

## Vivian Hornik Weilerstein: On Listening, Leading, and Learning How to Be More in Sync With Your Music-Making Partners.

### Description

In preparing for this week's post, I conducted a very scientific poll to see if I could find out where the piano ranked in popularity relative to all other instruments (i.e. I asked Google, Siri, and Alexa "what is the most popular musical instrument?").

For what it's worth, Google said that it was the piano, Siri said it was guitar, and Alexa insisted (repeatedly) that "the biggest instrument in the world is the Boardwalk Hall Auditorium Organ."

Whatever the results of my stupendously rigorous data collection process, it's probably reasonable to assume that the piano is among the more popular instruments in the world. After all, you'd be hard pressed to find a musician who hasn't themselves played the piano at some point, or doesn't play with a pianist on at least an occasional basis.

And whether it's you who is behind the keyboard, or someone else, I imagine you've had that curious experience of feeling a sort of musical "chemistry" with your collaborators. Where with some folks, everything just clicks. While with others, things feel a little more...effortful.

Have you ever wondered why that might be? And what you could do – either as the pianist in an ensemble or as the singers/instrumentalists in the ensemble – to feel more engaged and connected and in sync with your music-making partners? And experience more joy and flow when playing with other musicians, whether that natural chemistry is there or not?

### Meet Vivian Hornik Weilerstein

Vivian Hornik Weilerstein has enjoyed an active and varied performance career, performing as soloist, collaborator, and chamber musician at venues and music festivals around the world. Vivian is also a sought-after coach and educator, and currently serves as director of the professional piano trio program at the New England Conservatory, where she is also on the piano, collaborative piano, and chamber music faculties.

In this episode we'll explore...

- 1:45 – How playing solo piano itself is kind of like playing chamber music (and can help cultivate better listening skills).
- 5:12 – Vivian alludes to "emotional rhythm," and I say "wha...??", and she explains what that means.
- 8:13 – There's a saying in neuroscience that "neurons that fire together wire together." I bring that up, because Vivian says something about what it takes to play together in an ensemble that totally

reminded me of this.

- 14:23 – Vivian suggests that pianists can gain a lot from interpreting articulations as bowings (and also explains what that means).
- 21:01 – Vivian explains why she is not a fan of the term “score study.” She also explains why she would rather students *not* listen to so many recordings of the piece they’re working on, and what she would rather they listened to instead.
- 27:56 – Why Vivian thinks we have become too preoccupied with “lined-up ensemble” at the expense of “emotional ensemble.”
  
- 31:24 – A few tips on practicing sight-reading...
- 39:39 – Why members of a chamber music group should step out of the group on occasion and listen to how the group sounds from the audience’s perspective.
- 41:02 – How does one develop a keener sense of anticipation? Vivian says that it’s related to singing – but perhaps not in the way you might think!

## Notes

- 6:53 – Vivian mentions cellist Merry Peckham, who also speaks to the idea of “leading the rhythm together” in [her podcast episode](#).
- 16:53 – I allude to Vivian’s husband and chamber music partner, Donald Weilerstein, who you can hear from in a podcast episode where he and Vivian are interviewed by their son, conductor Joshua Weilerstein: [An Interview with Donald Weilerstein and Vivian Hornik Weilerstein @Sticky Notes](#)

## More thoughts from Vivian

- You can connect with Vivian and learn more about the professional piano trio program at NEC here: [Vivian Hornik Weilerstein @NEC](#)
- And I think you’ll also enjoy this podcast episode with Vivian and her husband, violinist Donald Weilerstein, where they are interviewed by their son, conductor Joshua Weilerstein: [An Interview with Donald Weilerstein and Vivian Hornik Weilerstein @Sticky Notes: The Classical Music Podcast](#)

### Date Created

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