



East London Late Starters' Orchestra

Members' Handbook 2021 to 2022

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A Very Big Welcome to ELLSO

There's no experience quite like playing music with other like-minded people...

It's a very special feeling. The ethos of ELLSO is that it's never too late to learn music and take part in this liberating and fun experience.

You've joined a friendly and enthusiastic orchestra, taught by experienced and committed tutors. We tackle a wide variety of music even though, as late starters, some have not yet reached a high standard technically.

In a non-competitive and supportive environment, we play music that is enjoyable, stimulating, expressive and playable by a wide range of abilities. Some members have never played a stringed instrument before, some can't read music, whilst others have previous musical knowledge and expertise.

Our end of term concerts allows you to invite guests to a performance of what you and other members have learnt.

Reading this handbook will help you to get the best out of ELLSO

It gives information about what we do: an overview of all the ELLSO activities in which you can take part, details of the ELLSO Learning Programme, the technique skills you'll master at each of ELLSO's five stages plus advice on orchestral etiquette and caring for your instrument (and much more).

At the back there are important dates for your diary (p15) and the Saturday morning timetable (p16).

There are also details of how you can join our residential String Summer School and the other ensembles that ELLSO runs. Other events will be arranged from time to time which will be advertised on the website and by email.

The ELLSO Learning Programme is Unique

There are **four sessions** on a Saturday morning:

- one dedicated to developing technique
- a second to acquiring essential musicianship skills
- & two others to playing in ensembles.

The technique scheme of work (p6-7) provides a framework for what you'll be learning in each of ELLSO's five stages—Stage 1 for beginners up to Stage 5 for more experienced players.

If at any time you are finding difficulties with the demands of learning your instrument, please speak to the tutors in the first instance.

Other Ways to Find Things Out

Saturday players can keep an eye out for announcements on the noticeboard in reception.

Regular information will be available to you through email and on the website (www.ellso.org).

You can always raise things with board members.

So please, if you're unsure of something, do ask.

Please Volunteer

Running ELLSO involves a considerable amount of work. It is run mainly by volunteers so we rely on members to help, for instance to administer the running of ELLSO, arrange our end of term concerts, liaise with the professional musicians who are our tutors, look after the instruments, and organise refreshments on a Saturday morning.

We could not continue without volunteers so if you are able to help, please contact secretary@ellso.org or one of the Board Members; you can find their details on the ELLSO website and on the noticeboard.

As a member you will take part in General Meetings. You can also stand for election to the Board. Feedback on your experience will also be evaluated through an end of year questionnaire.

"Have an enjoyable year"

—from the ELLSO Board

Essential Information

Saturday Morning: Things to Remember

Please check the Noticeboard in Reception each week for any changes/ announcements.

Bring your:

- Instrument and bow
- Music
- Pencil and eraser
- Rosin and soft cloth
- Glasses (if appropriate)
- Short fingernails!

On arrival sign the Attendance Register in Reception (we need to know who is in the building in case of emergencies).

Be punctual. Please arrive at 9.15 am to set up and tune your instrument, ready for the 9.30am start. If you arrive after 9.30 am:

- Make your arrival as quiet and unobtrusive as possible
- Unpack your instrument outside the room and leave
- your case outside
- Tune your instrument before you go in
- Don't take up lesson time with apologies

With only five minutes changeover time at the end of each class, you'll need to finish promptly and be ready to start your next class on time.

How you can Help

Once Covid restrictions are eased, technique groups take it in turns to provide refreshments each week. See the rota on the noticeboard for when it is your group's turn.

Help to set up the rooms at the beginning of the morning.

Ensure that if yours is the last group to use a room, you put the furniture back and return all stands.

We are always looking for members to help out more widely with the running of ELLSO, both during the Saturday session, and with publicity and administrative activities that keep the orchestra running. We would be very happy to hear from you if you could offer some voluntary time to help keep ELLSO running; email secretary@ellso.org for more details.

About ELLSO

East London Late Starters' Orchestra (ELLSO) is a registered charity and was started over 30 years ago with a basic philosophy that music-making is within everyone's ability.

We are a teaching string orchestra for adult late starters—regardless of age, background, experience or income—and our aim is to encourage people to play music. Our approach is to provide a genuinely supportive and non-competitive environment. This philosophy is reflected in our teaching methods and the music we play.

Our model has served as the springboard for establishing late starter string orchestras in Yorkshire and other parts of the UK, as well as overseas in New York City and Durban, South Africa.

Where we Meet

We meet on Saturday mornings at the Phoenix School, 49 Bow Road, Bow, London E3 2AD

Term Dates

There are three terms. Each term lasts for 11 weeks in total, including a half-term break and end of term concert—see Dates for the Diary (p15).

End of Term Concerts

These take place on the last Saturday of each term.

They're great fun, so come along and don't worry about how well or not you play.

Fees

You pay an annual fee to be a member of ELLSO, plus a fee per term for tuition and (if relevant) instrument hire. Concessionary rates may be offered in proven cases of hardship. Fees are payable in advance, before the start of each term. For further information, email the treasurer: treasurer@ellso.org

Essential Information

Website and Emails

News items of interest to ELLSO members appear on the ELLSO website, www.ellso.org and in an occasional email newsletter. Such items include news of upcoming concerts that may be of interest to ELLSO members, concerts including present or former ELLSO tutors, or performances by various ELLSO ensembles (PE or IPE). You can also advertise instruments for sale.

Any ELLSO member can submit an item for consideration for the newsletter and the news section of the website; just send an email with the content to newsletter@ellso.org

The website contains lots of useful information for members, including a short film about us. We also use a web-based system to keep in touch with everyone. The website now includes an RSS feed. By subscribing to this feed, you will be automatically notified whenever a new item appears in Latest News.

Who Runs ELLSO?

ELLSO is a registered charity. There are Board Directors, elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). A full list of the Board Members can be seen on the Noticeboard in Reception and on the website.

The AGM in the spring term is your chance to elect new board members who will set the strategy for the coming year. Why not stand yourself? Put your name forward at the next AGM.

Feedback

We always value your feedback at any time: there is a suggestion box in the entrance hall and you can also provide feedback directly to Board members or email them to feedback@ellso.org

As for the teaching programme, at least once a year we ask you to complete a questionnaire to provide detailed feedback on your experience. However, if at any time you are concerned about specific aspects of the teaching, initially talk to the class tutor about it. If this is not possible, or the problem persists, please speak to Mike Lee, Tutor Liaison Officer (feedback@ellso.org), or Sinan Kadifachi, Tutor co-ordinator.

Music Throughout the Year

Apart from the Saturday morning sessions, there are other ways you can join in, have fun and improve your playing (separate fees apply). Details of all of these can be found on our web site, www.ellso.org.

Intermediate Performance Ensemble (IPE)

IPE meets on Monday evenings at The Merchant Street Centre in Bow and is for players who have been playing for a year or more.

Performance Ensemble (PE)

This is for more experienced players who want to tackle more demanding repertoire. It includes a small wind and brass section. It meets on Thursday evenings at St Anne's Church, Limehouse.

String Summer School

ELLSO's Late Starters String Summer School (established in 1999) was founded in response to nationwide interest in an article in The Times Saturday Magazine about ELLSO and its approach to teaching adult string players. The String Summer School is often described as inspirational and life-changing by attendees.

Mudlark

An opportunity for or ensembles formed by members outside the Saturday morning programme to perform music to each other and friends and families (see Noticeboard in Reception for the next date)

Summer Mondays

A very enjoyable and relaxing way of keeping in the swing of things over the summer, between the end of the ELLSO summer term and the start of the autumn term. This group often does open air concerts such as on the Victoria Park Bandstand.

The ELLSO Learning Programme

The ELLSO Learning Programme

Saturday ELLSO comprises four sessions on a Saturday morning

- Developing technique
- Acquiring essential musicianship skills
- Two sessions playing in ensembles

You'll be in one of five stages (for technique classes and ensemble playing), according to your ability on your instrument. The stages are designed to cover the needs of all players - from absolute beginners, to those with considerable instrumental experience who wish to develop interpretative skills and tackle established string repertoire.

You play in ensembles from day one with players from adjacent stages:

- stages 1 & 2
- stages 1, 2 & 3
- stages 3,4 & 5
- stages 4 & 5

ELLSO Stages

The tutors have written a scheme of work for technique classes showing what you should expect to cover at each of the five stages. This should prove useful for monitoring your progress and provides guidance as to when it is appropriate to change stage.

The tutors are keen to ensure that you are in the appropriate stage relative to your experience and skills. If you move through the stages too quickly you could find that you start to develop bad habits and might feel disheartened if you are unable to cope with the demands that are placed upon you. Also, it isn't fair on other members if the range of ability in each class is too wide.

Please talk to your technique tutor about any aspects of technique that you feel you would like to cover in your technique class. Tutors should discuss with you their plans for a particular term, which will be based on the scheme of work for your stage and their assessment of what is needed by the group. If you are not certain about what these plans are, please do talk to the tutor.

Making Progress

To monitor your progress, you should use the Scheme of Work and check using the tick boxes, that you have consolidated the skills which are expected of you at your current and preceding stages. These also contain guidance about the typical length of time that you will spend at each stage. This is a minimum, and is better to stay at the

same stage for a longer period of time than to move up too early, where you may find the music in ensembles too difficult and the technique classes frustrating because more basic skills have not been consolidated.

As you progress through the stages you will not just learn new skills, but consolidate the skills that you have learned. For example, it is not enough to be aware where third position is and be able to work out what notes are played by each finger. Consolidating third position means that you should be able to find third position reasonably easily, play reasonably well in tune in that position and know, without too much thought, what note each finger is playing.

As you progress, you will also be able to use the skills that you have learned to play in an expressive and musical way. Finally, remember that we are helping each other to learn; if you are one of the more advanced players in a stage, you should be learning how to support other players, e.g. in ensembles.

You should also be aware that as you move through the stages, you are expected to cope in the ensembles with less tutor support and that in general the pace of technique classes and ensembles will be faster.

If you feel that you would like further advice about whether you are currently at the right stage then please feel free to discuss this with your technique tutor.

End-of-Year Review

In the summer term of each year, one technique class will be dedicated to individual review session. In this, you will spend 5-10 minutes discussing your playing privately with the tutor. This discussion will cover:

- What you want to get out of learning your instrument
- The progress that you have made during the year
- Areas that you or the tutor feel that you need to focus on
- The stage that you should be in at ELLSO next year
- What you should work on over the summer to best prepare for ELLSO next year

This is designed to be a constructive and positive experience, focused on how you can best develop as a player.

Scheme of Work: Violin/Viola

Violin/Viola Stage 1

One year beginner course.

- Holding instrument, posture, plucking
- Bow hold within first half-term (string changes)
- Put fingers on (towards end of first term)
- G, D, A scales (C, D, G for violas) - second term
- Moving 2nd fingers back
- Two octaves G and C major, one octave F major
- Slurs (3 notes in a bow) towards end of the year
- Simple rhythms throughout the year (affects bow speed)
- Relaxation techniques and posture throughout all classes
- Lifting and coming down on the string

Violin/Viola Stage 2

A minimum of two years should be spent at this stage.

- Recap from Stage 1
- Moving 2nd fingers
- 1st finger back (flat keys)
- Use 4th finger (Bb 2 octaves, Eb 2 octaves violas)
- Playing 2 open strings
- String crossing
- Arpeggios
- Postural awareness
- Move 4th finger forwards
- Move 3rd finger forwards
- Possibly: get used to moving hand up higher (e.g. play same tune on different notes)
- Use different parts of the bow (whole and half)
- Uneven rhythms (slow and fast)
- Increase slurs up to four notes
- Martelé bowing, staccato, starting and stopping, bow pressure
- Major/minor variations (two minor scales)
- Saucer movements
- Half position
- For the violas 2nd position may be included

Violin/Viola Stage 3

A minimum of two years should be spent at this stage.

- Recap from Stage 2
- Postural awareness
- 2nd, 3rd and 4th positions
- Consolidate keys from Stage 2
- Cover more minor keys
- Play in new positions without changing out of the position
- Shifting
- Natural harmonics
- Circular movement with bow hand
- Introducing double stops
- Putting one finger down on two strings
- Putting two fingers down on two strings
- For the violas: Introducing treble clef

Violin/Viola Stage 4

A minimum of three years should be spent at this stage.

- 1st to 5th positions
- Harmonics
- Advanced bowing techniques
- Double stopping and chordal playing
- Introducing diminished, dominant 7ths etc.
- Introducing vibrato
- Postural awareness
- Scales and arpeggios—all keys up to four sharps and flats (although at this level you could be required to play music in any key)

Violin/Viola Stage 5

This stage can only be joined with the agreement of the relevant tutors.

Stage 5 will be geared to the abilities of the group and you'll be expected to have covered the scheme of work from all previous stages. You'll work on consolidating the work from Stage 4, but focusing more on musical performance and interpretation.

Schemes of Work: Cello and Double Bass

Cello Stage 1

One year beginner course.

- Holding instrument, posture, plucking
- Sitting with cello, plucking
- Maintaining posture
- Bow hold and arm
- Changing direction of bow
- Fingers down in 1st position
- String crossing and selecting strings
- Playing notes of different lengths
- 1st position C major (two octaves)
- Scales: G, D, F (one octave)
- Arpeggios of above scales
- Slurs on one string (maybe two)
- Staccato (on the string)
- Introducing dynamics
- Arco to pizz

Cello Stage 2

A minimum of two years should be spent at this stage.

- Recap on Stage 1 work, especially bow arm and hold and left hand position
- Postural awareness
- Backward/forward extensions
- 4th position with extensions
- One octave harmonics
- Half position
- More advanced slurs (more than two notes)
- Slurs and staccato combined (on string)
- Increasing velocity
- Dynamics
- Sforzando/ fortepiano/ tremolando
- Keys: (one octave) Major Bb Eb; Minor E, B
- Keys: (two octaves) Major G, D, F; Minor D, G, C

Double Bass Stages 1 to 3

These stages will be working as one group.

- Basics of tuning
- Bow hold
- Basic bow strokes and terminology
- Holding instrument and posture
- Plucking and arco sound
- One octave scales of E, F, G, A, B, Bb, C and D
- Positions up to D with 4th finger

Cello Stage 3

A minimum of two years should be spent at this stage.

- Recap from Stage 2
- 2nd and 3rd positions with extensions
- Scales and arpeggios: all keys up to three sharps and flats
- Consolidating and moving around different positions up to 4th position
- Play off the string
- More advanced bowing techniques involving slurs and staccato
- Introducing tenor clef
- Postural awareness

Cello Stage 4

A minimum of three years should be spent at this stage.

- Recap from Stage 3
- Postural awareness
- 5th, 6th, 7th and thumb positions
- Consolidating and moving around positions
- Introducing vibrato
- Scales and arpeggios - all keys up to four sharps and flats (although at this level you could be required to play music in any key)
- Introducing double stopping
- Developing bow control
- Improving sound quality

Cello Stage 5

Can only be joined with the agreement of the relevant tutors.

This stage is geared to the abilities of the group and you'll be expected to have covered the scheme of work from all previous stages. You'll work on consolidating the work from Stage 4, but focusing more on musical performance and interpretation

Double Bass Stages 4 and 5

These stages will be working as one group.

- Recap from previous stages
- Comfortable at tuning the instrument
- More complex bow strokes
- Two octave scales
- More demanding co-ordination of left and right hand

Ensemble Playing

Ensemble Playing

Each member of ELLSO plays in two ensembles on a Saturday morning. For most people, playing with others is the main purpose of learning to play a musical instrument and, of course, it's a lot of fun.

However, the ensemble classes are also an integral part of learning to play at ELLSO and should be viewed as teaching sessions in their own right.

The main aims of these sessions are to:

- Offer the opportunity to consolidate and extend the skills learned in both the technique and musicianship sessions
- Experience the enjoyment of playing with other instruments
- Learn to play as part of a group and in particular to develop listening skills
- Provide opportunities for public performance
- Learn about different musical styles and how that affects the way in which pieces are performed
- Experience a wide range of music written at different times, including contemporary music
- Learn about orchestral etiquette.

As well as playing with other instruments, the ensembles are structured so that you play with members with differing levels of experience from you and you learn from each other. You do this not only by playing with those who have more experience, but by taking a leading role (e.g. sitting at the front) when playing with less experienced players (which helps in developing your confidence and in contributing to ELLSO).

Ensemble Skills to be Developed at each Stage

Stage 1: Reading and playing the stage 1 parts within the ensembles. Following the conductor and playing in time.

Stage 2: Developing skills and confidence in reading and ensemble playing, including following the marked bowing directions and dynamics. Experience sitting at the front of the section in the Stage 1-2 ensemble.

Stage 3: Further developing skills and confidence in reading and ensemble playing, including quicker tempos and playing in higher positions. Experience sitting at the front of the section in Stage 1-3 ensemble.

Stages 4 and 5: Developing fluency in reading (including tenor clef for cellists and treble clef for violas). Gaining experience of playing music written in more complex keys and time signatures.

How to Play in an Orchestra

Be on Time

- So you don't miss anything
- To give yourself time to tune up
- So you don't distract others when you have to scramble around finding a seat, finding music, knocking over music stands, etc.

Don't Talk

- This is very distracting for everyone and disrupts the rehearsal
- If you have a query, ask the conductor or another tutor

Listen to the Conductor...

at all times, even if you think that they talking to another section. If you switch off, you won't know when the conductor starts saying something which is relevant to you (particularly where to start rehearsing from next).

Whilst the conductor is rehearsing another section:

- Follow your own part and see how it relates to the section being rehearsed.
- Silently practise your left hand.
- Take the opportunity to write fingering and bowing into your part.

Don't Practise during Ensembles

It can be tempting to practise your part whilst the conductor is focused on another part in the ensemble or whilst they are talking. This is distracting to the other players. Instead, use your pencil to make a note in your part.

Finding the Place to Start

Be alert and listen.

The conductor will often say something such as:

'Before letter C; one, two, three, four, five bars.'

Find letter C as quickly as possible and start counting bars before the conductor finishes. This helps to save time.

Please be ready to play when the conductor puts their arms up, stop when the conductor stops—and watch the conductor whilst they are conducting.

Bring a Pencil and Eraser to all Rehearsals

It's a good idea to make notes on your music. Tutors know lots of shorthand ways of doing this, so if you're uncertain please feel free to ask.

How to Sit

Usually two players share a music stand, known as a desk: one music stand, two players. It is preferable to share a stand, but occasionally players will need their own stand (e.g. because of visual impairments), though you should still sit in pairs.

- Desks should be set up in pairs behind the front desk.
- You should sit with players who are playing the same part as you and with players at the same stage. At ELLSO the stage one players usually sit round the back of the ensemble, so that tutors can get to you easily if you need extra help.

In many orchestras the front desks in each section are filled by players who are more confident and experienced. However, in teaching orchestras like ELLSO it can also be helpful for some experienced players to sit at the back so that others can hear what they are playing. The tutor leading the ensemble may sometimes suggest particular seating arrangements and/or may suggest changes to give members experience of playing in different places.

- Make sure that you have enough room to play. It works best if you position the chairs on each desk so that they're parallel to each other.
- You need to sit so that you can move your eyes easily between the music and the conductor. This means not having the stand too high/low or too close. You should be able to see the conductor in your peripheral vision, even when focused on your music.

If you are not sure where to sit or have any concerns about the seating arrangements then please speak to one of the tutors.

Page Turning

It's the convention that the inside player turns the page. For violins and violas, the inside player is the player on the left, as you sit facing the music stand. For cellos, the inside player is the one on the right.

Tuning

- Listen carefully to the A before attempting to tune your own A string.
- Sing each of the other strings in your head before trying to tune them.
- Tune quietly. Stop playing once your instrument is in tune. This makes it easier for everybody else.

Musicianship Sessions

Musicianship: a Class by Class Guide

The third session on Saturday is called a *musicianship* class. These classes offer you the opportunity to develop your musical skills. There are eight classes and you choose the one appropriate to you, subject to the constraints described below.

The skills and knowledge you acquire will support your learning in the technique and ensemble classes as well as rounding out your experience in music. Musicianship classes cover a wide range of needs (from those with no previous musical experience, to those who already play instruments and read music). They have a common set of aims to:

- Improve your sense of pulse
- Understand rhythm
- Develop an improved awareness of pitch
- Increase your listening skills
- Extend your musical memory
- Provide the necessary music-reading skills for the music you play in ELLSO

You may want to repeat these classes to consolidate your progress.

- Minor scales and keys, relative major/minor keys
- Names of scale degrees, intervals.

Foundation Skills Level 1 (Susanna)

The class is geared specifically to the needs of beginners with no previous experience of music and will provide hands-on knowledge of the fundamentals of music-reading in a practical way. It will include activities around rhythm, pitch, clefs and time-signatures, including practising following a conductor, key-signatures and some of the major scales.

Theory Level 2 (Hannah)

(covering Books 1 and 2 ABRSM) Aimed at consolidating and extending the knowledge acquired in Foundation Skills.

This class is suitable for Stage 1's who can already read music but need to improve their theoretical knowledge. It is also designed to fill in gaps in knowledge for members who have been in ELLSO for longer than a year. Two years is often required to cover all aspects of basic theory.

We aim to cover the theory behind the topics listed below plus, time permitting, include practical exercises too—so bring your instruments. The topics covered will include:

- Time signatures (both compound and simple time)
- Constructing and understanding major scales
- Key signatures and the circle of fifths
- Accidentals, rests, ties and dots
- Triplets and compound time

Theory Level 3 (Brooke)

(starting from Book 3 ABRSM)

This class is suitable for those who have completed the Level 2 Theory.

It is also suitable for members who want to revise their knowledge. Topics covered will include:

- Compound time signatures of 6/8 9/8 12/8 and the grouping of notes and rests within these times. The demisemiquaver (32nd note) and its equivalent rest. Exercises will include the composition of a simple four-bar rhythm which may start on an upbeat.
- Extension of the staff beyond two ledger lines. The transposition of a simple melody from the treble clef to the bass clef, or vice versa.
- Scales and key signatures of all major and minor keys up to and including four sharps and flats, including both harmonic and melodic forms of minor scales, with their tonic triads (root position), degrees (number only), and intervals above the tonic (number and type).
- More terms and signs. The phrase structure of melodies will also be covered.

Participants should purchase Book 3 of the ABRSM syllabus (*Music Theory in Practice, Grade 3*) for use in this session.

Musicianship Sessions

Hearing Music (Ian)

Aimed at extending skills learned in the theory course and improving your ability to read music by hearing it in your head.

The course will enable you to be able to sight-read more reliably and have a clearer understanding of what a piece of written music will sound like before you try to play it. There is a particular emphasis on improving your sense of pulse, ability to read rhythm and developing the ability to hear pitch in your head.

Most of the activities adopt a practical approach, although this does not usually involve instruments. It therefore enables you to develop your skills without having to think about the technical difficulties of playing your instrument.

The course is flexible and will be adapted to best meet the needs of the group, whatever the range of experience within it. However, this class is aimed at members who are ready to move on from the Theory class, but are not quite ready to join the more advanced courses such as *Playing by Ear*.

Improve your Rhythm (Phil)

A class for all levels and instruments and all those wanting to improve their rhythm. We'll look at how to read rhythm better in music starting with simple examples and moving to more complicated patterns like triplets. We will also look at ways to improve our sense of pulse, allowing us to 'feel' the beat more and play in time with others.

Playing by Ear (Sinan)

Will explore melodies from a wide range of musical genres – all by ear.

This will be good practice in the recognition of intervals, rhythms, phrase structure and precise intonation.

It should also be a reminder of how to play a melody, not only the notes that create it.

Chamber Music (Piotr)

Combines active listening with an exploration of musical genres and styles and the application of this to performance practice and score reading.

The class will focus on the repertoire of string quartets and each week an arrangement of part of a quartet will be studied and performed in the group.

This will be a faster moving class. A good standard of playing (stages 4 and 5) and sight reading is required.

How to Practise Effectively

Advice on Practising

One of the key elements which will determine your success in learning to play will be the amount of time which you are able to devote to personal practice. So here are a few thoughts on how to approach practice and to get the most out of your practice time.

When is the Best Time to Practise?

To some extent this is a matter of personal preference. It's important to choose a time when you will not be interrupted and there are no other demands on your time.

Some people find that the best time is early in the morning, for example before going to work, whilst others prefer the end of the day. Some people take their instrument to work and practise at lunchtime. Whichever time you choose, it's a good idea to practise at the same time each day if your lifestyle will allow this.

Try to avoid any thoughts like, 'I'll just do the washing up before I practise', or even some other more pleasurable activity.

When the time comes (whatever time you have allocated), you should make practising your top priority and not allow anything to distract you. This approach not only helps you to be disciplined, but helps people that you live with get used to your being unavailable during this time.

Where Should I Practise?

When you practise it's helpful to feel that you're not really being listened to, so that you don't feel that you're performing and you can focus on what you are trying to achieve.

However, since most of us have to practise within earshot of others, we have to ignore the fact that we can be overheard, even though practising often means attempting to play things that we can't play well and also playing scales and exercises (so most of it is not necessarily enjoyable to hear).

Let your neighbours know that you're learning an instrument and tell them this means that you have to practise at some point during the day. You'll be surprised at how supportive they can be.

It's helpful if you can practise somewhere which is not too resonant as it could give a false impression about sound quality. Sometimes it's helpful to be able to see yourself in a mirror, particularly for checking if your bow is moving at the correct angle to the string.

How Often Should I Practise?

Try to practise a minimum of five days a week - six days is probably better. However, if this is not possible, set yourself a realistic target and aim to stick to it. Don't give yourself a hard time if you're unable to practise as much as you'd like.

Whatever practice you do won't be wasted. Doing hours and hours on the Friday night before ELLSO, when you haven't been able to practise during the week, is probably not a great idea. Not least because of the danger of developing an injury.

How Much Practise Should I do?

It's not a good idea for beginners to do more than about 15 minutes per practice session when they first start.

However, over the first year this should probably increase to at least half an hour and perhaps even 45 minutes. After this it's about how quickly you want to progress. The more practice you do the more rapidly you'll progress.

What Should I Practise?

Your technique tutor will advise you about what you need to practise from your technique classes.

This will usually be a mixture of scales, arpeggios, other exercises and pieces. It's also important to practise the pieces from the ensembles. The latter is best done early in the term as this means that you can use the ensemble sessions to improve your ability to play with others, rather than having to spend time in the ensembles rehearsing the notes.

How Should I Practise?

Again, tutors will give you lots of advice about this.

Practising involves a lot of thinking time as well as playing time. Incidentally, this means that mental practice away from the instrument can be hugely beneficial.

Be clear about what you're trying to improve before you play. Try to work out what you need to change to get something right. If you practise something a lot and it isn't getting better, ask your tutor for some advice. Try to improve one thing at a time: when practising a piece, focus on intonation for some of your practice time, then think about bowing, rhythm, sound quality or posture, etc.

Metronomes are very useful for ensuring that you are playing with a strong sense of pulse. You may find it helpful to record your practice, although be aware that most home recordings will not sound as good as it actually is!

Looking after your Instrument

Don't:

- Put your unattended instrument down on a chair or on the floor
- Stand cellos or basses against a wall or chair.
- Allow liquids near your instrument
- Play on a damaged instrument (or the damage will be compounded)
- Leave your bow tightened for long periods

Do:

- Release bow hair tension after use
- Clean rosin off your instrument and bow stick
- Insure your instrument
- Examine your instrument before use
- Place your instrument in a strong case after use
- Replace worn strings
- Keep spare strings
- Protect your instrument from heat, cold, humidity
- Practise!
- Importantly, always retract your cello spike before moving around or laying your cello down.

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Six-monthly	Annually
Strings	Wipe off excess rosin with a duster		Check winding	Consider changing upper strings	Consider changing lower strings
Pegs	Tune up			Apply peg paste	
Fine-tuners	Tune up		Check if touching belly		
Bridge	Check angles	Check feet	Check for damage	Check if notches are ok	Check for warping
Fingerboard	Clean with a duster		Check for damage	Clean with meths	Clean tramlines
Tailpiece	Clean with a duster		Check for damage		
Body	Clean with a duster		Check for damage		
Bow	Loosen. Wipe off excess rosin with a duster		Check for damage	Check if it needs rehairing	
Chin rest	Clean with a duster		Check adjustment and positioning		

Dates for the Diary 2021-2022

Saturday mornings from 9.30am to 1:30pm

Autumn Term 2021	Spring Term 2022	Summer Term 2022
September 18th 2021	January 15th 2022	April 23rd 2022
September 25th 2021	January 22nd 2022	April 30th 2022
October 2nd 2021	January 29th 2022	May 7th 2022
October 9th 2021	February 5th 2022	May 14th 2022
October 16th 2021	February 12th 2022	May 21st 2022
October 23rd 2021 - HALF TERM	February 19th 2022 - HALF TERM	May 28th 2022 - HALF TERM
October 30th 2021	February 26th 2022	June 4th 2022
November 6th 2021	March 5th 2022 (+AGM during morning session)	June 11th 2022
November 13th 2021	March 12th 2022	June 18th 2022
November 20th 2021	March 19th 2022	June 25th 2022
November 27th 2021	March 26th 2022	July 2nd 2022
End of term play-through (no Audience) - Venue and times TBA	End of term Concert - Venue and times TBA	End of term Concert - Venue and times TBA

Saturday morning timetable: September 2021 to July 2022

Please check the Noticeboard in Reception for any changes/new announcements

9.15-9.30	Arrival/Setup/Tune Up					
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Double Bass
Session 1 9.30-10.25	Violin Technique Brooke S7 Viola Technique Brooke S7 Cello Technique Hannah N2	Violin Technique Tina N3 Arianne C10, Romana S5 Viola Technique Piotr C8 Cello Technique Ian S4 Susanna dining room	Stage 3,4,5 Ensemble Sinan Phil Main Hall	Stage 3,4,5 Ensemble Sinan Phil Main Hall	Stage 3,4,5 Ensemble Sinan Phil Main Hall	Technique Early Stages Callum C9
Session 2 10.35-11.30	Stage 1,2,3 Ensemble Brooke Piotr (part reading) Susanna Main Hall (part reading in 406)	Stage 1,2,3 Ensemble Brooke Piotr Main Hall	Stage 1,2,3 Ensemble Brooke Piotr Main Hall	Violin Technique Romana S5 Phil S7 Viola Technique Tina N3* Cello Technique Hannah Dining Room	Violin Technique Sinan N2 Arianne C10 Viola Technique Tina N3* Cello Technique Ian S4*	Technique Higher Stages Callum C9*
11.30-11.50	Break					
Session 3 11.55-12.30	Musicianship: <i>Choose class from descriptions in the Members' Handbook</i> Foundation Skills (Level 1) Susanna (Room 406); Theory Level 2 Hannah (C8*); Theory Level 3 Brooke (Music Room); Hearing Music Ian (Dining Room); Improve your Rhythm Phil (S7*); Chamber Music Piotr (Main Hall); Playing by Ear Sinan (N2)					
Session 4 12.35-13.30	Stage 1&2 Ensemble Ian Phil Room 406 (New Building)	Stage 1&2 Ensemble Ian Phil Room 406 (New Building)	Violin Technique Piotr S5 Sinan N2 Viola Technique Brooke Music room Cello Technique Susanna Dining Room	Stage 4&5 Ensemble Hannah Main Hall	Stage 4&5 Ensemble Hannah Main Hall	Ensemble according to level
13.30-13.45	Pack away/Tidy Up					

*All the rooms need to be put back to their original state by the end of the morning. Rooms marked with an * are not used for the whole morning so will need to be put back at the end of Session 2 (N3, S4, C9, C10) or at the end of Session 3 (S7, C8). The large chairs used in S4 need to be stacked just outside the door.