



At the Heart of Chamber Music:

A Practical Guide for the Player, the Coach and the Music Lover

Created by Gillian Rogell

Featuring Paul Katz and The Jupiter String Quartet

Imagine seeing amateur groups make enormous technical improvements without one single word about bowing, fingering, or other technical issues from the coaches! **Gillian Rogell** (Va, Brookline, MA) believes that technical improvement will follow if each player loses individual self-consciousness and becomes one with the group through four basic ideas: learning to create a group sound, learning to connect with each other visually (without fear of losing their place in the music), talking about the character of the music, and finally learning to feel the music as one entity.

We watch a young string quartet internalize the melody of Beethoven's *Op 18 #4* so that the other voices can respond without rigid counting. Amazingly, learning this technique actually improves the rhythm of the group as a whole. Next, a high school quartet works through the Adagio opening of Shostakovich *String Quartet #8*. Coaching by members of the Jupiter Quartet helps them to reach the deeper meaning of the music. An especially illuminating comparison to *Tai Chi* enables players to hand off seamless entrances to each other with no technical discussions of bowing. Equally fascinating is the way the Jupiter explores the emotional meaning of something as simple as an eighth note rest, and the immediate effect that this has on the playing of the students.

In the adult trio (which includes Chair **Roberta Goldman**), the group explores the difficulty of settling on a comfortable tempo and learning to feel the long rests by breathing together as a group in the Adagio of Beethoven's *Trio #1*. Woven throughout, a performance of the Brahms *Sextet, Op 36*, by the Jupiter Quartet with guests Barry Shiffman and Paul Katz, helps the viewer realize how visual communication, coordinated body language, and even the unified breathing that make a superb professional performance can be mastered by amateurs so that groups of any level can learn to dissolve the boundaries of self into the whole of the music.

This video is great to watch at many levels: as a professional seeking to learn coaching techniques; as a group learning good ensemble techniques; or simply as a listener gaining greater appreciation of what is going on during a performance.