

EVERYONE IN HARMONY! FRESNO, HERE WE COME!

As we get ready for our historic, yes, historic, performance in a few short weeks, I started to research some basic tips for performing in front of judges. Much of what I found we have already been told or already had it stuck in our brain.

The following notes were gleaned off a past issue of BHS Harmony magazine; offered by a Presentation/Performance Category Specialist. Here's a bit of what he had to offer.

"You won't need a checklist to succeed in the new Performance Category, because I can sum up what we're looking for in four words: Deliver a great performance.

Not enough detail? Try this:

Connect authentically with your audience—don't worry about what will impress a Performance judge. Instead of asking what the judges want to see, simply ask, "What do we want the audience to experience?"

No matter the mood or the song, audiences want to feel a genuine connection with the performers, as if you were conversing with them directly. Generally, this means using the facial expressions and body language you would use in everyday conversation.

BHS judges have coined the term Art of Performance, and it is precisely this art that we are dealing with when we try to address these odd, mannered or disingenuous techniques. Here are just a few examples.

The "barbershop squat" and other clichés. The moves are foreign to most audiences, and come across as inauthentic. They can get in the way of truly connecting with and affecting the audience.

One of the most noted barbershop quirks is actually a case of good technique gone bad: a chorus that resets its stance very obviously after every breath and artificially injects body movement for movement's sake. They do it because someone told them this was good."

Now for another angle: how to deal with nervousness. I found these tips on another site: I have paraphrased the important points.

FIVE of the most effective tips for **overcoming your stagefright**:

Tip # 1: Practice, Practice, Practice!

Sometimes, our performance anxiety comes about because we have not practiced our song enough, and we are still not 100% sure of our lyrics or the song we chose to sing.

Being **well-practiced** will help us to reduce this feeling of nervousness and make us more confident onstage!

Tip # 2 : Practice with a Listening Audience

It helps to practice with a **listening audience** present, either your friends, family, or even complete strangers!

This allows you to **build up confidence** in your singing ability, and also makes performing in front of people a regular habit, so that it becomes less daunting for you as a performer!

Tip # 3: Make Fun of Your Audience In Your Mind

One effective and well-known tip for reducing stagefright is to **imagine your audience in funny ways**, so as to make it less daunting to perform in front of them! Naked, anyone?

Another useful tip would be for you to **look through** your audience by fixing your visual focal point at a point far behind them.

The audience will still think you are looking at them, but because you are not looking at their faces or their eyes, it makes it less scary for you onstage as a performer!

Tip # 4: Deep Breaths...

Whenever we feel the onset of stagefright or performance anxiety, it would do good for us to practice **deep breathing**, using your **diaphragm** to calm our nerves and stay relaxed and.

Another way for you to relax is to **tense** up all the muscles in your body and clench your fists hard, and then **relax** all your muscles and let all the tension leave your body.

This allows you to feel more relaxed and let the stress or nervousness leave your body before you go onstage to perform!

Tip # 5: Your Audience and Judges are Your Friends!

We are most relaxed when in front of our friends and family, so apply this theory to the judges and the audience we meet during auditions or competitions.

Treat your audience and your judges as your **friends**, and interact with them in that way!

An important point here is that you are performing because you want to share your singing and your song with the audience and the judges.

Last of all, here's some tips I found regarding food and drink!

As far as food is concerned, it is important to avoid singing on a completely empty stomach. Singing can be athletic, and you want to have plenty of energy for your performance. However, it is also important to avoid singing on a completely full stomach. When the stomach is too full, it is difficult to take the low breaths necessary for healthy singing. Also, singing tends to cause burping when it is done too soon after eating, and burping is an activity that is usually frowned upon by many audience members during a vocal performance.

A rule of thumb is to eat a healthy "singers meal" about 2 hours prior to a performance. A singer's meal would be balanced in 1) lean meat, chicken, fresh fish, eggs, or a high quality vegetable protein such as

tempeh or tofu; 2) a complex starchy carbohydrate such as whole grain bread, brown rice or potato (not much butter, and no sour cream); and 3) plenty of fresh vegetables and/or fruits (citrus fruits however seem to cause mucous or dryness in some singers). Make sure to never stuff yourself, especially before a performance.

Some foods and beverages to avoid prior to singing are mucous producing foods such as dairy, stimulants such as caffeine and spicy foods, soft drinks, refined sugars, chocolate, iced drinks and alcohol (including wine and beer). Be aware also of any foods which you may be sensitive to or allergic to prior to singing (for example, some singers have trouble with citrus fruits, wheat, nuts, shellfish or soy).

It's also important to keep the body well hydrated with water the days prior to and of a performance, but please remember to lay off on the water intake several hours before you go on, since there probably won't be too many bathroom breaks. Some performers will chew a bit of sugar free gum or suck on a sugar free hard candy prior to going onstage to keep the saliva flowing in lieu of drinking water.

Can't wait to show the Far Western District what a great mixed-chorus can do! See you in Fresno!

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