

Chamber Music

One player to a part. No conductor. Everything agreed between you.

SIGHTLINES

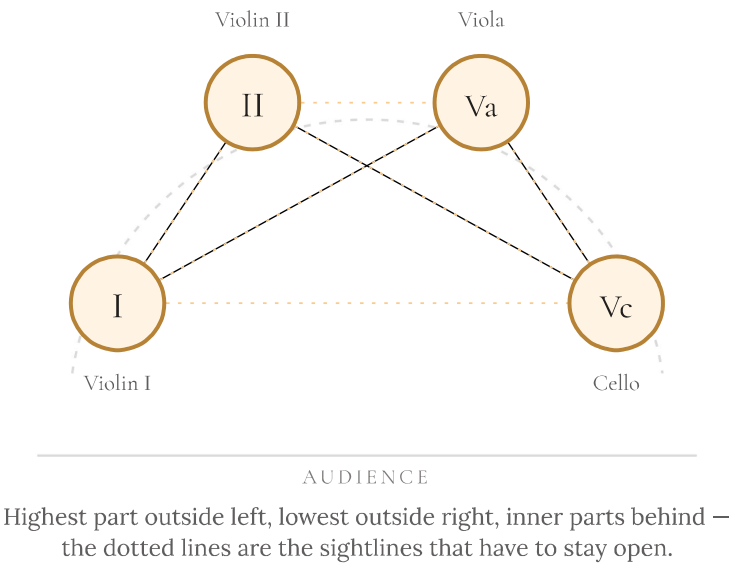
Sit so that every player can see every other bow arm or breath without turning their head. If you cannot see somebody, move the chair, not your neck.

STAND HEIGHT

Low enough to look over, not through. The music is not the thing you watch most.

DISTANCE

Close enough to hear each other over yourself. Spread out and the group plays late.



Two to about nine players. Beyond that somebody has to beat time and it becomes an ensemble. Pin this where you rehearse.

TUNING ORDER

- 1 One source: the piano, or the cello's A.
- 2 A first, then down through the lower strings.
- 3 Check octaves and fifths between players.
- 4 Hold a chord; adjust until it stops beating.
- 5 Re-tune after ten minutes — things go sharp.

WHEN TWO DISAGREE

The lower part holds; the upper part moves. Tuning comes up from the bass.

THE GROUPS — ONE PLAYER TO A PART IN EVERY ONE OF THEM

Duo	Any instrument with piano, or two of the same	String trio	Violin, viola, cello — every line exposed	Piano trio	Violin, cello, piano
String quartet	Two violins, viola, cello — the central repertoire	Piano quintet	String quartet plus piano	Wind quintet	Flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, bassoon
Brass quintet	Two trumpets, horn, trombone, tuba	Percussion	Three to six players, tuned and untuned	Vocal consort	One or two voices per part, SATB

THE FOUR TEXTURES — AND YOUR JOB IN EACH

Melody & accompaniment One has the tune and shapes the tempo. Everyone else places their notes <i>with</i> it and thins out at its phrase ends.	Dialogue A figure passed round. Match the shape, length and volume of what you were handed, then hand it on.
Homophony Chords in one rhythm — most endings. Nobody leads: agree the attack and the length. Bass tunes it, top shapes it.	Counterpoint & fugato Equal lines at once. Play yours as a melody, but drop a level whenever a new voice enters.
The texture can change every few bars — Haydn will change it four times in eight. Name what the bar is doing before you decide how loud to be.	

WHO LEADS WHAT

- The start** — whoever plays first: breathe in, then move on the beat before.
- A new tempo** — the player who owns the new material, upbeat at the new speed.
- After a pause** — eye contact first, then breathe together.
- Slowing down** — the bass line decides; follow it, not the tune.
- The last chord** — one player lifts; everyone stops on the lift.
- Between movements** — settle, look round, wait for the room to be quiet.

BALANCE — WHO GIVES WAY

Melody	
Counter-melody	
Bass line	
Harmony	
Rhythmic figure	
Every dynamic is relative to the others: if a listener notices an inner part, it is too loud, and the bass must always be audible.	

A SCORE IS ONE SYSTEM

Violin I	
Violin II	
Viola	
Cello	
Highest at the top, piano underneath everyone. Read <i>down</i> a column to hear the chord.	

MARKS IN YOUR PART

Bar numbers	Missing? Pencil one at every line start before you play
Boxed letter	A rehearsal letter — quicker to find than a bar
Numbered rest	That many bars of silence: count and listen
Small notes	Somebody else's line, cueing your entry
V. S.	Turn quickly — plan the turn in pencil
Tacet	You do not play in this movement

WHAT GETS SAID IN THE ROOM

From the top — from the beginning.	The upbeat to 42 — start on the beat before bar 42.	Letter B — from the boxed rehearsal letter.
Take it down — play it quieter.	Give way — let the other part come through.	Sub-divide — count in smaller units.