If You Give a Quartet a Coaching

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If You Give A Quartet A Coaching

If you give a quartet a coaching, they are going to want a metronome to go with it,

When you give them a metronome, they are going to want to know how to use it,

When you show them how to tune and keep time with it, they are going to want to keep a steady tempo,

Then they’ll get excited and ask you to help them with their rhythms,

When you show them Reverse Slicing, they’re going to master polyrhythms.

But they’ll realize that they weren’t matching their vibrato so you’ll teach them how to Live, Breathe, & Die.

And as they work on Live, Breathe, and Die, they will need to develop a concept for focus,

So you’ll have them share vivid imagery to go with the music.

After many coachings, they will be ready for a concert, so you’ll help them organize a performance!

They will be so moved by the performance, that they will want to keep studying music.

As they continue through their career, they will take on their own students.

And if they give a quartet a coaching, they are going to want this manual to go with them.

- Alexander C. Ullman
Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank my advisor Dr. Andrea Bohlman for her patience and guidance through the duration of the project. I would also like to thank my committee of readers, Professor Brent Wissick and Professor Donald Oehler for taking the time to critique my work. Finally I would like to thank all of the students, teachers, and interviewees who gave their time, energy and wisdom to this project. I look forward to see how it will continue to grow.
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Introduction
As a musician, I believe performing and teaching chamber music are essential modes of communication and meaningful ways to have a positive impact on a community. My first experience with this was playing cello at the Greenwich Woods Health Care Center, where my great-grandmother, G.G. lived. She was 98-years old and suffered from dementia, so she could no longer hold a conversation, yet there I sat with her in the dining room during lunch. My mother had encouraged me to bring my cello so I set up my instrument and began to plunk out “Hot Cross Buns,” as a warm-up. G.G. smiled. Once I was ready to perform, I started to play “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” and then got fancy and played an obbligato part to the same tune. My great-grandmother, who had been unable to consistently connect with reality, began to tap her feet and faintly hummed the song that she had not sung in many years. I was just a kid, playing for my great-grandma, and, somehow, a connection was made that brought her a moment of lucidity. I wanted to share that musical connection with people locally, and so I asked three friends of mine to form a group to play music for the elderly at Connecticut nursing homes. We played our elementary school orchestra music as a piano quartet, and continued to perform for the next two years. Playing with this ensemble was my first introduction to chamber music even if I did not know it at the time.

In the summer, I participated in a chamber music festival called Chamber Music Central. The first year at the festival, I was paired with a pianist and flautist to play Joseph Haydn’s Piano Trio Hob. XV/25, for my first exposure to a formal chamber music setting that involved a regular coaching. I remember how strong our collective drive was to present a polished work at the concert, and I still have the recording of our performance. I
enjoyed my experience so much that I continued to participate at this festival for several years.

When I was 17, I earned the opportunity to participate in the Chamber Music Institute for Young Musicians led by Asya Meshberg, whose incorporation of a metronome named “Lucy” inspired a whole chapter of this study. The festival is a two-session intensive string quartet study at which each group is devoted to a complete major work in the string quartet literature. The year I first participated I dove into Claude Debussy’s String Quartet in G minor, Op. 10, with three people I did not know. Under the leadership of Asya, we worked every day to learn our parts, explore what making chamber music meant for us, and how it helped us relate to the world around us. I learned more from Asya in that week—about cello playing, music making, and the world of chamber music—than I had in the previous seven years I had been playing the instrument.

I learned how to count, keep time, and play in tune as both a soloist and ensemble musician. I learned how my bow usage could create sounds that evoked the French style. I learned how to practice efficiently. Most importantly, I learned how important having a well-trained, experienced quartet coach was for me to grow so much in such a short span of time.

I am convinced that these chamber music experiences are the main reasons I still play cello and want to pursue a career in music. From a survey of my peers, professors, and other music professionals, I have been convinced that this is a critical common factor for the development of an aspiring classical musician. Colin and Eric Jacobsen of Brooklyn Rider both began playing chamber music at an incredibly young age with their parents and
as part of the Juilliard pre-college program.\(^1\) The violist of that quartet, Nicholas Cords, was originally a violinist. His first, major chamber music experience was being thrown into a Brahms quartet on viola at a music festival, at which point he was required to simultaneously learn the viola and alto clef. Another mentor of mine, violinist Jennifer Curtis, grew up improvising chamber music by herself using a four-track tape recorder. She is now an acclaimed soloist and chamber musician.\(^2\)

Why, then, does it seem that chamber music, which is a vital part of music education, is not accessible for most primary and secondary education students, but only experienced at the higher education level and through special programs, festivals, and camps. My public school education experience consisted of playing in school orchestra and taking private lessons, but that was it. I was fortunate enough to live in an area that had external music opportunities such as CMC, the CMIYM, and local youth orchestras and to have parents willing to drive me to them. This is consistent with the education many of my colleagues received in their public schools. The musical education of my colleagues, many professional musicians, and myself differed from that of other music students our age when we started to participate in chamber music.

In order to continue and enhance the tradition of excellent teaching at public and private schools, any subject or specialization that has as profound an impact on students as chamber music needs educator training. At universities such as the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill there are performance courses for chamber music ensembles and advanced history lectures on the development of chamber music since the 18\(^{th}\) century. There is also an entire degree program at UNC-CH for Music Education. However, there is

\(^1\) Nicholas Cords, Colin Jacobsen, Eric Jacobsen, interview with author, Chapel Hill, NC, April 4 2014.
\(^2\) Jennifer Curtis, Skype interview with author, July 29, 2014.
no course that bridges the gap between chamber music performance, history, and music education. Instrumental music teachers study how to better educate students and teach these methods for better teaching. Schools such as the University of Hartford’s Hartt School of Music offer Masters of Music degrees in Suzuki Pedagogy for students wanting to learn a comprehensive method for teaching violin, viola, cello, piano, and guitar. Master performers write their own methods such as János Starker’s, *An Organized Method of String Playing* or Ivan Galamian’s scale system as outlined in *Contemporary Violin Technique*. These are written as exercises for the student, rather than a guide for a private lesson instructor, but still provide a great deal of information that can be used by a teacher over their students courses of study.

The string quartet coach is relatively absent in music pedagogical literature when compared to other performance traditions in music. Experienced string quartets have some resources for self-advancement, such as *The Art of String Quartet Playing*, and *At the Heart of Chamber Music*; however, these sources are limited. Sources such as *The Cambridge Companion to the String Quartet* and films such as *The Matchstick Man* are devoid of descriptions of the coaching practice even when talking about master coaches or showing excerpts of the rehearsal process. However, inexperienced players depend on a coach to lead them in their studies. In order to provide valuable coaching to these less experienced musicians, the coach needs techniques to apply their teaching. In current American

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chamber music practice, coaches learn by spending years as students in ensembles both small and large, gathering knowledge by observing their own coaches. Many go on to coach quartets made up of their own students. However, they do not have the ability to study the coaching of quartets. While there is formal study of chamber music and its performance, there is no formal study of the subject of coaching these ensembles.

With this thesis, I suggest that chamber music coaching be considered a crucial learning objective for music students of all ages and through my research, provide a document that will help guide their learning processes. There is no lack of interest in the task of quartet coaching. Instead, there is no organized material to facilitate formal study. Emerging chamber music coaches need a resource that compiles the many issues that they will face in real coaching scenarios and functional, tested solutions to these problems—a pedagogy that is comprised of methods, techniques, and analyses.

For the following work, a three-page handout created by the Cavani String Quartet is the closest thing to a model. This was only available as an appendix to a 2012 doctoral thesis. This document is a good start, but it only contains some of the techniques used by only the members Cavani String Quartet and their students. I take a different direction in this presentation. Through interviews, coaching observation, and field coaching, I compiled eight techniques and methods used by coaches from a variety of musical backgrounds, consolidating them in one convenient location along with my general observations about coaching scenarios. What I ultimately envision is a text that, in a cohesive, organized manner, presents the knowledge of string quartet coaches from any school of thought that

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wishes to be included. The foundation of such a resource follows. I invite my readers to contribute, to nourish its growth. Please use it to further yourself as a teacher and player. Please use it to help your students grow as musicians and people.

Methods
This study was designed in three phases. Phase One began by interviewing professional string quartet players and coaches on their development as musicians and techniques they employ when coaching or giving master classes to chamber ensembles, as well as observing them during coachings. Through the interviews and my observations, I isolated eight methods that I believed would be the most useful in applied coaching situations. The methods fell under three categories: Rehearsal Structuring, Technical Demands, and Concept Development and Execution.

The methods described in, “Rehearsal Structuring,” are designed to help coaches plan long term and short term schedules for rehearsing. Coaching A Warm-Up teaches how to use scales to prepare students mentally and physically for the remainder of the coaching. Sight-Reading and Listening Parties teaches how to use sight-reading as a professional skill-building tool, and introduces the concept of listening parties as an alternative tool for learning about a new piece of music. Performance Preparation teaches a way to help the ensemble gain endurance and confidence in the final weeks and days before a performance.

The chapter on, “Technical Demands,” are all ways the coach can help the ensemble carefully focus their attention on the rhythmic and notational details of most string quartet music. The Meshberg Metronome Method teaches how to use a metronome to help the ensemble secure rhythm and pitch. Counting to Four teaches how a game can be used to

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7 I interviewed Nicholas Chords, Colin Jacobsen, Eric Jacobsen, Jennifer Curtis, Nicholas DiEugenio, and Asya Meshberg.
challenge the quartet to develop internal pulse. Reverse Slicing details a method that can be used to help the ensemble through especially tricky rhythmic passages and follow the harmonic motion of the music.

The “Concept Development” chapter methods that help the group develop an artistic vision for the performance and exercises to help execute this vision. Live, Breathe, & Die is a technique that allows the coach to help the quartet match each other’s sound character and energy. Concept and Visualization teaches what strategies can encourage creativity in rehearsals and coachings and help the ensemble develop a cohesive musical idea to present to the audience.

Four string quartets made of Chapel Hill middle school and high school students provided me the opportunity to test each of the methods (Phase Two). Each ensemble received a weekly coaching, which I recorded. The quartets rehearsed independently once per week. Prior to the coachings, sections where one of the techniques could be put to use effectively were planned out. In my coachings I would use the techniques as planned, but also often in places I had not anticipated their usefulness. Of course, other suggestions were given as necessary, but were beyond the official techniques I had set as my test cases. In Phase Three I reviewed the recordings, transcribing the details of my experimentation. This collection of data was then summarized in a table of concepts, the problem or observation that made it important to teach this concept, how I addressed the problem, and how the quartet responded to the coaching they received (see Appendix C).

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8 Effective use of a technique assumes that the coach has a concept of how s/he wants the music to sound, and that the use of the technique either allows the ensemble to achieve or helps them achieve that sound. This can be determined by the improvement over the course of one coaching and whether the transmitted concept continues to improve over the course of all the coachings.
This manual, in many ways, presents my journey as a coach of chamber music. I set off with no pedagogy or textbook to guide me. I hope that as you begin your own journey, you will use the following text to enrich your learning and coaching experiences.

**To the Coach:**
There is great variety in coaching styles. Each coach brings different ideas to the table. The contents of this paper should not be misconstrued as an inflexible rule, but rather a set of guiding thoughts and a collection of professionals’ wisdom and tips gleaned from personal experience. Each educator can approach the contents as they wish, thereby maintaining the spirit of individuality and personality so important to making music. There is much more than can be addressed in this first edition of “If You Give a Quartet a Coaching.” Each chapter contains the techniques and methods that, throughout the course of my research, proved to be most often necessary and effective in the coaching setting. Beyond these techniques and methods, I give a brief teaching guide for several other methods at the end of each chapter.

**To the Quartet Player:**
This manuscript is primarily geared toward aspiring coaches, but string quartet musicians can also learn a lot about rehearsal expectations.³ Remember; everyday you are not receiving a coaching, you are your own coach. The techniques contained in this manual can be applied to a regular rehearsal and often individual practice as well. If you approach these musical philosophies with a strong work ethic, you will put yourself on a road to success.

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³ For more information on how best to prepare for rehearsals and coachings see David Finckel and Wu Han, “AN OPEN LETTER: PREPARE FOR YOUR CHAMBER COACHING,” David Finckel and Wu Han Blog, January 6, 2010, https://artisted.wordpress.com/2010/01/06/students/
**What is a Chamber Music Coach?**

First and foremost, *being* an effective chamber music coach is not the most important aspect of coaching chamber music. I understand your primary purpose is to positively impact the lives of your students and to enrich their musical and personal horizons. While you will have certain objectives for each ensemble or individual, each goal should cultivate the skills necessary for students’ continued growth. Recognizing that the process does not revolve around you will allow you to connect more personally with your students and to establish yourself as a positive musical and personal role model.

There are coaches that scream and yell at the quartet until everything is perfectly in tune, some that use vivid imagery to describe what is happening in the music, and others still who draw on music history or theory to inform students about the style and performance traditions of a work or composer. People who use any of these methods—and many others—can make effective quartet coaches. Each has a clear vision of what a piece of music should sound like and pushes the ensemble to achieve that sound. In my opinion, the best coaches will recognize their ensembles’ visions, or help students develop one, and share all the tools they have to help realize that vision. ¹⁰

The best coaches fit the ideal of a coach laid out nearly nine decades ago by string educator and writer James Brown, who wrote in his *Musical Times* column, “The Amateur String Quartet:” “What the youngsters need at this early stage is a guide, philosopher, and friend: a guide to tell them how to start and what to aim at while they are at work; a philosopher to disentangle the motives and

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arrange them into intelligible categories – as social, technical, artistic, spiritual, &c.; and a friend to encourage and warn them.”

As a coach it is your challenge to become one of the “best coaches.” Some ensembles want to be pushed to the highest level in order to prepare for competitions and professional performances. Other groups just want to play for fun. Some groups are mixed: some students are very serious and others will not care at all. There are diverse serious students: aspiring soloists, orchestral players, chamber musicians, teachers, gigging musicians. All of these are viable and valuable professions. You may also have skilled players who want to pursue a profession outside of music. As you get to know your musicians, you will be able to recognize what your group is looking for. This knowledge is crucial in determining what skills you can help cultivate.

Your job as a coach is two-fold. You must help your group develop their vision, and once they have a vision, you must help them realize that vision into a performance that they can be proud of. To be the “best coach,” you should establish yourself as a leader with comprehensive knowledge of the music. You should be able to play all the parts on your primary instrument for demonstration. You should fully understand the piece’s form and harmonic trajectory. Ideally you will have performed the piece, so, from experience, you can focus the coaching time on the difficult sections. You also have to be willing to dedicate significant time to working with the group, both as an ensemble and as individuals. If an individual is struggling, your job is to be supportive and provide them with the help and resources they need to succeed. The same is true of your responsibility to the group as a

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whole. This manual will provide you with ways to expand your coaching-technique repertoire and uphold this responsibility.

Yes, this sounds like an enormous amount of work. It is! And it is exciting! You are preparing to lead four people through an emotional journey upon which they can learn how to make beautiful music. The reward at the end is worth the effort. I promise.

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12 Throughout this paper I will frequently refer to music as “beautiful.” I am not always referring to the nineteenth century romantic sound of strings that the classical music canon has come to refer to as beautiful. Many varieties of sound, including harsh or dissonant sounds can be beautiful if executed convincingly. Beauty throughout this paper refers to a sound that has been created with intention and in good faith to a concept.
Chapter One: Rehearsal Structuring

Coaching a Warm-up:
The ensemble warm-up is critical to a successful coaching.\textsuperscript{13} Proper warm-up routines are crucial to preventing long-term injuries.\textsuperscript{14} There are also cognitive benefits to warming-up prior to rigorous mental activity, such as improved retention and improved recall speed.\textsuperscript{15} The beginning of the coaching sets the pace and mood for the rehearsal, while also mentally and physically preparing the quartet to learn and retain the most material throughout the rest of the session. Ideally, the members of the quartet will arrive with adequate time to begin warming up their fingers with whatever they use for their regular practicing warm-up.

One of my favorite warm-ups as a coach and as a chamber musician is to lead an ensemble through a slow one-octave scale in the key of their piece at the beginning of their first coaching. The members of the ensemble can be initially a little irritated by how easy that seems; however, inexperienced groups struggle to play the first note to my satisfaction or their own. Whether the problem is intonation, sound quality, vibrato matching, beginning together, or something entirely different, in my experience there is always something that can be improved. For example, I coached a quartet that worked on Beethoven’s String Quartet No. 11, Op. 95 in F minor. At the first rehearsal of the piece, I

\textsuperscript{13}In my opinion and for the purposes of this paper, a successful coaching is a coaching where the coach shares information with the ensemble in such a way that the players understand it, and can execute the changes to their playing necessitated by this new information.
had them play a one-octave F minor scale. When the group played the F natural at the start of the scale I stopped them immediately because none of the musicians played the pitch accurately. All I had to say was, “That is not an F natural. I heard four different F naturals. There is only one. Listen to “Lucy” (see Lucy and the Meshberg Metronome Method” 25), and played the F natural through the tuner function.

For any warm-up where this happens, I hold that note out on full volume for five seconds, long enough that it allows the students to get the correct pitch in their ears. Then I say, “Play that first note like you are beginning the scale again and hold it.” While they are holding the note, I play the tuner pitch for them to match. Once they have found this pitch, I ask them to commit the sensation of playing that note to memory. In order to cement that exact location in their muscle memory, I ask the ensemble to hone in on what playing the note feels like, from the tips of their fingers on the string, to the position of the feet on the floor and the way they are sitting in the chair. This is an abstract concept for students to wrap their head around, so I have them put down their hands, rest briefly, and then physically return to this feeling several times while checking for accuracy. I allow the students the opportunity to try this a few times. The students then start the entire scale again and work from there. If the first note is not perfect, I have them try again until the pitch is accurate. Once it is, the intonation of the next note becomes the working target. Continue through the whole scale, up and down, engraining the motions in both directions. Of course, by requiring the students to focus so intently on the way they are playing the first note, often the rest of the scale is played with far greater accuracy than the first note.

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16 Coaching 2B
Warm-ups should prepare both brain and body for music making, and this exercise serves both purposes. Primarily, this warm-up serves to activate critical listening. This will allow students to quickly identify inaccuracies in their own pitch and adjust appropriately to match the rest of the ensemble throughout the remainder of the coaching. Scales are simple enough technically that it will efficiently activate the muscles without causing physical strain. This warm-up exercise also teaches your students a method for warming up in their own rehearsals, allowing them to take this focus with them to the practice room. If the students are encouraged to have this kind of critical analysis of their own playing, long-term gains in ability can be greatly increased.  

The pitch focus detailed above can be extended into other facets of music making that will improve the group’s ability to produce the sound that they want to achieve. As the group works on their intonation, identify the players that are using vibrato and the ways in which they are using it. I recommend asking one of the members of the ensemble who was using vibrato. Asking the group to get involved in the analysis of their own playing helps their critical thinking and in this particular scenario serves to help them realize the importance of maintaining group awareness. It is likely that while focusing on the issue of their own intonation, they ignored their partners and were not listening beyond the pitch. With the group’s new awareness, explain that all of these varieties are valid, so they must decide as an ensemble what kind of sound they want and pick a vibrato that best achieves this sound. Give each member the opportunity to lead the group through playing the scale, while the rest of the ensemble tries to match both pitch and vibrato with the leader. This technique is explained in greater detail in Chapter 3 (38). Other components that can be

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17 Coaching 1B-G, 2B-G
18 Coaching 1B, 1D-E, 1G-H, 2D
focused are bow usage, articulation, shifting, string crossing, cuing and inviting, and tone color.

Remember in coachings that you should not berate the ensemble while pointing out their inaccuracies. You can make serious comments and give excellent constructive criticism without making the members of the ensemble feel like bad people or bad musicians for their mistakes. They are humans and often-impressionable individuals. Try to make your observations somewhat humorous so that if they get a little embarrassed by a mistake they feel safe enough to laugh about it and then make a serious effort to correct it because you have given them the opportunity, necessary information, and confidence to. In my approach, your students do not need to be scared into solving the problem, they are quite capable of figuring it out on their own, or even with a little gentle prodding.

If the ensemble begins to show signs of tiring of this exercise, conclude the warm-up and move into work on the piece, but make the group aware that it will try again at the next coaching, so that they come mentally and physically prepared.

**Sight-reading and Listening Parties**

Sight-reading is commonly understood to be the performance of a piece of music upon seeing it for the first time.\(^\text{19}\) Diane Hardy’s research showed the importance of this skill for all musicians. She polled 221 piano music educators, with over 85% of participants

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\(^{19}\) The Harvard Dictionary of Music, Fourth ed. s.v. “sight-reading”- Belknap Press of Harvard University Press (2003) 780. This definition was contested in a doctoral thesis, because sight-reading is the ability to read the music on the page and not necessarily play it, where sight-playing is the ability to do both simultaneously; however, this distinction leads to word mincing and is unnecessary for most purposes. Dneya Udtaisuk. *A Theoretical Model of Piano Sightplaying components*, (PDF) Diss. U. of Missouri-Columbia, (May 2005) 2.
saying it was the most or one of the most important pianistic skills. Sight-reading is not a skill only necessary for pianists; for string quartets and string players in general, sight-reading is a critical skill for learning music rapidly and efficiently, which aids in winning professional work. However, as a method for coaching a string quartet, sight-reading is not an effective technique especially if a performance is a short-term goal (less than three coachings away) for the ensemble.

From my field research coaching ensembles, I discovered that an initial sight-reading of a piece of music with an ensemble is a stressful experience for all parties involved, as well as a waste of time. It is a waste for the members who can play their parts, because a lot of the time is spent stopping to help the members who cannot read as well find their place and their notes. It is a waste of time for the members who cannot play their parts because their time would be better spent efficiently learning their parts through careful practice rather than hoping and praying that they do not miscount and lose their place. Sight-reading from that seat can be a stressful and traumatic one. That player feels the frustrated eyes of their colleagues, which only compound the student’s frustration with themselves for being unable to keep up. It is also a waste of time for you as a coach. Your time would be better spent giving one-on-one attention to the weaker members of the ensemble, helping another ensemble with something they are working on, improving your own understanding of the composition to better serve your students, etc.

But wait! Did I not just say, “Sight-reading is an important skill that every quartet player should develop?” Yes, and I stand by that. However, having your ensemble sight-

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21 Coaching 2A, 3A, 4A.
read and teaching them how to sight-read are very different things. Introducing your ensemble to a piece of music that they are going to work on over the course of a semester is not teaching them how to sight-read (21).

If your goal is to help your ensemble become more familiar with the work being studied, it is more practical to use the “listening party” technique during the first coaching. A listening party is when you and the group are either selecting works to study and perform, or have decided on a work and are trying to (re)-familiarize yourselves with it. In this process you listen to recordings while reading scores and parts without playing any instruments. There are often several editions of a work, each with different editorial markings, and it can be valuable for the group for you to point out the differences across editions. If your ensemble is at the professional or pre-professional level, they should be able to edit and mark their own parts. If they are not quite yet advanced enough to do this, then you should look through the parts and supply fingering and bowing suggestions for at least the most complex passages. It is a good idea to share scores, because students reading from a score will be able to see both their part and the context in which it is set. By sharing recordings, the members of the ensemble will be able to hear what the piece will sound like when it is performance-ready. Across several recordings, they will gain the insight of many different interpretations, which can free them to develop their own. If you have your ensemble simultaneously read and follow parts or scores while listening to recordings, they will be able to make notes on things they want to remember, try, or avoid doing. At the

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22 I say (re)-familiarize because you should always be familiar with a work before trying to coach a group on it if you can. If you do not already know the piece, but the ensemble is set on playing it, make every effort to study the score, recordings, and scholarly material on the piece in preparation as well as learning to play as much of the parts as you can on your own instrument.
end of a listening party, assign a certain segment of the piece to be learned and rehearsed for the next coaching session.

**Teaching sight-reading:**
There is a method that can make learning to sight-play useful and enjoyable for you and your ensemble. It is far more practical to teach the group to sight-read than it is to simply have them read a piece. Teaching sight-reading often involves an explanation of its importance, with several suggestions of how to actually do it. It is an important skill for chamber musicians, especially in the professional environment, because ensembles commonly play gigs or perform on short notice and do not necessarily have the time to practice or rehearse the music extensively beforehand. In order to perform successfully without this practice, proficiency at sight-reading is necessary. Students can improve their sight-reading skills by:

- Learning what to look for while studying the part
- Practicing reading ahead
- Learning scales and arpeggios in all keys
- Practicing sight-reading

As a coach, you are obligated to help your students acquire these skills in the context of the ensemble. This involves selecting repertoire that will challenge the students appropriately.

For less experienced students, it is a good idea to begin with sight-reading the same line together. This will allow them to focus on the skills necessary for strong reading and therefore playing. In the early stages, the excerpts need to be in a manageable key, with rhythms that all the members of the group are accustomed to and be mostly scalar or arpeggiated in nature. As the group progresses, these excerpts can develop in complexity by adding chromatic tones, increasing the difficulty of the rhythms, using more complex
keys, and adding articulations and/or dynamic markings. When students reach a very high level of sight-reading proficiency, changing speed markings such as at ritardando, rubato, and accelerando, as well as suddenly new tempos or changing time signatures, can be added.

Interspersed with this group study of single lines, the ensemble should learn how to read different parts together as well. Classical period quartets, such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s String Quartet in C Major, K. 157, make good entry-level sight-reading material because the melody lines are simple and the harmonic motion is relatively slow. These are useful for students, because generally the pieces are in simple keys for reading. As students get more advanced with working in this medium, the difficulty of the sight-reading material will increase appropriately. As the coach for your ensemble, use your discretion and intuition to figure out what your group needs; for much of the beginning of your coaching career, there will be some experimenting and some failure. With practice and experience, you will learn about many types of students and get a sense of what each needs to become the best quartet player they can be.

Performance Preparation

The final stage of coaching is bringing the string quartet to the point where they can express their full potential through a musically and emotionally engaging performance. Much of the repertoire is lengthy; it requires an enormous amount of concentration for the entire duration and it requires a lot of physical stamina just to make it through. Many of the

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23 There are also many books of gigging music such as Lynne Latham, *The Wedding Album for String Quartet*, (Dayon, OH) (A Lorenze Company Publication), that make for both introductory teaching material and practical sheet music to have available should the group desire to find paying engagements. Another option includes collections by Alfred Pochon, some of which are accompanied by a rehearsal strategies manual. Alfred Pochon *A Progressive Method of String Quartet Playing. In Two Parts*, G. Schirmer (1928). Whitmore (95).
things you can do to help, such as helping set realistic performance goals, can be accomplished early on in the learning process. It often helps to know first, what kind of performance is expected. Is your ensemble going to perform one movement? A full work? A full recital worth of chamber music? A whole season of chamber music concerts? How long until the performance is expected? Answering these questions helps mentally prepare the group for what is to come. It will also help you develop a schedule or program that will help the ensemble master the work(s) with enough time to spare to develop confidence that what they learned is engrained.

Once you have established a schedule and your ensemble has learned and polished much of if not the entirety of a work, it is time to prepare a plan to take the group through the performance. In the ideal situation, you will have about two weeks between when the group has reached this point and the actual date of the performance. In this period, it would be ideal to give your ensemble four coachings, making the first coaching of each week a complete run-through of the piece and making the other coaching a listening session with a discussion of the recordings. Allow time at the end of each session for the students to ask their lingering questions.

The mock-performances should take place on the same day of the week and at the same time as the actual concert. Ideally, they would also be in the same performance space as well. The goal is to allow the group to gain experience playing through the entire work without stopping in a scenario as similar as can be attained to the performance. By doing a full run of the quartet, the ensemble has the opportunity to work on the consistency with which they play the piece. The group has spent plenty of time rehearsing and nit picking details, but stopping and starting accommodates the errors and lapses in concentration
performers tend to make because they can always fix them the next time. During a run-through, the ensemble knows that they only have one chance, so they give their fullest concentration.

While they play, sit somewhere, observe, and take notes. It is actually a good idea to put pressure on them by sitting in their peripherals. The experience and endurance they gain will build their confidence so they can deliver a convincing presentation of the concepts they rehearsed. Any time remaining after the run should be given to addressing and rectifying any rhythmic or notational errors. Save errors in terms of ensemble for the listening sessions. I have found that it is much easier to adjust important concepts like balance after listening to the spot that needs fixing rather than abstractly telling a player to be louder over a few measures. Hearing it will allow the performer to decide how much they need to change and whether louder playing is even necessary if a different texture or color will achieve the same effect.

The day of the performance is also crucial. Lead the ensemble through the regular warm-up and really work to make them comfortable. The most important thing the group needs to hear from you is how far they have come and how much they have learned. Hopefully they have earned that kind of praise. In my experience as a quartet player, when a coach commends a group on their hard work and shares their belief that the quartet will give a masterful performance, it gives an enormous boost of confidence going into the concert.

Make sure to record the concert because you are going to listen to it with your ensemble at a later date. Ask the group where they want you to sit, whether they want you

\[25\text{ Coaching 1B.}\]
to check for projection, or to be there right in the front row for moral support. Bring a score or a notepad to the performance. If you are out of their line of sight, feel free to take notes but make sure it will not distract the group; that was just for practice playing under pressure. At the end, applaud enthusiastically. Regardless of how well they performed, they placed themselves on a stage to be judged by their friends and families. It takes very brave individuals to do that and they deserve to be recognized for it.

At this point, I think it is a great idea to have a post-performance rehearsal. In the post performance rehearsal, talk with the group about things that went well. Have them volunteer any of their own thoughts. The thoughts could be on their own playing or the ensemble. You can share the notes you took during the concert as well. The most important thing to do in this debriefing session is to allow the ensemble the opportunity to perform a section that everyone agrees could have been more successful. Give them a chance to prove how well they can actually play it. This way the quartet knows that the next time they go to perform this concert (if another opportunity exists) they will be able to play everything to the best of their ability. It reaffirms any confidence that may have been shaken by a rough spot in the performance.
Chapter Two: Technical Demands

“Lucy” and the Meshberg Metronome Method:

Ludwig van Beethoven was ecstatic about the invention of the metronome in 1816. In one of his letters, he described how he had been looking for years to find an alternative to the vague descriptors of tempo, such as allegro, adagio, presto, and andante, and that universal use of the metronome would allow for more precision in music than ever before.26 Despite Beethoven’s enthusiasm for the metronome, it seems that his did not work very well as the markings in many of his works were nonsensical.27 Over the nearly 200 years since, metronome technology has improved to the point at which we have powerful machines such as the Dr. Beat Metronome DB-90.

The DB-90 is a powerful musical problem-solving tool, the sword of the rehearsal space. Like any good sword, many owners bestow a name such as “The Truth,” or simply Dr. Beat, upon the metronome. The metronome that has had the most profound influence on my life is named “Lucy” and belongs to Asya Meshberg. I had the privilege of being coached by Asya as a cellist in the Chamber Music Institute for Young Musicians while in high school. This past summer I was invited back as a coach. In preparation to coach, Asya had me study her method of using Lucy, so that I could use my own metronome the way she had as my coach.

Before using all of the metronome’s features, you must train your students to listen to the metronome and play precisely with its count, as some students have not had practice

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26 Beethoven’s Letters Volume 1: Entry 211.
27 S. Forsén and H.B. Gray, Was Something Wrong With Beethoven’s Metronome, Notices of the AMS, Volume 60, No. 9 (2013)
working with a metronome.\textsuperscript{28} This is easily trained by having students clap steadily, with the metronome, at several tempi.\textsuperscript{29} Once this skill is engrained in your students, you can begin using all the functions of this tool.

The first function that can be used is the pitch drone. It is imperative that the ensemble regularly tunes to the same pitch during all their coachings, rehearsals, and during their private practice.\textsuperscript{30} Consistently tuning to the same pitch establishes intonation reliability in all mediums of music making. If the location of a pitch moves around the fingerboard of an instrument because the fundamental pitch of the open string is changing, it is incredibly difficult to establish a consistent landing point for the fingers. By establishing that consistent landing point, problems of intonation disappear quickly. Beyond the initial tuning this function is very practical for tuning notes in the middle of pieces. You can use the drone to fix notes pitch by pitch, you can set one pitch and tune all the notes relative to it, and you can tune each note of a chord. The metronome serves as a personal ear trainer If these methods of utilizing the metronome are used correctly in coachings, rehearsals, and individual practice, intonation will be more consistent and the students will be more able to adjust on their own based on what they hear.

The DB-90 has four different voices programmed with different sounds. In my experience, two most useful are the first (“click”) and fourth (“count”) settings. The click setting plays a clear sound that is the same on every beat. This is very useful for pieces in which the time signature changes frequently. For music with a consistent time signature, the count setting is useful because the metronome actually says the beat number you are

\textsuperscript{28} Paul T. Henley, “Effects of Modeling and Tempo Patterns as Practice Techniques on the Performance of High School Instrumentalists,” Journal of Research in Music Education Vol. 49 No. 2: 169-180,

\textsuperscript{29} Coaching 3A, 4A

\textsuperscript{30} All Coaching Sessions
on; if more subdivisions are needed, you can set it to count the “and” of duples as well as the “ti, ta” of triplets (ex. one, ti, ta, two, ti, ta) as demonstrated in Figure 1. These two subdivisions can be used simultaneously when needed. Breaking down complicated rhythms is much easier than when using a less advanced metronome or no metronome at all.

![Figure 1: Counting Triplets](image)

This metronome should be in use in some capacity during the majority of rehearsals and coachings. If the group is performing a section, make sure you have set a tempo. If the tempo is too fast, slow the metronome down and work your way back to tempo gradually. Consistent metronome use fosters the development of steady tempo. If something is falling apart rhythmically, break down the rhythm part by part using the metronome as a guide for the smallest subdivision in the music. If the intonation needs attention, use the pitch setting to set a drone and have the ensemble tune using it as a guide. Using the Dr. Beat will save you an enormous amount of time that would be wasted attempting to solve these problems without a metronome with this level of sophistication.

The philosophy behind the Meshberg Metronome Method is absolute. It assumes that playing out of rhythm and out of tune are both unacceptable. It requires every member of the ensemble to play with the metronome and not be totally dependent on each other. If everyone plays exactly with the metronome in all capacities then the quartet plays “exactly together”. With enough practice, even without the metronome the exactness remains.
Critics of the method say that it leads to robotic playing without freedom or expression. Adherents believe that this method provides a stable framework around which to create expression. Having been coached and then coaching with this method, I discovered that it allows for a great deal of expression, and it requires the players to think about where to give and take time or where to emphasize a pitch. By thinking carefully about the solutions you become more able to execute them consistently.

While it is true that every player makes mistakes, when we have the power to reduce the severity and frequency of mistakes we should make the most of it. As a coach, you can help your students eliminate the errors they are prone to make. The DB-90 is a practical tool to help you achieve this goal.

**Counting to Four: Tempo, Subdivision, and Internal Pulse**

The terms rhythm, tempo, beat, subdivision, and pulse are thrown about interchangeably, which is a terrible conflation. The quartet coaching is a perfect time to set the record straight for your students. Rhythm is the organization of time in terms of “the duration of the sounds and silences” from which music is made. Tempo, is the rate at which musical time passes. It has an inverse relationship to the duration of a rhythm; the faster the tempo, the shorter the sound. Beats are emphases that enable the measurement of time. Meter is the organization of beats into measured units. Subdivision more accurately measures the passage of time between beats. Pulse has several tiered levels. The simplest pulse is a beat. Within a measure, stronger pulses on certain beats create a hierarchical structure of emphasis. Within a phrase, the pulse helps create a hierarchy of measure importance. Over

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the duration of an entire movement or work, a consistent internal pulse in all the players allows the ensemble to perform without losing rhythm or tempo.

How are we supposed to share all this information without giving that lecture?

This is easiest using an experimental technique of my own invention, called, “Counting to Four.” This technique does not use any definitions and so it does not require you to mince words to prove a point. Using Lucy, set the voice option up and have her count to four at 100 bpm. First, have the group count two full measures of quarter notes out loud. Assign each member of the group a different beat starting with the first violin on one. Have them count out loud with the metronome exactly on their own beat. Do not allow them to be lazy about where they place their vocalization. Once the quartet can pass the beats over the span of two measures, add eighth note subdivisions such that the first violinist counts “One and,” the second counts “Two and,” etc. Once this is mastered have the group switch up which beats are being said, such that the first violinist now says “One...and (of three),” and the person sitting across from them says “and (of two)...three,” etc. so that no member is saying two consecutive beats. See Figures 2-5 for clarity.
Counting to Four

Violin II
Violin I
Cello
Viola

Figure 2 Color Coded Seating Chart

Figure 3: Quarter Note Counting

Figure 4: Eighth Note Counting

Figure 5: Trading Eighth-Notes While Counting
The first two iterations of this exercise are very easy for quartets to master quickly. This last version is incredibly challenging for groups of all ages and skill levels. On the first attempt the group invariably slows down from the given tempo, a member stumbles or says someone else's beat, or simply forgets to say their own beat. This is exactly what you want to happen as a coach because it helps you identify problematic tendencies.

Help the group by slowing down the tempo as slow as you need to go. This is an ideal time to explain why practicing and rehearsing at a slow tempo early in the learning stage is useful. When practicing slowly at a consistent tempo, you allow your brain to think ahead of your fingers, which prevents you from making errors that get engrained in your memory. At too fast a tempo, your brain will not have the time to create pathways that will allow for faster, accurate execution in the future. This information lets the students understand that tempo is the rate at which the music moves along without defining tempo explicitly or getting caught up in word games.

Before they start at the slower tempo, have the group listen to the metronome for two full measures. Have them say the beat in unison with the metronome, and do the same with the subdivided eighth notes. Prior to counting the passed around eighth notes pattern, ask the ensemble to silently count the subdivisions even when they are not speaking a syllable. This part of the exercise helps train the members of the quartet to count carefully and subdivide when tricky rhythmic issues arise. As the group develops confidence with this pattern, increase the tempo. The group will likely be able to increase their speed

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32 This technique is versatile and works with groups of all skill levels and ages. I was able to get a group of middle school students to pass the subdivisions back and forth at 160 beats-per-minute. Some of the high school students could not quite get that fast, but one group took the initiative to rehearse their own pattern, a pattern that came out of a movement of the string quartet we were rehearsing. Using this technique to think through their parts, they were able to master the rhythmic intricacies of the movement much more quickly than I had expected. Coachings 1C-D, 1G, 2E, 3B-C, 4B-C
quickly. An excellent side effect of this is that even if you change the pattern of who says the subdivisions, the group will master the new pattern more quickly. Once it is in the students' heads to silently subdivide at all times, they will have an easier time applying it to other situations.

A challenging and fun variant on Counting to Four is to get the group started with a pattern and then to mute the metronome while letting it continue to run. The group should keep counting out loud in a set pattern. After several of measures, put the metronome volume back on and see if they have stayed in tempo and arrive on the correct beat. Monitor the progress of the group as they count without the aid of the metronome and search for patterns where the group speeds up or slows down. If there are any patterns, discuss them with the ensemble and work with any individuals who seem to struggle with precision. As the group improves, increase the duration of the metronome's silence. Other variants involve the group walking around the room while counting, and counting without a set pattern, but not being allowed to speak at the same time as another group member.

As the group practices counting and subdividing for longer periods of time, they will begin to feel very comfortable doing so. This is great! This is the point at which the ensemble has developed an internal pulse where they can maintain a tempo within a piece of music for its entire duration unless they intentionally take or give time where the music explicitly or implicitly requires them to do so. When the group is secure with the metronome, have them try to play without it occasionally to prevent them growing reliant on its presence.
Reverse Slicing

Reverse Slicing is a technique that allows you to coach your ensemble through difficult rhythms and chord intonation. This technique is effective because music is made up of repeated rhythmic patterns of varying difficulty; regardless of the difficulty, any rhythm can be learned by breaking it down into its simplest components. Because there are a finite number of rhythms that can exist within one measure, or even one beat, each rhythmic permutation can be learned and memorized. By learning them all and looking for them in the music, your quartet players will master their rhythms more quickly.

Reverse slicing is particularly useful when members have difficult or different rhythmic groupings such as syncopation, hemiola, and polyrhythm. It can also be effectively used when the rhythm is simple, but individuals change notes on different beats. It teaches them to coordinate and listen to harmonic rhythm while playing.

To help your ensemble solve the problem, have the group play *only* the last beat of the section. If they have not mastered it, determine what caused the problem, isolate and address the problem, and provide a solution. Often, subdividing that beat into the smallest written unit allows the group to be more exact with the rhythm. By repeating this beat with and without audible subdivisions, each player practices and memorizes their own rhythm and how it fits into the rest of the ensemble. If it is practiced with enough care, any time this rhythm appears in future music, the player will have the knowledge, skill, and experience to play it correctly the first time. In the long term, this enhances sight-reading.

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33 In one beat, using quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes and rests, there are 28 possible combinations. As the number of beats or types of subdivisions increase, this number grows and can be very large and overwhelming. By mastering rhythms on the micro level and stringing several beats together, you can solve a macro level problem quickly and efficiently.
ability and reduces the chance of mis-learning a rhythm in other works. Once the last beat is mastered, have the group move on to the prior beat.

When moving on to the second to last beat, make sure the group understands that they will now play two beats, both the second to last and last beats. Once this series of beats is mastered, the group must play all the way through to the end of the passage. By always working from the newest added beat to the final beat of the passage, the ensemble both learns where the section is going, while gaining confidence in their ability to play the middle and end of the phrase, which is where focus often lapses and causes problems.

Reverse Slicing works by breaking down complex problems into small manageable parts, and also provides a way to begin putting the manageable pieces back together into a complete idea. It also requires the members of the ensemble to address the end of the difficult passage. Quartets are often very concerned with starting sections together and in the same character, but once this is achieved, the next step requires ensembles to go on and address how the phrase develops and concludes. By working in reverse, the start of the passage is not addressed until the end, and the group already has developed an understanding of where the passage goes.

I was introduced to this technique was while being coached by Stefan Litwin. He invented this technique while a student as a way to solve rhythmic problems in ensemble playing, when playing through the section slowly would not help. The ensemble he coached me with worked on Hanns Eisler’s Vierzehn Arten den Regen zu beschreiben. There were some incredibly challenging passages rhythmically that involved polyrhythms and line passing such as in the fourth and fifth variations. By reverse slicing through these passages

34 Coaching 1C, 1E, 2B-F, 3C
in a coaching session, not only were we able to master that section, we also learned a
technique that we were able to apply throughout the remainder of the work.

I have been able to effectively use Reverse Slicing in Antonín Dvořák’s String Quartet
in F Major, Op. 96 to help the ensemble with the rhythm starting in measure 171.

![Figure 6: Antonín Dvořák String Quartet in F Major, Op. 96 Mvt. 1, mm. 171-172](image)

This section is difficult for many groups to perform convincingly because players
have rhythmic emphases on different beats that create and resolve suspensions with the
added complication that the last measure has a printed “poco rit.” In reality, the rhythms in
individual parts are not that hard, but the way the parts interweave creates momentary
uncertainty and instability. By reverse slicing from the last beat of m. 172, every group
member learned exactly who changed notes on which beats. By the time they made it all
the way to the beginning of the first measure of this example, the group was able to
perform it beautifully.

**Concepts to Communicate to the Quartet:**

1. **Being Deliberate:**
The rhythm section is an appropriate place to talk about being deliberate. A rhythm, in the classical string quartet canon, is an exact articulation of musical time by sounds and silences.\textsuperscript{35} When rhythms are played to a beat, there is an exact starting location for the articulation. For the rhythm to be played “correctly” each articulation must fall exactly where it is supposed to in relation to the beat. While it is difficult to be this exact, I observed that players who concentrate on and practice their precision have much more success than those who do not.\textsuperscript{36}

2. Scaling Dynamics

Scaling dynamics is a great skill for groups to learn as it allows for the coordination of crescendi and decrescendi over the course of a piece, or even over just a few measures. It also helps develop the ability to control the relative volumes of printed dynamics such as a subito change from piano to mezzo forte without making a crescendo to the new dynamic or playing the new dynamic too loudly. Have the group play an open string as loudly as they can while maintaining a resonant sound. This will be their triple forte. Have them then play as quietly as possible while maintaining a quality sound and make this dynamic their triple piano. Have the group play eight four-beat measures on open strings, during which they crescendo from the triple piano to the triple forte. The crescendo should be smooth so that the start of each bar is at a new dynamic level without sudden jumps. Record them while they perform this crescendo. Check their pacing on the recording and have them try it again while making sure not to crescendo too fast or too slow. If the crescendo is smooth, try again, but have them save the crescendo until the second bar. This way they have to realign

\textsuperscript{35} The Harvard Dictionary of Music, Fourth Ed. s.v. Rhythm
\textsuperscript{36} Coaching 4B: For example, when a group of middle school students deliberately placed the downbeat of a measure in a waltz movement, they were able to match the metronome, whereas prior to focusing, not all players were arriving together.
where each dynamic marker falls. Alternately, try changing the tempo to make the crescendo more rapid or more reserved. There are many variants that can be used, all of which will help the ensemble develop the ability to pace their dynamic changes.

3. **Dvořák is Czech Not Rushin'!**

   Inspired by my youth orchestra director, I find using humor is an effective way to address simple problems. Our director always had a joke ready when we lost focus to bring energy back to the rehearsal. One season we were working on the fourth movement from Antonín Dvořák’s Symphony in E minor, Op. 95, and the violins were rushing their triplets. He stopped the whole orchestra, turned, and asked, “Violins, do you know where Dvořák is from?” The violins had no idea so he shouted, “Dvořák is Czech, not Rushin’! Quit Rushing!” which made the rest of the orchestra double over with laughter. He then worked with the violins to help them get over the rushing issue and, for the rest of the rehearsals and the concert that season, the violins did not rush in this passage or any other. If your jokes are inventive and do not bring down your players, they will be greatly appreciated by all.

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37 This exact quote came in handy during coaching 1F while working on the Antonín Dvořák's String Quartet in F Major, Op. 96, especially at the end of the finale movement. I got the group to laugh and to stop rushing through the finish.
Chapter Three: Concept Development and Execution

Live, Breathe, and Die

While a student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I observed an open coaching by Dr. Nicholas DiEugenio in which the ensemble and much of the audience (myself included) were introduced to a very effective technique called Live, Breathe, and Die (LBAD). I have since interviewed him to learn more about its origin and use.  

LBAD is a method popularized by the Cavani String Quartet, teachers at the Cleveland School of Music who are dedicated to high-level coaching. Dorianne Cotter-Lockard researched their methods of coaching and uncovered a document the CSQ created that contains methods they like to use while coaching. One of the techniques briefly explained was LBAD. Here is an excerpt from that document with what they have to say on the subject: “‘Live, Breathe & Die’- Each member takes a turn initiating a passage, musically rhythmically, dynamically – while other members mirror exactly what they observe. This involves looking up at least once per bar and trying to match all nuances, with bow vibrato and movement. Initiating members must be giving, inspiring and dramatic!!”

LBAD is as much a philosophy of playing music, as it is a technique for coaching. In this technique, one member of the group is asked to be the initiator. The initiator's job is both to cue the entry of the ensemble and then to convey a musical idea to the rest of the group through their own playing. The remainder of the group, while playing, has the job of

38 Nicholas DiEugenio, interview with author, Chapel Hill, NC, September 19, 2014.
carefully listening to and observing the way the initiator is producing sound. They must all strive to adopt the musical idea of the initiator.

In order to accomplish this, the remainder of the group “lives, breathes, and dies” for the initiator’s playing. I interpret that the phrase LBAD is a hybridization of the roots, “to live and breathe for,” and, “to live and die by the sword.” The first expression means (for the player[s]) to fully dedicate themselves to an idea such that it is the sole purpose of their playing. This idea is so important that they place it above their own beliefs of how to properly play the passage. The second adage is a modified way to say, “Do unto others what you would have others do unto you.” That saying is appropriate to many aspects of playing chamber music because players and coaches should always give their best to the group and have a right to that same dedication from the rest of the ensemble. In LBAD, each player has the opportunity to act as the initiator for the section and give their best.

By giving each player a chance as initiator, the members of the group hear a different voice hierarchy. This has the effect of teaching the players how to view themselves in soloistic or accompanying roles, which can drastically change the way they approach the section.\(^\text{40}\)

One of the advantages of this technique is that it does not require much talking once the group has learned how to use the technique. Stopping the rehearsing process to talk can be useful some of the time, but excessive discussion has the potential to be disruptive and/or unproductive. By using LBAD and giving each member an opportunity to initiate, these conversations become necessary less frequently. The initiator conveys exactly what

\(^{40}\) For example, in Coaching 3B there was a section where the violist had syncopations. Allowing the violist to act as initiator allowed her to hear her part as the motor of the group, not just as accompaniment. For the rest of the coaching sessions, she played her part with more energy, which gave the rest of the ensemble stabilizing confidence.
they think to the ensemble through their playing, and the ensemble listens and responds with sensitivity and the intent to support and adopt the approach of the initiator.

LBAD is difficult to use with younger students. For students who do not have total mastery of their instrument, it can become very frustrating for them to hear the way one of their colleagues is playing something and not know how to create that same sound. Frequently, less experienced students have a more difficult time identifying the ways in which their sound differs from the rest of the ensemble. In these cases you may have to give very specific examples of what you are looking for. If you want the group to try to match a wide vibrato, ask everyone to play with a very wide vibrato. When one of the students’ vibratos looks and sounds like the desired goal, give the rest of the group the chance to see what that student is doing. Then ask the group to try to match that. Until your students reach a stage where they know what sounds “correct,” they will need your guidance. They need to learn what in their playing sounds good, and what needs improvement.

**Visualization and Concept**

One of the most important principles of LBAD is that the initiator has an idea that they convey to the rest of the group through their own playing. The questions then remain, how do we encourage our quartet players to come up with their own convictions and then share them, when they can be deeply personal? While many of these chapters and techniques stress precision and accuracy, you must still foster a coaching environment where creativity, imagination, and innovation abound. This section will provide several tools for doing so in the quartet setting.

One of the best ways for you to stimulate your quartets creativity is to ask the group questions and by being open to answering their questions for you. Even if you know the
answer to a question already, it is often worth asking anyway to make sure the group has an answer. A good way to start a rehearsal is by asking what the group has prepared or what they would like to work on for this coaching session. Help them polish what they have prepared. If they have not come prepared, there are still ways you can run a coaching where the students learn a lot. Tell them without anger that the reason they practice individually and rehearse is to come up with questions so that they can self-direct their learning. You are their thinking textbook, and if they have difficulty or problems, you have the power to help overcome and solve them, but it is also the groups responsibility to make an effort to find these issues on their own.

For the situation where the group has come prepared to the coaching and knows what they want to work on, begin to ask a line of questioning that really gets the group to think very specifically about the section at hand. What do you want to work on? Why do you want to work on it? Why is it important? How did you try to work on it in rehearsal? Did any thing you tried help? Why or why not? How do you want it to sound?

That last question is the essence of developing a musical idea. If the members of your ensemble do not know how they want a section to sound, it will not be able to get there. Your job in teaching your ensemble to develop a concept is to help the players figure out what they want a section to sound like and provide them with ways to reach these decisions on their own.

A great way to begin your group’s process of visualization is to take a section and have each member visualize an image to go with it. Then in turn have each member share what they imagined for that part. Feel free to share your own visualization with the group.
as well. Once everyone has shared, invite the group to Live, Breathe, & Die for each concept. Once the group has given each variant a try, have them talk about which one they liked the best. Again, this is a time to ask probing questions, such as, how does this image inform the printed markings?

Another method is to have the group look at a score together and try to follow the melodic line or the motif as they get passed around through the voices. This is a more advanced approach and requires some score reading ability. Ask each player to mark, in their own part or score, who plays the main line, their own relative importance, and any pitches that require extra stress. Once these decisions are made, have the group perform the section to see what works and what adjustments can be made to more closely approach the desired sound. Then talk about how to scale your dynamics, when and where to take time, and how best to pass phrases both physically and musically. Again, let the group test themselves. It is useful to record and listen back to a test. This way everyone can hear what improvements are needed with an ear outside the performance.

Sometimes, chamber musicians need to increase the diversity of their expressive palate. It is helpful to play improvisation games where the goal is to create a sound world that represents an image. Take an image that the group came up with regarding a part in the music and have the ensemble improvise for a minute, while trying to convey that image without playing any of the music from the piece itself. Doing this allows the quartet to experiment with different bow strokes, speeds, and contact points, as well as vibrato.

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43 Thinking about a piece in terms of a village dance will cause it to sound very different than if it is thought of as pirates singing a sea shanty.

speeds and dynamic levels. If the group is a little lost, give them a demonstration of some techniques to try and make sure that they know there are no wrong notes. Sometimes groups need to be given a key area to play in so that restricts the number of notes allowed, reducing the potential for catastrophic dissonance is diminished. Even though a technique might not be appropriate to the specific piece you are working on, the character implied by the technique might be, and increasing the repertoire of your players’ abilities will certainly help with their future studies.

**Concepts to communicate to the Quartet:**

1. **Cueing**

   Cueing, the art of initiating a passage, is a skill that all players should master. A simple method for teaching your ensemble to cue is to have them count out a full measure before an entry and gesture on the last two beats before the entry. The whole group should do this together and you can guide them through this once. When the group does this, encourage them to exude much more confidence than they actually need. Ask them to use huge gestures and small gestures, loud voices and quiet voices, individually, in pairs, and as a full ensemble. By getting the group to try all of these variants you are preparing them for many situations they will find in string quartet literature.

2. **Sound Production**

   It is easier to control the sound of a string instrument when you know what the fundamentals of sound production are. The fingers of the left hand control the pitch and in part the resonance of a note. Three crucial components of bow use determine the type of sound made in terms of timbre, volume, and projection. These three components are

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45 Catastrophic dissonance is my term for when the pitches clash so violently players are compelled to stop playing rather than risk the possibility of hearing that dissonance again.
contact point, bow velocity, and the perpendicular acceleration of the bow into the string. The contact point refers to where along the string the bow is placed and affects the shape of the sound waves. The bow velocity refers to the speed of the bow at the contact point, which affects the amplitude of the wave. The term perpendicular acceleration is the degree of pronation or supination of the wrist of the bow arm that allows for more accessible mass to be worked on by gravity. This acceleration increases the tension of the string and allows for the sound to project farther.

You can demonstrate this for your quartet by modifying one of the factors and keeping the others constant. For example, try pulling the bow across the string twice, changing the contact point from one stroke to the other while maintaining the bow speed and downward acceleration of the bow. Near the fingerboard, this would create a sul tasto sound, while at the bridge this would create a ponticello sound. I have often used an unconvincing forte that is too soft or piano that is too loud as a reason to introduce these ideas. I ask the first violinist to play a note as loudly as they can. Then I, as a cellist, borrow their instrument and by using these concepts, project more sound out of their instrument than they knew they could make. I ask the group, “How did I make that much sound? I do not play the violin, but because I know what contributes to making quality sound, I was able to make a lot of it.” I ask the quartet try to figure out what some of the ideas are before filling in any gaps they leave. They come away with this discussion with more tools to improve their playing.

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46 The perpendicular acceleration of the bow is a term that I use to describe what many others call weight, pressure, or force. I want to advocate for the elimination of those from the musical vocabulary because their use leads to physical tightness in the body, which is detrimental to sustaining quality sound production.

47 Coaching 1D, 2C, 3B, 4B
3. Non-verbal communication

There are many signs of a group that needs to develop their non-verbal communication skills such as not looking up from their music, missing entries, and fluctuating tempos wildly. Beyond telling the group to look up from their music and saying, “Hey, we are all friends here, you do not have to stare at the floor,” games are a great way to develop non-verbal communication skills. Even games that involve talking require non-verbal cues for successful completion. Some games I like to use are Four Corners, Are You Afraid of The Dark, Memorization Madness, and Back to Back. “Four Corners” places each performer in a different corner of a large room and having them play the piece or a section to the best of their ability. In order to stay together, they have to make clearer physical gestures, listen closely to what the other players are doing and make eye contact for cues. During the game “Are You Afraid of The Dark”, have the quartet try to stay together with the lights out. This reduces the students dependence on their eyes and requires the students to use their ears to help the group stay together. In “Memorization Madness”, take away all the music and the stands and have the group get through the piece without them. If a player loses their place, they wait until they remember a section to come back in. If the whole group falls apart, any player can pick a section to start back up from and the group should continue on as well as they can. This tests the group’s mental toughness and awareness of the other parts, because often there are ways one player can help another find their place without saying anything. In “Back to Back,” the players form a square in the middle of the room facing away from each other. It is another game that puts a lot of focus on the ears.
4. Phrasing

Phrasing is a concept that describes many aspects of music making, but I would like to focus on phrasing the end of a musical idea. Often, especially with young or inexperienced groups, the ensemble will arrive at the end of a phrase and slam the last note. Have the group or individual sing the line the way they would want to hear it. It is very difficult to slam the last note while singing unless it is intentional. Then ask the players to play the passage the same way it was sung. If singing did not quite fix the problem, sing it once for the quartet to hear, and then let them play along with your singing. Show them how to give care to each note and encourage them to love the last one as much as they love the other notes.

5. Independence and Dependence of Parts

A common trap that students fall into is ignoring the printed dynamics to match the volume of the rest of the ensemble. Many times, there are sections where one or more players are marked differently than the rest and therefore must be independent. If you are aware of where these sections are, you can make sure that the ensemble is aware as well. Many students also do not realize that they can be heard well by an audience even if they cannot hear themselves. They end up playing much louder than they need to which throws off the balance of the ensemble. The opposite is true, where players are afraid of over-playing and compensate by under-playing, which also unbalances the ensemble. Record the group playing and listen to it with the players so they can hear how they can adjust their sound.

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48 Slamming is the act of playing a note far above its printed dynamic level such that it sticks out of the texture and distracts the listener from the music.
There are also sections where the parts are *dependent* on each other, such as where melodic lines or motifs are passed around from player to player. You can work on this with your ensemble by asking only the people who have these trading lines play, but only play where they have that important idea. This way they learn who plays and in what order and you can challenge them to connect the line as it moves across parts. Then add in the other voices and have them keep in mind what it felt like to pass the line around.

6. **Tuning the Melody**

Using a tuner it is easy to adjust the pitches of a melody or harmony for greater accuracy. Have the person playing the melody practice with the tuner note by note. You can also set a drone and have them play in relation to a central harmonic pitch. Once the intonation has improved, have them try without a tuner at all. Then, have the rest of the group play the harmonies outlined in the accompaniment without the other textural information, so that the melody player hears the harmonic context in which their part ought to fit.
Conclusions:
The coachings I gave were as eye-opening for me as I hope they were for my students. Coaching, as many will tell you, rarely goes the way you plan it too. If I arrived at a coaching prepared to use a specific technique for a section of a piece, it did not mean I would get to use it! The groups I coached often asked me to focus on specific areas where they wanted assistance, so the technique I had planned to use was no longer relevant. Sometimes issues that were more significant, or had not yet occurred to me, popped up. In attending to them, I had to put aside my coaching plan. It is also true that these techniques are not an all-encompassing solution for every experience you will have as a coach. Sometimes, the important details are so specific to a player or a measure that using a technique is unwieldy and excessively time consuming.

However, the techniques contained in this manual repeatedly and often proved their worth. They were applicable for several age groups and experience levels, and can all be modified to fit the needs of the individuals. I hope that leading you through these techniques has helped you realize how crucial it is for students in developing stages to have a coach that can put these methods to use properly. I also hope that you will realize the importance for the coaches to have a manual like this so that they may learn and better serve their students. Coaches of chamber music have the serious responsibility of cultivating the talents and energies of new generations of musicians. Any resources we have to help and encourage them, we should happily provide. With each new edition, I hope this manual will grow to include the wisdom of coaches from around the country and the world.
Appendix A: Interviews


Jennifer Curtis, Skype interview with author, July 29, 2014

Meshberg, Asya, interview with author, Stamford, CT, August 8, 2014

Nicholas DiEugenio, interview with author, Chapel Hill, NC Sep, 14, 2014
## Appendix B: Coaching Sessions Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quartet #</th>
<th>Coaching</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Work/Movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quartet 1:</strong> East Chapel Hill High School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dvorak String Quartet No. 12, Op. 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching 1A</td>
<td></td>
<td>10/14/2014</td>
<td>Mvt. I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching 1B</td>
<td></td>
<td>10/21/2014</td>
<td>Mvt. I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching 1C</td>
<td></td>
<td>10/30/2014</td>
<td>Mvt. II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching 1D</td>
<td></td>
<td>11/06/2014</td>
<td>Mvt. III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching 1E</td>
<td></td>
<td>11/13/2014</td>
<td>Mvt. III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching 1F</td>
<td></td>
<td>11/18/2014</td>
<td>Mvt. III/Mvt. IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching 1G</td>
<td></td>
<td>11/24/2014</td>
<td>Mvt. IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching 1H</td>
<td></td>
<td>12/02/2014</td>
<td>Mvt. IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quartet 2:</strong> Chapel Hill High School</td>
<td>Coaching 2A</td>
<td>10/22/2014</td>
<td>Ludwig van Beethoven String Quartet No. 11 Op. 95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching 2B</td>
<td></td>
<td>10/31/2014</td>
<td>Sight-Reading/Mvt. I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching 2C</td>
<td></td>
<td>11/07/2014</td>
<td>Mvt. I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching 2D</td>
<td></td>
<td>11/14/2014</td>
<td>Mvt. I</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coaching 2E</td>
<td></td>
<td>11/19/2014</td>
<td>Mvt. I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching 2F</td>
<td></td>
<td>11/24/2014</td>
<td>Mvt. I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching 2G</td>
<td></td>
<td>12/01/2014</td>
<td>Mvt. I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quartet 3:</strong> Philips Middle School 1</td>
<td>Coaching 3A</td>
<td>11/10/2014</td>
<td>Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart String Quartet No.4 K. 157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching 3B</td>
<td></td>
<td>11/13/2014</td>
<td>Mvt. I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching 3C</td>
<td></td>
<td>11/24/2014</td>
<td>Mvt. I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching 3D</td>
<td></td>
<td>12/01/2014</td>
<td>Mvt. I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quartet 4:</strong> Philips Middle School 2</td>
<td>Coaching 4A</td>
<td>11/10/2014</td>
<td>Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart String Quartet No.3 K. 157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching 4B</td>
<td></td>
<td>11/18/2014</td>
<td>Mvt. I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching 4C</td>
<td></td>
<td>11/20/2014</td>
<td>Mvt. I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix C: Coaching Index

Index of common coaching events and some practical solutions I employed in real coaching situations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category/Topic</th>
<th>Purpose/Observation</th>
<th>Problem Solving</th>
<th>Group Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Choosing what to work on | • Many things can need attention during a coaching  
  o Focusing on one thing at the expense of another | • Focus on one overarching theme OR  
• Focus on lots of small details that can be fixed quickly  
• Use a theme to guide which small details are isolated and worked in a rehearsal | • Students can only learn and retain a limited amount of information gained in a coaching session (marking parts helps this) |
| Creating a concept | • A concept of how a scale, section, movement, or complete work should go is necessary for successful execution | • Explain the importance to the group using words, or a demonstration.  
• Encourage or lead a discussion over a particular section  
• Mandate the ensemble to play a passage with your concept in mind  
• Great opportunity to use “Live, breathe, and die” | • Groups tend to nod and say nothing about it.  
• Hopefully this means they are thinking hard about the way they want to play the passage the next time. |
| Cueing Part 1 | • The violinist played before she reached the end of her cue | • Practice different length cues and at different tempos  
• Allow all members a chance to cue | • All members gained confidence cuing at the appropriate spot |
| Cueing Part 2 | • Three people cued at the same time but for different tempos and durations | • Decide on the length of the cue  
• Practice it with all the members who need it  
• Depending on context it may need to be more of an invitation than a command  
• Cueing together is good | • group entered together at the beginning of a movement in 6/8 |
| Deliberately placing downbeats | • Tried to conduct a fast ¾ in one,  
• Downbeats stopped landing in the right place. | • I had the cellist play alone with the metronome to solidify downbeat precision  
• I then worked with the violinist on a similar issue where she was holding long notes far longer than they were supposed to be | • Playing with the metronome resolved these problems. |
| Dvořák is Czech, not Rushin’ | • Group not considerate of the demands of one part (i.e. rushing someone who has lots of fast notes) | • Have the fast voice play their part the way they hear it in their head  
• Then let the group play as an ensemble again | • When the group gained a better understanding of the context of their part, it was harder to ignore their colleagues and push and pull the tempo. |
| Ending rehearsal on time | • Ran out of time and did not realize it  
• Held the group over  
• Students had to rush to get to next obligation  
• Did not achieve all goals for coaching session | • Keep a close eye on the time (use a stopwatch)  
• Partly the ability to conclude the rehearsal in a timely manner comes with experience  
• Mostly by making a concerted effort to be aware of the time remaining | • Both you and your students will be able to get to your next obligation on time |
| Equipment needs | • Students bow needed rehairing  
• Student laughed out loud when he heard the difference | • Borrowed a bow from another instrument  
○ Later got his bow rehaired | • Secured bow contact with the strings and produced the desired sound more easily |
| Finding measures to rehearse | • Parts without rehearsal letters  
• Parts without measure numbers | • Have students mark their parts outside of coaching  
• Mark measure numbers  
• Mark major rehearsal letters  
• Scores often have these marked in for guidance | • Speeds up rehearsal time  
• No guess work for finding places |
| Fitting complex rhythms | • complex rhythmic trade-offs combined | • reverse slicing  
• under-tempo | • sections fit together students had a new |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>together with ritardando or accelerando, caused frequent problems</th>
<th>Getting a piece up to tempo</th>
<th>Identifying problems</th>
<th>Imagery</th>
<th>Independence of parts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fast music is hard to play at tempo</td>
<td>Gradual increases on a metronome</td>
<td>I forgot my score this day.</td>
<td>It is easier to convey an idea to an audience when you have an image to share</td>
<td>Not all parts have the same dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students get comfortable in slow tempos which makes it difficult to break out</td>
<td>You do not have to tell your group its happening if you adjust subtly or</td>
<td>The cellist was skipping a half measure and derailing the group.</td>
<td>Often, due to lack of experience using words to describe music, the ensemble struggles with this.</td>
<td>First check with a score to make sure your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Go faster than final tempo and then return to it</td>
<td>I had difficulty figuring out where the problem was without the score.</td>
<td>Ask the group what they think their parts would look like if they were a painting or a movie</td>
<td>Forces students to make brave steps in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Have them write it down or say it out loud if they are confident enough to share (I encourage sharing out loud)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Help identify how they can change the way they are playing their instruments to get closer to the image they depict</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increases the palate of sounds used by the group</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Useful for a small section, or telling the story of an entire movement or long-form work.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A valuable tool for program and absolute music</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Internal rhythm | • What allows an ensemble to maintain a steady tempo when they choose, intentionally stretch time, and then return to a steady tempo | • Counting games help  
  o Split up 1+2+3+4+ between group members  
  • Counting all the subdivisions in your head  
  • Alternating who says which beats  | • The group liked being able to challenge themselves at rhythm technique  
  • Instant gratification with lasting results |
| Keeping tempo | • Groups consistently played with poor sense of tempo over long durations of playing | • Clap a steady tempo for the group (can be practiced)  
  • Set a metronome with a light and/or sound. For counting, the Dr. Beat DB-90 has a feature for a voice that counts the rhythms.  | • The groups played with better tempo while the metronome was active |
| Maintaining a tempo without a metronome | • The group will not get a metronome in the concert | • Let the group try on their own,  
  o Still be there to help put them back together if they fall apart.  | • The metronome is there for consistency.  
  • Taking it away allowed the group to follow the flow of the music |
| Making ensembles feel comfortable | • Hostile environments interrupt learning  
  • Students must be comfortable and be empowered to communicate  | • I talked to the students  
  • Learned their names  
  • Told them about myself, what I was doing that day,  
  • Asked what they were doing  | • By showing interest in them, they felt welcome and |
| Marking parts | • Helps players avoid committing the same mistakes as in the past | • Make sure students have a pencil  
  • Mark in dynamic reminders  | • Prevents long term recurring problems |

• It is easy to fall into that trap  
  • Then play it with confidence  
  • If your part has a different dynamic or articulation it is probably for a reason  
  • Their music and take little solos where they are written  

Internal rhythm  

What allows an ensemble to maintain a steady tempo when they choose, intentionally stretch time, and then return to a steady tempo?

- Counting games help
  - Split up 1+2+3+4+ between group members
  - Counting all the subdivisions in your head
  - Alternating who says which beats

Keeping tempo

Groups consistently played with poor sense of tempo over long durations of playing?

- Clap a steady tempo for the group (can be practiced)
- Set a metronome with a light and/or sound. For counting, the Dr. Beat DB-90 has a feature for a voice that counts the rhythms.

Maintaining a tempo without a metronome

The group will not get a metronome in the concert?

- Let the group try on their own,
  - Still be there to help put them back together if they fall apart.

Making ensembles feel comfortable

- Hostile environments interrupt learning
- Students must be comfortable and be empowered to communicate

- I talked to the students
- Learned their names
- Told them about myself, what I was doing that day,
- Asked what they were doing

Marking parts

- Helps players avoid committing the same mistakes as in the past
- Make sure students have a pencil
- Mark in dynamic reminders

- The metronome is there for consistency.
- Taking it away allowed the group to follow the flow of the music

- By showing interest in them, they felt welcome and

- Prevents long term recurring problems
| Non-verbal communication | Big beat lines  
| Accidentals  
| Cues and other visuals | Cues gain clarity  
| Allows lines to blend  
| Steadied tempo  
| More smiles |
| --- | --- |
| Struggling to enter together  
| Not looking up from music  
| Wildly fluctuating tempo | Tell the group to look at each other  
| They are all friends  
| They do not need the music in the first few bars of a section  
| Have them practice passing music segments using only their movement |
| In tempo  
| What does that even mean?  
| Other ambiguous markings | Original tempo? A different, yet steady tempo? |
| This served to open a dialogue for the group that lead to an agreement without my input |
| Clipping or slamming the last note of a phrase | Sing the way you want the phrase to sound  
| Pay particular attention to the way you want the end to sound and how it transitions into the next phrase  
| Have the group sing with you  
| “love every note” |
| Learning to “love every note” applies beyond the isolated incident |
| Young group that did not know the piece  
| Needed a starting practice tempo | I decided on a slow tempo for them during first rehearsal  
| On their scores and parts I wrote an acceptable tempo range for practice and performance  
| Kept tempo using a metronome and clapping along  
| More experienced groups needed less |
| Ensemble’s security with the notes and rhythm improved  
<p>| Were eager to try a faster more “professional” tempo when asked |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pinky (4th finger) usage</th>
<th>guidance</th>
<th>Free up vibrato</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The pinky often inhibits younger players</td>
<td>Relaxing whole hand</td>
<td>Allows fast runs to be smoother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes tightness when not being used</td>
<td>Make sure the pinky is not tucked under the fingerboard</td>
<td>General facade is more relaxed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weakest finger</td>
<td>Vibrato</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>change angle of hand to support pinky</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relaxing whole hand</td>
<td>Free up vibrato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make sure the pinky is not tucked under the fingerboard</td>
<td>Allows fast runs to be smoother</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General facade is more relaxed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pizzicato</th>
<th>What location on string</th>
<th>Pizzicato of the ensemble gained warmth.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pizzicato sound decays too quickly</td>
<td>Which finger/where on finger</td>
<td>Pizz started giving direction to the line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No color variation</td>
<td>Brush stroke pizz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vibrato</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experimentation encouraged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deciding on how nimble or heavy the pizz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Playing what is printed</th>
<th>When an error is identified ask the player to read their part out loud in terms of the common errors</th>
<th>Students can get embarrassed when this happens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Careful observation can fix many mistakes</td>
<td>Help them figure out why this mistake happens so that they can avoid it in the future.</td>
<td>It is ok as long as they learn for the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most common with incorrectly learned rhythms, notes, and dynamics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Playing with quality sound</th>
<th>Contact point</th>
<th>Stun the group by producing more sound on a members instrument than they thought possible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensemble’s sound was unbalanced</td>
<td>Velocity of bow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students unaware of how sound is produced</td>
<td>Downward acceleration of bow*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demonstrate on an instrument How the components contribute</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice at home, rehearse at rehearsal</th>
<th>Easily resolved by saying, “Practicing parts in rehearsal is not allowed unless I</th>
<th>Establishes authority and brings focus back to the issue at hand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students practice their parts during rehearsal</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Downward-acceleration: The degree of rotation of the arm (by either pronation or supination of the wrist and the angles of elbow and shoulder) by which the player increase the force of the bow on the string. This terminology is designed to avoid using the word force when teaching students. When students think of force or pressing, it creates physical tightness, which works against the goal of producing quality sound comfortably.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Suggestions</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-coaching and pre-rehearsal</td>
<td>Players did not know notes, rhythms or dynamics</td>
<td>Do not tolerate people practicing on their own during</td>
<td>Future rehearsals can focus on music beyond the notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preparation</td>
<td>These are the most basic elements of music making</td>
<td>Give students suggestions of how to more efficiently prepare their parts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong foundation is needed to make more engaging music</td>
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<tr>
<td>Projecting for a violist</td>
<td>Young violist was not projecting well</td>
<td>One solution was simply to play louder.</td>
<td>When she applied these suggestions it made the rest of the ensemble more secure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Issues:</td>
<td>Another solution was to rotate her body so that the face of the viola was</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Sound projects away from audience</td>
<td>not pointed at the back wall and more towards the violins, cello and audience.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Playing too quietly in general</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proper bow stroke</td>
<td>The eighth notes in a Mozart quartet were too heavy</td>
<td>I encouraged the group to try to achieve a lighter sound, using a brushier,</td>
<td>Allowed the bass notes on the downbeat to ring through the measure and the weak beats to be</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>off the string stroke</td>
<td>light, bringing the waltz to life</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This worked for all instruments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rehearsal Space</td>
<td>Groups need enough space to play comfortably</td>
<td>Make sure the space is large enough for the group</td>
<td>In confined quarters, the players tighten up as does the sound</td>
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<td>In spaces too large, the emptiness of a hall can be intimidating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remembering music</td>
<td>Students forget to bring their music</td>
<td>Bring copies of parts and scores</td>
<td>Apple iPads were used to access IMSLP for parts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhythmic accuracy</td>
<td>have two copies of their parts, one that they leave in the rehearsal space and one that they bring home to practice</td>
<td>during some rehearsals</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
|                   | • Jumping off the ends of ties  
|                   | • Tripletizing dotted-rhythms  
|                   | • Entering late  
|                   | • Syncopations | • Set metronome  
|                   | | • Demonstrate so the students hear the correct rhythm  
|                   | | • Have students “Ta” or clap  
|                   | | • Accuracy improves  
| Scales            | • Scales are good for focus and warming up  
|                   | • Help students begin to hear ensemble intonation  
|                   | • Allows students who have not played yet that day an opportunity to warm-up | • Scales in unison, thirds and with drones  
|                   | | • Spoke with the group and asked them to focus on an important aspect of their playing (intonation, vibrato) for the scales and remainder of rehearsal  
|                   | | • Did not relent until they made significant progress on the topic  
|                   | | • Have a method for returning to the previous note (say “Back”)  
|                   | | • When students realize they struggle to perform satisfactory scales (which they perceive to be easy) they increase their focus immediately to prove they are capable  
| Scaling dynamics  | • Sometimes the differences between dynamics such as forte and fortissimo go unobserved | • Sing for the group so they can hear how serious you are about the differences  
|                   | | • Sometimes the difference is not pure volume, but sound quality and intensity  
|                   | | • Empowers group to increases the dynamic range available to the students  
| Starting a rehearsal | • start of a coaching sets the mood  
|                   | • Tell ensemble the way the coaching is organized  
|                   | • initiating energy, focus and excitement | • Run-throughs are good for excitement  
|                   | | • Run-throughs allow the group to show you their hard work  
|                   | | • Short segments are good for focus  
|                   | | • Long-segments allow the group to settle into a
| **Starting and stopping** | • I like to start quickly to avoid wasting time.  
• Quartet took too long to get ready after what I had hoped to be a brief stop. | • This means that I require my groups to be ready to play immediately, and to stop when I ask them to stop. | • This saves a lot of rehearsal time.  
• The rest of the rehearsal was much smoother. |
| **Trading lines, Dialogue, and one voice across parts** | • Voices get passed around frequently  
• Often disjunct or completely ignored | • Have the group identify for themselves which parts are related  
• Isolate the exchanging voices  
• Have these voices sing their parts | • Clearer phrasing  
• Clear understanding of construction conveyed to audience |
| **Tuning at the beginning of the coaching.** | • Asked why I took so long to tune each player individually  
• Gives the group a better chance of playing in tune | • I tuned each person’s instrument separately to the same “A.”  
• Asked one player to try to explain to the group why I take so much time and care to get them in tune. | • In the quartet, there are no sections, just one on a part, so if notes are out of tune it is very noticeable.” |
| **Tuning the melody** | • When the melody is out of tune it makes it difficult to understand what is really going on | • Tune the player individually to a metronome drone  
• Have the rest of the group hold out the harmony while the melody is practiced | • Students heard the relationship between harmony and melody  
• Were glad that the melody finally sounded right |
| **Understanding the construction of a work** | • I observed in a run-through that the three lower strings who were playing in rhythmic unison were playing totally different rhythms  
• Other sections, group was unaware of trading lines | • Had them play outside of the full context and isolated their parts.  
• Asked if they knew that they were in unison  
• Made them realize that when they performed it they each were playing a different imprecise rhythm | • The group never missed that particular passage any more.  
• The issue of missing unisons persisted  
• can spend an entire rehearsal going through the score with the ensemble |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voice Hierarchy</th>
<th>Suggested to rehearse with a score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Group had not looked at a score</td>
<td>• Things to look for</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Suggested to rehearse with a score</td>
<td>• Melody/countermelody</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Group putting their parts in context beyond just the printed dynamics</td>
<td>• Motifs (rhythmic or pitched)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Things to look for</td>
<td>• Suspensions (harmonic importance)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Students were able to hear resolutions of suspensions and how the dynamics alone do not tell the whole story</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What does <strong>ppp</strong> stand for</th>
<th>Students were able to hear resolutions of suspensions and how the dynamics alone do not tell the whole story</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Piano or beautiful</td>
<td>• Learning that <strong>ppp</strong> is mostly about sound quality</td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>ppp</strong> is a very special dynamic that conveys an effect as much</td>
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<tr>
<td>• groups often sacrifice sound quality while trying to achieve the indicated softness</td>
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<tr>
<td>• I asked my group why Dvořák would write <strong>ppp</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• One of the members shared a story about a conductor who asked what <strong>p</strong> meant and someone said piano</td>
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<tr>
<td>• conductor said it means “<strong>p</strong>”eautiful</td>
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</table>
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