

# TEEN STRINGS

IDEAS, NEWS & FUN FOR STUDENTS OF VIOLIN, VIOLA, CELLO, BASS & FIDDLE

TIP SHEET № 17



## 5 TIPS ON SUCCESSFUL CHAMBER-MUSIC SIGHT READING

Sight reading chamber music is one of the great joys of being a musician. While playing at first sight as an ensemble has its challenges, there are individual and group strategies to greatly improve the experience.

**First, you need to scan and prioritize.** Before playing, each member of the group should look over his or her part. A key concept in successful sight reading is establishing what is most important in the first play-through. For example, string players all tend to worry about “playing the notes.” However, playing accurate notes should actually be rather low on the list of priorities.

### 1 Rhythm

If the group plays all the notes in a given passage without correct rhythm, there will be chaos; however, if everyone plays even a few notes in their correct place, the effect is much closer. So your first step should be to scan the page for time signature(s), tempo indications and changes, and tricky rhythms. Don't forget to notice rests.

### 2 Dynamics

Imagine you're a landscape painter—would you start by

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## FLEXIBILITY EXERCISES FOR YOUR BOW HOLD

An important concept to understand when dealing with bow-hold flexibility is that when you play, you are pulling the bow, not pushing it—the statement “you can't push a rope” absolutely applies. Here are two exercises to increase bow-hold flexibility.

**1 Bow push-ups** Hold a pencil with your bow hold and bring the pencil into the palm of your hand

by curving your fingers, then release. Repeat, holding the bow.

**2 Collé** With the bow on the string, move the stick using only your fingers (no arm, no wrist). With practice, your control and range of motion will improve.

—Scott Flavin



ICE MUSIC/KARIN ABERG

## STAY COOL THIS SUMMER!

### THIS ICE ORCHESTRA PERFORMS THE COOLEST CONCERTS YOU'VE EVER HEARD (LITERALLY)

The Swedish Lapland town of Luleå near the Arctic Circle is home to the coolest orchestra you've (possibly never) heard of, where musicians play hand-carved ICEstruments (instruments made out of ice, naturally) inside a gently lit, pulsing, rainbow-colored igloo concert hall.

It's called Ice Music and it's the brainchild of ice sculptor Tim Linhart, who, 20 years ago, carved a

string bass out of ice and was shocked at how beautiful it sounded.

"I skied all the way down to the village and I told them what had happened to me and how excited I was," Linhart says in the video, which was filmed by P2 Photography. "They pretty much thought I was a kook."

Kooky or not, the ice orchestra is undeniably unique and its array of stringed and percussion ICEstruments are ethereal and beautiful to experience.

Playing frozen instruments presents many challenges, as you might imagine, which is why Linhart accommodates for temperature by playing in a double-domed igloo, which allows the warmth from the audience to rise up and away from the instruments, so they don't melt mid-performance, which would be super awkward.

Linhart says the experience is akin to magic—"unbelievable but happening"—and we can't help but agree.

—Anna Pulley

painting individual blades of grass? Most likely you would flesh out the larger shapes, the hills and valleys. These are translated into dynamics. Before playing, look for high and low points in color and volume.

### 3 Style

Usually, the composer and his time period give us an idea of style; you're going to play with a different tone, articulation, and phrasing if you are playing Brahms instead of Haydn. Tempo designations may also help you find the character of the music—separate eighth notes in Allegro will be played quite differently from those in Largo, for example. Articulation markings, as well as any performance indications also can help.

### 4 Roles

What is everyone's role at any given moment? In looking over the music, notice where there are possible solos, as well as accompanimental passages. Some difficult figurations may not be as important if they're accompanying another voice.

### 5 Notes

Even here, start from the larger gestures and shapes. When scanning the piece, notice the key signature, key changes or accidentals, difficult passages, and patterns.

—SF

## A SHARED MUSICAL LANGUAGE

"Beethoven's very well known for his use of subito pianos and subito fortes. Suddenly the music will be very soft, and suddenly the music will be very loud. Beethoven [No.] 5 is a good example of this. Interestingly, Kanye West does the same thing."

—Yeethoven conductor Yuga Cohler on the similarities between Beethoven and Kanye West