

Communicating With Your Audience

OBJECTIVES:

- To help emcees understand their job better
 - To facilitate in the creative writing of material
 - To discover and exercise those skills that will improve our emcee attempts
- I. Discovering where we are and what we do
 - II. Our Job
 - A. Goals
 1. We want to present a professional image that will attract people to our music.
 - a. Singers/performers to add to our chorus
It's easier to teach musicians our style than to teach non-singers how to sing well enough to sing our style.
 - b. Younger people to add to our ranks
 - c. Possible future venues: preferably with money
 2. We need to be concerned with image. We must compete.
 - a. There are many current entertainment options out there
 - b. The current generation is used to MTV, music videos, concerts with fireworks and magic tricks.
 - c. As a stage actor/director, I have to compete with movies and TV for an audience. I've had to learn how to get the most from my medium to attract people to my art form
 3. How we package the music is our problem.
 - a. In advertising lingo, music is our product.
 - b. In commercial/voice over work, they say to get them to buy the steak you must sell the "sizzle"
 - B. Rethinking the Emcee gig
Our job is to package our product so that it will sell. And that means more than just trying to connect the songs with a few jokes.
 - C. Plan
Today I want to spend some time on the creation of material to help us achieve our goal, and also spend time on the skills we need to perform the emcee spots
 - III. The material
 - A. Define the approach:
 1. 4th wall consideration

Engaged or not? Presentational or representational? (concert or musical theater?) Direct or indirect?

2. Once you established an approach, stay with it
 - a. Audience will be confused if you don't stay with what you've established
 - b. Dialogical sections can be direct as long as you include the audience as a participant
 - c. Character scenes can also be direct, if you include the audience as a participant
 - d. Audiences accept breaking of stage conventions in threes
- B. Creating the direct emcee script
1. Research your venue and host. What is unique, intriguing, historical, vernacular?
 2. Think in terms of an event. Don't settle for being the entertainment; aim for being so much a part of them that they can't imagine the event without you.
 3. Don't open with an "innie" song. Most audiences don't initially care that we "ring" chords. If you were a college choral group, you wouldn't open with your alma mater.
 4. Don't use trite phrases ("we're so happy to be here tonight.") Use efficient, economical language. Find a way to SHOW them that you're happy to be there, or say it another way.
 5. Play to an intelligent audience. Don't tell them what song you're going to sing next. Use the musical theater scripting approach, and let the song do the work. Don't put the words of the song in the script. Make the audience make the leap. Make the song the punch line.
 6. Soft peddle the barbershop jokes. No one laughs at things they don't understand.
- C. Writing the script
1. Humor is powerful tool. If we can get them to laugh, we can get them to cry. If we can get them to cry, we've got them. (In business, ideas presented with humor get more support, and after 5, the person who gets more laughs gets more dates.)
 2. Don't tell jokes; don't tell stories; don't try to be funny.
 3. Go on stage with a passionate desire and the intent to communicate your thoughts and feelings
 4. Remember, the truth is entertaining
 5. Some comedy techniques
 - a. Be serious about what you're saying on stage
 - b. Have an attitude (I love...I hate...I worry...)
 - c. Ranting and raging about something is good
 - d. Talk to your audience
 - e. Think in terms of set up and punch. The set up gives information, and the punch is an exaggeration, or twist, or sudden change of direction.

- f. Use comparisons
- g. Use similes
- h. Use lists of three; with the third thing being unexpected
- i. Audiences laugh at two things: things they can relate to, and something that catches them off guard
- j. Connections (to something already mentioned)
- k. Running gags: repeated material. For some reason, things are funnier when they happen three times. Two isn't enough, and four is too many, but the third time generally gets a laugh.

D. Sample Scripts

IV. Performance Skills

A. Focus energy

B. Split focus

C. Combating the stereotype:

- 1. Optimum pitch
- 2. Question: how do you speak after you are properly vocally warmed up?
- 3. Exercise

D. Combating the stereotype:

- 1. Regionalisms
 - a. Breathing exercises
 - (1) panting, breathing for singing
 - b. Tongue Twisters
 - (1) Unique New York
 - (2) A big black bug bit the big black bear
 - (3) Thomas Tattertooth
 - (4) A basket of biscuits
 - c. Tongue extensions
 - Theophilus Thistle
 - d. Sonnet reads
 - e. Favorite words

E. Gestures

- 1. Animated but not plastic. Be real.
- 2. Working in a mirror will make you plastic (like models). Use videotaping

F. Dissipation of energy: dancing feet

Mic will ground us.

G. Eye Contact

- 1. At opening, find one person, and make him your friend; check back with him
- 2. Play lines to one person at a time, and wait for response. This will travel clear to the back row

H. Listen for response. Hold for laughs

CONCLUSION:

The face and the voice that the public puts on Sweet Adelines is that of the emcee. We are the image of the organization, the picture of the professionalism we try to project. We are the door to the musical product. We are the sizzle in the steak. Let's rise to the occasion.

RED HAT SOCIETY PERFORMANCE SCRIPT

ORANGE COLORED SKY

VICKIE

Boy! This is the biggest pajama party I've ever been to! Makes me want to roll my hair, paint my nails and freeze a bra or two. ("Look at me, I'm Sandra Dee!!) I hope you don't mind, but I've brought a few of my friends with me. We are the Metro Nashville Chapter of Sweet Adelines International, and we are under the direction of the queen of the musical universe, Kim Wonders and we want to share with you," Hats off to Harmony." Because that's what we do best.

CHORUS removes robes

CHORDBUSTERS MARCH

VICKIE

Do you realize how hard it is to be a woman? We spend our whole life looking for things we don't want to find; like gray hairs, runs in our hose, visible panty lines. And we still find time to hold the world together. Let me tell you a secret: women even hold together baseball, the man's domain. The theme song of baseball, itself, was written about a woman.

TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALL GAME

THERE USED TO BE A BALL PARK

VICKIE

No wonder I'm so tired! It seems like women hold this whole world together... and we get blamed for everything. We even get blamed for the weather! I mean, have you ever heard of severe damage being caused by a "Himmacane?" (Sniffing) I don't think I like being a woman!"

(Chorus gasp.)

KIM

Do you know what the problem with you is, Vickie?

UNDECIDED

VICKIE

I'm not going to do anything! This is supposed to be a pajama party! I'm supposed to be having fun!

VICKIE sits, pouting.

SMILE

*During SMILE, CHORUS moves toward Vickie...
End in Freeze*

YOU GOTTA HAVE HEART

During HEART, GWEN pulls VICKIE up.

VICKIE

You guys are right! How can I be depressed when I've got friends like you to remind me the importance of being silly?

*KEEP YOUR SUNNY SIDE UP
TIME FOR YOU*

VICKIE

All through history, women have always been there for each other. Our great grandmothers had quilting bees. Our Grandmothers lived for the church socials and women's missionary societies. Our mom's hosted bridal and baby showers, Tupperware parties, coffee klatches. And today, we have the Red Hat Society, and Sweet Adelines. Whatever the event, women have taught us the power of sharing our lives with each other. It's that power that gives us the strength to give ourselves to our families, and the men in our lives.

*LOVE EYES
FIT AS A FIDDLE*

VICKIE

"When I am an old woman, I shall wear purple
With a red hat which doesn't go and doesn't suit me
And I shall spend my pension on brandy and summer gloves
And satin sandals, and say we have no money for butter.
...But maybe I ought to practice a little now?"

CHORUS puts on red hats

*CANDLE ON THE WATER
LET THERE BE PEACE*

VICKIE

Thank you for inviting us to your pajama party! And for reminding us the joy we have in each other. And the importance of being silly. And as we leave here today, we hope to leave you SWINGING!

SWING DOWN

Fall Fling Performance

ON A WONDERFUL DAY

VICKIE

This is the day that the Lord has made. And we are celebrating His awesome creation of Fall. Hayrides, Bonfires, football games, and always, love and family. We are the Metro Nashville Chorus, of Sweet Adelines International, under the direction of Kim Wonders.

Metro Nashville is an internationally ranked award-winning chorus of 35 talented women, of all ages and all walks of life. And we have one main thing in common. We love to sing. It is said that he who sings prays twice. We hope that as you listen to us today, you will hear not only our songs, but also our stories and our prayer.

MOVE ME SUNNY SIDE

VICKIE

The sunny days of all remind me of another autumn event. Going back to school. I love that commercial for Staples, with two little kids standing, with long, mopey faces, and a dad shoots past, smiling, riding on the back of a shopping cart, while the song plays, "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year!" But going back to school is hard, if you're a principal. Or if you have kids going away to college for the first time. How many of you are dealing with kids going away to college? It's a tough time. A time of tears, nervousness, anxiety, money fears...and it's hard on the kids, too. I remember when my older sister went off to college, and I wrote her a song, "Oh, to college they say you are going. I will not shed a tear when you go. For all of your old clothes should fit me. And we need a spare bedroom so."

But it's different when you are taking your own baby to college. You see them standing there, in the empty shell of a dorm room, wondering how they are ever going to get unpacked, and organized, get themselves up in the morning, do their laundry. And you realize that you need more time with them. Time to love them, hold them, counsel with them, and advise them. Time to encourage and prepare them.

I HOPE YOU DANCE SMILE

VICKIE

But finally, all the last minute advice and hugs are over, and you say good-bye to them through tears. But as you leave them, you realize that it won't be for long. Because

soon they will be writing you and calling you and e-mailing you to say those three important words:

CHORUS

"Mom, send money!"

PUTTIN' ON THE RITZ

VICKIE

And, you realize that there will be other phone calls, too. Times when they are puzzled or heartbroken over grades, friends and dates. Or times when they have news so wonderful, they can't wait to share it with you. And then, you know that your job as a parent is still the same as it was when they were little.

*CANDLE ON THE WATER
TIME FOR YOU*

VICKIE

And as you pull away from the campus, you head back home, to a new, strange world...where you can watch what you want to on T.V., and listen to your music without being made fun of, where you can get in the bathroom again, and where a strangely familiar man is waiting to spend time with you...and there's only thing to say

WONDERFUL DAY REPRISE