

FOUR ON THE FLOOR - - THE WHOLE ENCHILADA

I. CAPTURING YOUR AUDIENCE - COMMAND & STAGE PRESENCE

Why does stage presence matter for quartet performers?

- “Impressionism” – what kind of impression does your performing group make on the audience?
- Professionalism and the sophisticated modern audience.
- Capture audience and put them at ease.
- In competition, part of the showmanship category.
- As performer, your experience will be more enjoyable.

II. TOOLS OF THE TRADE: INCORPORATE THE “FIVE ELEMENTS”

a. ENTRANCE

- Ideal: well planned, rehearsed and executed.
- All performers greet the audience with huge, sincere smiles indicating that they are thrilled about the opportunity to entertain.
- Highly energized physical posture and confident stride from the unit.
- A well-timed audience greeting followed by a fluid retreat from the edge of stage to the “starting position” at the microphone.
- A strong connection with the audience from the moment the quartet hits the stage, which is maintained throughout.

b. PITCH PIPE TECHNIQUE

- To take pitch or not to take pitch? That is the question. There really is no question – if it will set you up for a strong, confident, in-tune start to your song/performance then YES!
- No points given for not taking pitch. However points can be lost if as result of taking/not taking pitch your performance is shaky or otherwise negatively affected.
- What is assessed by audience? Showmanship judge? Fluidity & timing and how it is incorporated into the performance.
- Plan who will blow pitch, when it will be blown, how and where the pitch pipe will be stored and again removed for the next song.
- The manner in which the pitch pipe is blown can also assist with the setting of the mood.

c. TRANSITIONS / TIMING AUDIENCE APPLAUSE

- The “non-singing” parts of your performance – key is that you are still performing! Planning and rehearsing this supports the professionalism of your performance.
- Must keep the audience connection/interest. Don’t want them to use this break in the music as time to leave to use the restroom!
- Remember, you are still on stage and you are all visible! Do not adjust your costume, scratch your face, etc. Maintain the energized posture, involved face and be attentive to what is happening.
- Keep this fluid. If you are between songs, move with purpose from one place to the next, and ensure your posture is confident and energized.
- Applause Acceptance: Gauge your audience while you are accepting applause and begin to retreat back to the microphone (or leave the stage) when you feel the crest of the wave of applause. You do not wish to be standing in “applause acceptance” mode when the applause has started to wane; this leads to a gap in the flow and can create audience & performer discomfort.
- Setting the Mood: The transition period can also contribute to your performance by creating the atmosphere/mood for your next song. Facial expression, body posture, speed and timing can all assist the performer in preparing the audience for a ballad or uptune performance. It can be jarring to the audience if a conflicting message is provided during the transition/set up of the next song.

d. EMCEE

- Not a class on emcee technique, however the manner in which the speaker approaches the microphone and addresses the audience is definitely a part of the whole enchilada! Energy, posture and manner of speech can maintain the audience connection.
- When addressing the audience, remember to vary the tone of your speech and look at the audience.
- Practice good microphone technique.
- Plan/script what you will say in advance and rehearse this! Plan for audience response (for example if you are hoping for laughter!) and time accordingly.
- Remember that you are there to entertain the audience and keep them at ease. Do your best to know your audience demographic before a performance and plan your material accordingly. Never include offensive or inappropriate material/subject matter in your script.
- Non-speaking members are still in performance mode and should be attentive, engaged and energized while taking a “back seat” to the emcee. Pay attention to what is happening – you never know when something might happen on stage and you might need to improvise! If you don’t appear interested in what

your quartet-mate is saying to the audience, the audience won't be interested either! Remember, the audience takes their cues from you the performer!

- Emcee spot should flow with the rest of the performance and getting in and out of the emcee spot should be seamless.

e. EXIT

You are almost done! You want to leave a positive, lasting impression so be sure you are still performing until you leave the stage!

- The same confident, energized manner with which you took the stage is the ideal way to leave your audience. Maintain eye contact, have gracious smiles and leave the audience feeling like it was your pleasure to have entertained them!
- If you are unhappy with your performance, or the audience response, or one of your quartet-mates, don't let the audience know! An otherwise wonderful audience experience might be tainted with a hasty quartet retreat from the stage, or faces that reveal discomfort or unhappiness with the performance.
- If appropriate, you can show some creativity and incorporate the character or theme from your performance into the exit.

III. “THE WHOLE ENCHILADA”

- A successful performance includes the whole package: the music, the visual plan, the posture, the grooming, the facial expressions, the pacing, the costuming, and the energy field - that makes up stage presence.
- Plan it! Practice it!
- Understand that this is something that takes practice and experience.
- You can fake confidence and it can eventually become genuine!
- Understand that this is something you owe your audience, and you owe yourself as a performer. Focus more on the audience and “giving it away” and it will be more natural for you.

The audience is there to listen and watch you perform! Give ‘em what they deserve - give ‘em the WHOLE ENCHILADA!