



Live(ly)

PERFORMANCE

Some skills for performing

1. Knowledge of material
2. Control of the body
3. Awareness of the visual
4. Ability to focus
5. Ability to galvanize energy
6. Awareness of the audience
7. Ability to “be in the moment”

Knowledge of material

Mastering the musical language is a lifelong pursuit for all musicians. Knowing the material includes knowing the lyric, knowing the melody, and knowing the chord changes that constitute the harmonic structure of the song. It includes also having a clear idea of your character's intention, (subtext, etc.), being familiar with the style you are singing in, listening to other versions of the song you are singing, and identifying and mastering the technical demands of the song. In addition it includes knowing the name of the composer and lyricist, listening, practicing and listening some more. Knowing a song includes singing the melody without words, being able to say the words without singing, and on and on. Knowledge of material gives you new ideas and makes you feel confident in your ability to express yourself uniquely.

*You've got to be able to hold a lot of
contradictory ideas in your mind
without going nuts.*

*I feel like to do my job right, when I
walk out onstage*

*I've got to feel like it's the most
important thing in the world.*

*I've also got to feel like,
well, it's only rock and roll.*

*Somehow you've got to believe both of
those things.*

-----Bruce Springsteen

Control of the body

Does your nose itch uncontrollably when you get on the band stand? Does your hair keep falling in your face? Are you too nervous to breathe causing your voice to sound like a little mouse? Do you have odd mannerisms, like pulling at your clothes? Uh oh, now everybody is uncomfortable because you are communicating your anxiety. Control of our body is something to think about in practice. Look in a mirror when you practice. Live performance is a communicative art and as artists we want to communicate our intention, not our subconscious anxiety. Be aware of your body when you practice and when you perform.

Awareness of the visual

Unless you are in a recording studio, people are looking at you when you perform, and making many assumptions about you. Your sincerity, your ability, your comfort, your experience, your intelligence and your income level are all “out there” for everyone to assume. (Of course, they may not be right, but nonetheless, they are making assumptions.) Our personal appearance matters: it sends a message. Make sure that you are sending the message that you want to send. Are you smiling broadly in a sad song? Are you jumping around while the piano player is playing his solo and stealing attention? Are your clothes appropriate to what you are trying to say about yourself? Be aware of the visual and make it work for you. Communicate what you wish to communicate.

Ability to focus

You had a fight with your lover, the waiters are clanging glasses, the piano player has invented an entirely new set of changes for your favorite song that you've never heard or even knew existed, and the guy in the front row is wearing a neon tie and fondling the knee of the lady at the next table. Can you pay attention to what you are trying to do? Knowledge of material comes in really handy here.

Ability to galvanize energy

Hey everybody! Look at me!! I'm doing it!!!!

Awareness of the audience

Ever been in the presence of someone who is constantly looking over your shoulder at themselves in a mirror? Singing is communication, like talking. The audience wants to know that you know that they are present and included in what is being said. They want to be spoken to, not at. Consider this in your performance

Ability to be "in the moment"

Music is a "time art." Live music exists only in the here and now, and in the memories of the participants. We want the audience to give up their personal concerns and come along with us. That's why we want to cultivate these abilities:

- to play
- to be playful
- to feel
- to live in the moment
- to be aware of and to express our emotions
(while maintaining our connection to mundane concerns like, what is the next tune?)

Take responsibility for being the leader. Knowledge of material comes in really handy again here. Create with intention. Create with attention. Create with intention.