

Thoughts on rehearsals and being on stage

- Arrive early, warm up, and be ready to go when the scheduled start time arrives. This may mean being in your seat 10 minutes ahead of time, or it may mean 20 minutes. Even if you're already warmed up and have your instrument assembled, don't be disrespectful to your colleagues by walking in and sitting down just as the announcements or tuning note begin.
- Every note you play is a solo, even if it's not loud enough to be heard outside of the context of the section or ensemble. Play everything well, even if it seems no one else but you can hear it.
- An out of tune note is a wrong note. Period.
- When you have rests, you still have a job to do. Don't look around, stare at other people, or check your phone. Looking at your phone or reading something – even if you're tacit for an entire movement – has gotten people fired from gigs on the spot. Certainly don't talk to someone else, unless it is absolutely necessary and you can defend yourself if you get called out. If you're playing second, be doubly sure you are counting long rests correctly. The principal player may want/need your confirmation. A former bassoonist of the Boston Symphony objected to calling rests, "rests." He demanded that they be called "silences." He said that you don't rest during rests, but instead, you're still creating. Even if it's just a quarter rest, it was put there for a reason. Figure out why. Sometimes silence is built into a piece, like the end of the Adagio of Mahler's unfinished Tenth Symphony. Or sometimes, the conductor calls for a special silence. When he was alive, Claudio Abbado used to say that the silence after Mozart was still Mozart: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WLP6kqcmPRI>
- The conductor is always right...even when they're wrong (even if they're frequently wrong). Do your best to play the music the way they want it, and don't talk back or make comments to your colleagues. Those kind of comments have a way of eventually getting around. You'll only be hurting yourself. The conductor has a very hard job that is very different from yours.
- If the conductor is rehearsing a particular section of instruments, don't stare at the section. This is especially true if one person is being asked to play alone. Would you want 60 people staring at you while you try to appease a conductor?
- At a performance
 - Get on stage early. It does you and everyone else a favor.
 - Make sure you have everything you're going to need, and your music is in the proper order with all pages in their correct place. If you've forgotten something, you have time to go backstage and get it (because you arrived on stage early – see above).
 - Try not to look nervous. The audience is there because they want to be there. They've probably paid money to be there. It's your job to create a good experience for them, and a nervous-looking performer makes for an uncomfortable audience experience.
 - During the performance don't talk on stage unless it's absolutely unavoidable. Remember that the audience can see everything that you do.
 - If you make a mistake, keep going. ALL live performances have mistakes in them – it's part of being human. The 1991 Berlin/Abbado live recording of Mahler's First Symphony is considered by many brass players to be that symphony's reference recording. Yet, it has an early entrance by the 4th horn in the last movement.

- When you bow, bend at the waist. A former professor at USC taught all of his students to say, “I can see my shoes” when they bow. Make sure you really can see your shoes, your heels are close together, and your feet are angled out 30-45 degrees. DO NOT continue to look at the audience during the bow – if you continue to watch the audience as you bend at the waist you will look like a duck. If the idea of bowing is completely foreign to you and makes you uncomfortable, watch some Japanese people bowing on Youtube (yes, there are studies of bowing on Youtube, and you want to watch one that takes it seriously). Bowing is an integral part of Japanese culture, and they get it. The idea is for you to get it, too, and to look comfortable doing it.
- If the audience continues to clap after you exit the stage, go back out! But you don’t have to go all the way to the center of the stage. That way, you have a better chance of making it back offstage before the applause stops (a good thing).
- After the recital/concert, don’t talk to audience members about the mistakes you made and everything that went wrong. That can only lessen their experience. Talk about those things later with your teacher, family, or close friends.