

## ***Everything You Wanted To Know About Acting.... but were afraid to ask.***

*If we accept a simple definition of acting as the portrayal on stage of some part of human experience that is shared with an audience then in a sense every singer is also an actor. \**

Choosing a character will help you find an emotional context for your songs. Character colors the meaning of the lyrics and gives believability and passion to a song. The character is chosen *before the vocal work begins* because the choice of a character with whom everyone can identify, will affect unity, dynamics, forward motion, inflexion, interpretation, your visual plan/choreography -- in other words, Music, Sound, Expression and Showmanship.

*Character is the development of a real person, living truthfully, in imaginary circumstances. \**

TASKS in preparation for finding character in songs:

- A. Identify the character
- B. Find the circumstances
- C. Find the emotion *through action* in the up-tune
- D. Find the emotion *through action* in the ballad

The package is: "How Many Hearts Have You Broken?/Flirty Eyes" medley and "My Foolish Heart".

This outline will use the character Erica Barry in the movie *Something's Gotta Give* with Diane Keaton and Jack Nicholson.

It is a story about the rejuvenating power of love.

### **A. IDENTIFY THE CHARACTER**

#### *1. Who Am I?*

My name is Erica Barry. I am in my fifties, a successful writer, divorced, with a daughter, Marin who is in her late twenties. To all appearances I am in control of my life, but I am vulnerable, still hurt from past experience -- and feeling that I have been "put out to pasture" by a culture that has no regard for women my age. I am smart, cautious and determined.

### **B. FIND THE CIRCUMSTANCES**

Marin has been dating Harry Sanborn, a middle-aged "peter pan" trying desperately to keep up the pace of a younger man. They show up at Erica's beach house, thinking she is out of town. But Erica is at home and eventually all agree to be "civilized" and stay. Harry then suffers a heart attack and must remain at Erica's house until he is well enough to go back to New York.

1. *Where am I?*

Harry and I have come into my house from the beach, as it starts to rain.

2. *What do I want?*

I want to resist Harry.

*Identifying with the emotional life of a character (and not your own), allows you access to the emotional high stakes in the lyrics.*

**C. FIND THE EMOTION THROUGH ACTION: THE UP-TUNE**

Erica and Harry are alone in her house, having run in from the rain. They light a candle - the radio is playing. They dance and Harry kisses Erica. To her surprise and against her better judgment Erica kisses him back. As she looks at Harry she knows she is in big trouble: he is adorable *and* a notorious womanizer. Erica is surprised by the passion she feels and is unable to suppress.

**D. FIND THE EMOTION THROUGH ACTION: THE BALLAD**

Erica and Harry spend the night together. Erica is falling in love with Harry who is falling for Erica, but scared to death, he runs back to New York leaving Erica alone.

*Be sure the character is someone for whom the words of both songs are motivated and consistently true. Also the songs need to fit the style of the character. "How Many Hearts Have You Broken?" is an accurate expression of the fear and the excitement Erica feels as she falls for Harry. It is well suited to Erica's bantering wit and her ambivalence. The ballad "My Foolish Heart" in which she compares the uncertainty of love with the constancy of the moon is also consistent with Erica's personality style. Using the same character and circumstances for both the up-tune and ballad creates a musical scene. The break in-between the songs can be used as another device to enhance the emotional and visual expression of the package.*

\* Oscar Kosarin *The Singing Actor*

\* Sanford Meisner *On Acting*