



**OPENING
MEASURES
MINI
PRACTICE
COMPANION**



A Cellist's Monthly Guide for Discovering
Mastery Between the Notes

CENTERING THE PULSE



WELCOME



HELLO, CELLIST AND WELCOME TO

the PRACTICE ROOM

This Practice Companion is your musical sandbox: a space to explore, stretch, notice, and occasionally laugh at what our hands do when we stop overthinking and start feeling.

We will be tuning into something subtle but powerful: **the internal pulse — the heartbeat of music** that lives inside your body, not just on the page or in the metronome.

You'll find a blend of technical work, musical excerpts, and mindful prompts designed to help you connect more intuitively with rhythm

— not through rigid counting, but through sensation, breath, movement, and deep listening.

This isn't about perfection or ticking off exercises.

Take your time.

Bring your full attention.

Invite your sense of play.

And let the music begin from within.

ABOUT SOPHIE WEBBER



Dr Sophie has performed across the States and in the UK, has received numerous awards and prizes for her playing, and has released three critically acclaimed albums.

With over 25 years of teaching experience, she is a sought-after pedagogue and is frequently invited to give masterclasses across the USA. and beyond.

She is also the Founding Artistic Director of Fused Mused Ensemble, a music and mixed media non-profit organization with a mission to amplify voices too often left unheard.

Sophie

PULSE AND AN INTERNAL AWARENESS OF TIME

OPENING REFLECTION

the heartbeat of music

Probably the most powerful and grounding element of music is pulse.

Quite literally, **pulse is the heartbeat of music**. In Western music, the pulse of a piece of music should not strictly change (unless indicated).

However, it gives us a temporal structure within which we can push and pull (“rubato”), breathe

–and even occasionally break completely free.

But ultimately, it all comes back to an unwavering, steady sense of internal pulse.



This Companion’s goal is to help explore and develop exactly this.

I hope you enjoy finding your beat, noticing your tendencies (rushing/slowing down/front side or back side of the beat...), slowing down, breathing and being more fully present in your practice.

And a **BIG THANK YOU** for joining me in the **PRACTICE ROOM**.

Let’s explore together!

Sophie



Rhythm and Pulse Internalization

Welcome to the “heart” of the music —The Pulse!

Time in music isn't just something you track with a metronome; it's something you feel deep within. It's the steady undercurrent that shapes every phrase, every note, and every breath.

When you center the pulse, you align yourself with the natural flow of music, turning rhythm into something instinctual rather than just a set of rules.

In this companion, we'll focus on cultivating an internal awareness of time—not as an external ticking clock, but as a pulse that moves through you.

This is about grounding yourself in the rhythm so that your playing becomes effortless and fluid, without the need for constant checks against a beat.

Whether you're playing alone or with others, centering the pulse gives you a sense of security and freedom—it's like dancing to the music, but with your feet firmly planted.

By centering the pulse, you'll transform your playing from mechanical to musical, and from predictable to expressive.

Let's dive in,
Your internal clock is ready.



WARM-UP PREPARATION

Preparatory Tips for Body Awareness:

- ♪ Breathe (long, slow breaths out)
- ♪ “Soften” your body (relaxed stomach, arms, neck)
- ♪ Stretch (eg. windmill arms, wriggle fingers, rotate wrists and forearms back and forth, squats, light jogging on spot --get circulation going!)
- ♪ Shoulders should be low and passive throughout the full length of bow (TIP: be especially cognizant of this in the upper half!)
- ♪ Feet should be grounded (like the roots of a tree!)

Tips for Tone Connection:

- ♪ A firmer approach will generally give you a better tone. This tends to mean A LITTLE MORE WEIGHT and, often, A LITTLE LESS BOW
- ♪ Explore finding a NATURAL WEIGHT (vs “pressing down”) with passive heavy shoulders and arms. The bow should feel like it is sinking into the string.
- ♪ We are looking for an “ENGAGED” SOUND rather than a superficial/skating one where the bow is too fast/too light.
- ♪ Careful your bow direction is parallel to the bridge and not moving up and down.
 - On the A string, the point will move a little closer to you (while your arm moves a little further from your body).
 - On the C string, the point will move a little further away from you (while your arm moves a little closer to your body)



WARM-UP (5–15 minutes)

Choose Your Path to Centering the Pulse

In the full companion you'll find four paths. Here, I'll walk you through one — the most foundational — to give you a feel for the work.

Each one focuses on a different aspect of internalizing time, and the beauty of this "choose your own adventure" format is that you get to decide which path feels best for you today.

LISTENING TO STILLNESS, FEELING THE BEAT

Goal: Ease into practice by connecting breath, body, and time — without external pacing.

1. BREATH & SILENCE (2 MIN)

- Inhale slowly for 4 counts, exhale for 6 — no metronome
- Close eyes and tap your sternum or thigh in steady beats
- Listen to the silence between beats

2. OPEN STRING PULSE (3–4 MIN)

- Slow open strings (D or G)
- Settle into internal beats of ca 60 bpm (ie. a “second” pulse)— no click

Imagine hearing the beat while playing

Variation: Play with a drone pitch (a Perfect Octave or Perfect Fifth interval from your chosen open string –above or below --is a good way to start) and tap your foot or lightly vocalize subdivisions.

Here's a great [starting resource](#) for drones on all pitches.



TECHNIQUE EXERCISE

DOTZAUER STUDY NO.1

Dotzauer's Studies are excellent for developing **Pulse awareness**, in particular his Volume I (Studies 1 -35).

Let's jump in with Study No.1.

The purpose of this study is twofold:

1. To develop a **strong sense of internal pulse** (the main beat, the quarter note, should be felt strongly throughout)
2. To **gain familiarity of using all different parts of the bow** (the nut, the lower half, the middle, the upper half, the point, and the whole bow). However, I would suggest interpreting the area of the bow to be used with a *little* poetic license (otherwise there is a danger of becoming rather stiff).

It is implied that you should use roughly the same amount of bow (ca a quarter of the bow length) for the majority of the quarter note beats.

Another important consideration is **dynamics** and how we need to lighten the bow for softer parts.

I recommend starting at a slower tempo (quarter = ca 60 - 80 bpm) and gradually increasing the tempo to an Allegro (quarter = ca 120 - 140 bpm)



TECHNIQUE EXERCISE

DOTZAUER STUDY NO.1

PLAY-ALONG TECHNIQUE VIDEOS

(try with the slower tempo first, then at an Allegro tempo, as shown in the two Technique videos):

1) Dotzauer Study No.1 ca 80 - 90 bpm

2) Dotzauer Study No.1 ca 124 -132 bpm

TECHNIQUE TIPS:

- Try without vibrato --is your pulse more secure?
- Try to read the dynamics at the same time as being aware of the part of the bow you should be playing in and always, always listening to the sound you are making.
- If it seems too much, try slowing it down further and/or taking out the dynamics (you can always add them when you're more comfortable with the bow division and creating a good sound)
- For softer dynamics, remember to keep moving the bow, but with less pressure (weight)
- For stronger dynamics, the bow should feel "stickier" on the string, with more weight and more resistance between the bow and string



TECHNIQUE EXERCISE

- ▭ = Down Bow
- ∨ = Up Bow
- WB = Whole Bow
- UH = Upper Half of Bow
- LH = Lower Half of Bow
- N = At the Nut
- M = Middle of Bow
- Pt = At the Point

Mit ganzem Bogen
Allegro
Dotzauer

1. **WB** **LH** **N** **WB Pt** **UH M** **LH N**

sempre forte **WB** **LH** **N** **WB Pt** **UH**

M **UH** **M** **UH** **M**

LH

WB **UH M**

mf **LH WB**

UH **Pt** **WB LH** **M**

cresc. poco a poco **LH** **M**

LH **M** **LH WB** **N** **WB**

Dotzauer Study No.1, Peters edition, public domain (via IMSLP).



J.S. Bach – Suite No. 2 in D Minor, Prelude
(Opening 4 measures)

On the following pages, you will find the opening measures of Bach's Prelude in D Minor, as follows:

1. **Original presentation** (with suggested bowings and fingerings)
2. Reduced to **Open Strings**
3. With **subdivisions**
4. With **Speech Cues**

I encourage you to try counting with both subdivisions and speech cues, and to explore alternative methods of sounding the rhythms verbally too if you would like!

Play Along videos for each of version above are linked below.

PLAY-ALONG REPERTOIRE VIDEOS

- 1) **Bach D Minor —Performance**
- 2) **Bach D Minor —Open Strings**
- 3) **Bach D Minor —with Subdivisions**
- 4) **Bach D Minor —with Speech Cues**



REPertoire APPLICATION

J.S. BACH – SUITE NO. 2 IN D MINOR, PRELUDE (OPENING 4 MEASURES)

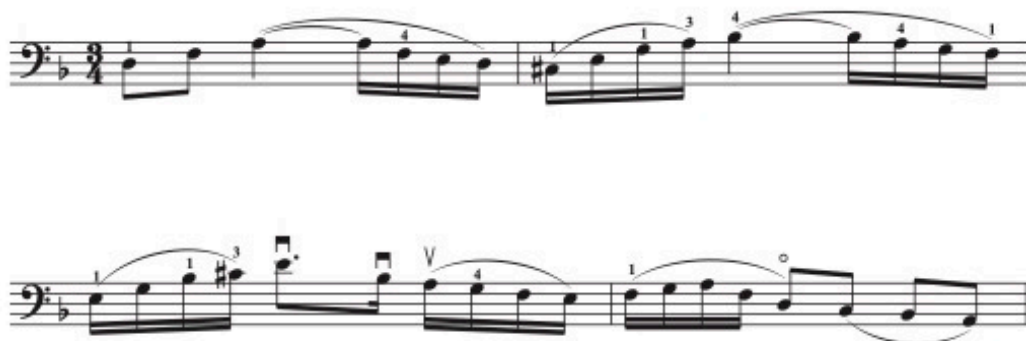
FOCUS: FINDING PULSE IN ASYMMETRICAL RHYTHM

BOW PACING: internal vs. external meter
Anchoring slow tempo

Practice Tips:

- Speak the rhythm aloud before playing
- Play pizzicato and tap quarter notes with foot
- Bow only open strings with written rhythm to isolate motion
- Record and listen for consistent spacing
- Hum through the rhythm with eyes closed

1. J.S. BACH – SUITE NO. 2 IN D MINOR, BWV1008, PRELUDE (MM.1 - 4)



2. REDUCED TO OPEN STRINGS



REPertoire APPLICATION

3. WITH SUBDIVISIONS

1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a

1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a

Detailed description: This block contains two staves of musical notation in bass clef, 3/4 time, with a key signature of one flat. The first staff consists of two measures. The first measure contains a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2, with a slur over the last two notes and a '4' above the slur. The second measure contains a quarter note C3, a quarter note D3, a quarter note E3, and a quarter note F3, with slurs over the first two and last two notes, and fingerings '1', '3', and '4' above the notes. The second staff also consists of two measures. The first measure contains a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2, with a slur over the last two notes and a '3' above the slur. The second measure contains a quarter note C3, a quarter note D3, a quarter note E3, and a quarter note F3, with slurs over the first two and last two notes, and fingerings '1', '3', and '4' above the notes. The third staff consists of two measures. The first measure contains a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2, with a slur over the last two notes and a '3' above the slur. The second measure contains a quarter note C3, a quarter note D3, a quarter note E3, and a quarter note F3, with slurs over the first two and last two notes, and fingerings '1', '3', and '4' above the notes. The fourth staff consists of two measures. The first measure contains a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2, with a slur over the last two notes and a '3' above the slur. The second measure contains a quarter note C3, a quarter note D3, a quarter note E3, and a quarter note F3, with slurs over the first two and last two notes, and fingerings '1', '3', and '4' above the notes.

4. WITH SPEECH CUES

The example below includes good speech cues, but do also feel free to add your own!

ba - ker plum pea-nut bu - tter pea - nut bu - tter plum pea - nut bu - tter

pea - nut bu - tter pa - sta pea - nut bu - tter pea-nut bu - tter ba - ker ba - ker

Detailed description: This block contains two staves of musical notation in bass clef, 3/4 time, with a key signature of one flat. The first staff consists of two measures. The first measure contains a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2, with a slur over the last two notes and a '4' above the slur. The second measure contains a quarter note C3, a quarter note D3, a quarter note E3, and a quarter note F3, with slurs over the first two and last two notes, and fingerings '1', '3', and '4' above the notes. The second staff also consists of two measures. The first measure contains a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2, with a slur over the last two notes and a '3' above the slur. The second measure contains a quarter note C3, a quarter note D3, a quarter note E3, and a quarter note F3, with slurs over the first two and last two notes, and fingerings '1', '3', and '4' above the notes. The third staff consists of two measures. The first measure contains a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2, with a slur over the last two notes and a '3' above the slur. The second measure contains a quarter note C3, a quarter note D3, a quarter note E3, and a quarter note F3, with slurs over the first two and last two notes, and fingerings '1', '3', and '4' above the notes. The fourth staff consists of two measures. The first measure contains a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2, with a slur over the last two notes and a '3' above the slur. The second measure contains a quarter note C3, a quarter note D3, a quarter note E3, and a quarter note F3, with slurs over the first two and last two notes, and fingerings '1', '3', and '4' above the notes.



REPERTOIRE APPLICATION

REFLECTION ...

WERE YOU ACTIVELY LISTENING TO THE PULSE, OR MORE FOCUSED ON THE NOTES/MOVEMENTS? (DID YOU STAY CONNECTED TO THE "HEARTBEAT" OF THE MUSIC?)

HOW DID SHIFTING, STRING CROSSING, OR BOWING AFFECT YOUR SENSE OF PULSE? (DID TECHNIQUE SUPPORT OR DISTRACT FROM RHYTHMIC STABILITY?)

IF YOU LOST THE PULSE, WHAT BROUGHT YOU BACK TO IT?
(A PHYSICAL GESTURE? A MENTAL IMAGE? BREATHING?)

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS:





A NOTE FROM SOPHIE:

I believe that playing –and practising –the cello should be a joyous thing. Too often, I hear cellists expressing frustration with their playing and practising, unsure how to move forwards and focus their attention. It is my sincere hope that the PRACTICE ROOM gives you the tools to lean into your practice with intentionality and reflection, at your own pace (which, if you're anything like me, should probably be a little slower). Quality always over quantity...

We all need to make space for ourselves to experiment without judgment (perhaps with a little humour, tho ;)) and to embrace the journey. I hope you enjoy the PRACTICE ROOM experience as much as I have enjoyed –and continue to enjoy, with your help –creating it.

Happy Cello-ing!

Sophie





BIKE AGAIN PROJECT

WHAT'S NEXT



Thank you for spending this time in your practice. Pulse is one foundation — the heartbeat that gives everything else its shape.

Tone is another.

This summer, I'll be opening the door to a deeper, three-month exploration: The Quiet Art of a Beautiful Sound, running July through September

Before the course begins, I'll be hosting a free workshop on tone production — open to everyone on my newsletter list.

Two ways to stay close to what's coming next:

→ [\[JOIN MY NEWSLETTER\]](#) Be the first to hear about the upcoming free tone workshop, plus the small weekly insights I'll be sharing in the lead-up.

→ [\[BE FIRST IN LINE TO THE EARLY-ACCESS LIST\]](#) Be among the first to hear when registration opens for The Quiet Art of a Beautiful Sound this July.

Wherever this work has met you today — whether you join what's coming or simply keep listening inward — thank you for being here.

With warmth, Sophie 🎻



WWW.SOPHIEWEBBER.COM

PULSE AND AN INTERNAL AWARENESS OF TIME



DR. SOPHIE'S CELLO LAB