the audio-tape, of which no one has access to except for me and Margaret Donaghue. The audio-tapes will be erased after the final document has been approved.

All electronic data (ie. the transcript of the interview) will be stored in computer files. Only people who are directly involved with the project will have access to those records.

Your participation is voluntary. You can decline to participate, and you can stop your participation at any time, if you wish to do so, without any negative consequences to you.

Do you have an hour to participate in this research study? Would you like to participate now or at a later time? If so, let’s schedule it for [...].

By you answering the survey/interview questions that I will ask, this means you consent to participate in this research project. Do you have any questions?
If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Margaret Donaghue, at the Frost School of Music, P.O. Box 248165 Coral Gables, FL 33124-7610, Day phone number: (305) 284-2161 Ext. 7943

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact the University of Miami, Human Subject Research Office at (305)243-3195.
INTERVIEW TOPICS/QUESTIONS GUIDE

(Note: These questions are not a script. More than likely I will need to modify questions in order to clarify or pursue additional information. The text in italics which precedes each group of questions provides guidelines for setting up the topic.)

INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS:

Topics Overview:

1) Role of a coach
2) Lack of commitment
3) Dominant personalities
4) Interpersonal communication

The chamber music repertoire contains not only vast amounts of repertoire but also different ensemble configurations such as duo sonatas, trios, sextets, and so on. The instrumentation can vary greatly as well. Is it a different experience to coach different kinds of ensembles? Are there certain techniques that you might use with one rather than another? What ensemble configuration do you find most enjoyable to work with (and why)?

Few publications give concrete definitions of coaching. What are the differences between coaching and teaching? When do the two overlap? What is the main responsibility of the coach? Outside of his/her primary instrument, how much awareness of instrumental mechanics must a coach have?
The members of the Guarneri quartet made a conscious decision to forgo all other chamber music projects when they first formed. However, especially in college settings, members of ensembles are very busy with many different ensembles and projects. What would you do if one or members frequently show up to rehearsal unprepared or fail to come to rehearsal? Are you responsible for motivating the member(s) to commit to the group? What if the group fails to rehearse because they cannot find time?

Other coaches and performers have told me that encountering a dominant personality in a chamber group setting is very common. This person assumes a leadership role and either rejects or ignores the input of other members. In your own performance experience, have you ever dealt with dominant personalities? What is the best way to work with them? How about in your coaching experience? What can you as a coach do to promote a better working relationship for this ensemble? How do you inspire other members to take leadership? Do you have any specific rehearsal techniques or exercises that might give each member of the group equal opportunities for leadership? Have you ever found the opposite problem where no one wants to take leadership?

In my own experience, I find that the most rewarding chamber music experiences happen when I have good personal and musical chemistry with the other group members. However, sometimes circumstances require that I work under less than ideal situations in this respect. What do you do when faced with a difficult personality or situation? As a coach, how do you facilitate healthy disagreement within an ensemble? How can you
encourage the ensemble members to communicate clearly in rehearsal? What kinds of wording or sentences are especially effective when offering feedback or criticism?

**CHAMBER MUSIC REHEARSAL PROCEDURE**

Topics Overview:

1) Editions
2) Rehearsing from score
3) Rehearsal Tempo
4) Flexible Time
5) Balance
6) Cueing/Breathing
7) Group vs. Individual Practice

*Chamber music groups often have the luxury of choosing from many different editions. Sometimes not all the members of the group play from the same one. What is your opinion about members using different editions? How much respect do you have for a student who comes to coaching with only a photocopy of the score? Do you encourage members of the group to obtain a copy of the original manuscript? What editions do you recommend?*

*In most cases, chamber music players do not play from the full score unless they are the pianist. It is easier for the pianist to be aware of the full score because they see all the*
other parts. I understand that playing with the score can be logistically difficult for the other members of the group because of the number of page turns. Should the non-pianists at least use a full score for rehearsals? What kind of strategies or techniques can the non-pianists use to know the other parts well, especially in a duo sonata?

*Practicing at a slow tempo is an issue which many musicians tend to overlook in their own practice sessions even if they are experienced musicians.* How is slow practice beneficial for an ensemble? Is it necessary to practice an entire movement slowly or just a section? Are there circumstances where slow practice is less helpful? Does the proximity of the performance date affect rehearsal tempo? Do you recommend that groups rehearse at the intended tempo right up to the performance or do you have other strategies?

*Feeling flexible time can pose a challenge for those playing chamber music.* Flexible time refers to the following: ritardandi, allargandi, accelerandi, fermata, etc. How do you help the ensemble members feel areas of flexible time together? What practice or rehearsal strategies would you recommend? Are there strategies better-suited for helping a large chamber ensemble with this issue and if so, what are they?

*Another major challenge of playing chamber music is balance.* In your opinion, is the pianist solely responsible for balance? Are there specific references in the literature where issues of balance are particularly problematic? Does changing the height of the piano lid help with balance? Speaking of positioning, what is your favorite configuration for a string quartet? For a piano trio/quartet/quintet?
Much of playing chamber music relies in non-verbal communication: eye contact, breathing, body movement. Is eye contact absolutely essential for chamber music performance? At what instances is eye contact most appropriate? How often or under what specific circumstances must the members of the group watch the leading string player’s bow? What kinds of problems can be solved by breathing together? How can an ensemble practice or rehearse breathing together? Is breathing a sufficient cue or is breathing with some kind of body movement more effective?

In addition to rehearsing together, members of a chamber group may also need to practice separately to work on individual parts. However, if members practice alone too much, the cohesiveness and strength of ensemble may suffer, especially with duo sonatas. Have you ever encountered this situation? How much time do you recommend that ensembles rehearse together vs. apart? Do you advocate the group listening to recordings together or is listening apart acceptable?