

Understanding musical scores

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[MUSIC PLAYING]

NAOMI:

Well, it's been really lovely listening to you play this Schubert piece, so thank you very much. But could you tell me a little bit more about how you use the score when you're rehearsing and performing?

PIANIST:

Yeah. That's an interesting question. What you find in most classical chamber music that the pianist has the full score with everyone's part in it, as well as their own. But during rehearsals, most good or diligent chamber ensembles will have a score on the floor so that every can refer to it. And so in chamber music, there's no intellectual leader, if you like. It's a cooperative, so that everyone can see what's going on, can have their say about how you interpret the score.

NAOMI:

But how do you start and stop?

VIOLINIST:

Well, that's usually the job of the violinist in the group, or the first violinist. So it's a combination of body language and breathing. So you need to get eye contact at the beginning to make sure that everyone is ready to play.

NAOMI:

Could you show us how you do that? Yes, that would be really great.

VIOLINIST:

Yeah, so just the beginning of the theme.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

NAOMI:

That's amazing. And then how do you end it?

VIOLINIST:

It's the same thing really, just making sure that everyone is feeling the music together, and you can lead with your body, and with your foot, and breathe together.

NAOMI:

How do the other members of the group feel about the violin leading that?

CELLIST:

I think it's amazing how much of an impact the lead can have so it's not just the tempo, or where to play, but it's also the character, and the dynamic, and the style that you're playing after the lead's been given.

NAOMI:

So the body language and the way that lead is given is really important to all of you?

CELLIST:

Yeah, definitely.

NAOMI:

But you've talked about starting and stopping, but it's not just about that. It's about how you keep it going. How do you keep together while you're playing?

CELLIST:

Yeah, I suppose it's another interesting question. The most important things to keep a constant sense of the pulse. And perhaps, it's quite a natural thing. So perhaps, thinking about the breathing. For instance, how a choir would breathe together to sing each phrase. That will probably give the most natural phrasing. And because in a piece like this, although, there obviously is a pulse, there's also a constant ebb and flow within the music.

So it's really important that you're aware of what's going on around you and constantly listening so that you're in tune with that person.

VIOLINIST:

Well, it's not always just the violin who has total control. I'm not the most important person. For example, in variation one, I'm not paying for the upbeat, so there might be other instruments who have to give that lead.

NAOMI:

So it really is that cooperative, that you're all taking part in that.

PIANIST:

Yeah.

NAOMI:

Do you want to maybe demonstrate that variation one? Who leads that?

PIANIST:

I lead that.

NAOMI:

The piano leads that?

PIANIST:

Yeah.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

NAOMI:

Great. Thank you very much.