

Age-Appropriate Song Selection and Acting Technique for Singers

High School Theatre Festival: Fullerton College 3/18/23

Choosing Age-Appropriate Repertoire

- Read synopsis of the musical/opera
- Read text/poem if it's an art song
- **Age Ranges**
 - High School
 - Themes of innocent love is ok
 - Avoid songs with characters who are married or have children
 - Art songs are great
 - Make sure the range is appropriate
 - Italian is a good first language. Spanish, Latin & German also good. French is tricky, best for more advanced students.
 - Musicals with characters who are young adults: Sound of Music, Hairspray, Shrek...
 - Arias with characters who are young adults: Laretta, Amneris, Gretel...
 - College and older
 - Themes that fit the student, and students are comfortable singing.
 - If possible, pick pieces students can relate to directly.



Acting and Singing

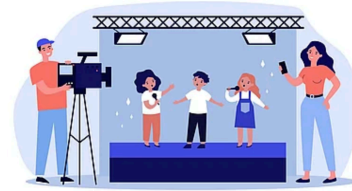
- Complete a “**Song Analysis**” form to help deconstruct your piece. (Sample included below).



- **Point of view**

- Who are you singing to?
- Are they in the room?
- Are you singing to yourself?
 - Confiding in the audience or for your character’s own benefit?
- This helps determine where you will “look” when you perform.
 - It should be as **fluid as a conversation**.
 - Staring forward with one focus is not natural (speaking or singing).
 - Have a few places/people to “look” at as you sing-imagine people in the room or images you are singing about.
 - “Breaking the wall” depends on the song.
- Decide whether to sing the song in context (according to the storyline of Musical/opera) or out of context (just based on the meaning of the words).
- Add meaningful, natural gestures to connect to character.
 - Movement is normal and natural & helps release energy!
- “**Monologue your song**” to find natural phrasing, dynamics & breaths.
 - Monologue your song with energy as if you are telling a story, then use the same energy while singing.
 - Sing to a friend, who can react non-verbally.
 - Use emotion or musical cards to find a range of emotions.
- For songs in a foreign language, do a **translation** of the text
 - IPA Source is a fantastic resource
 - Google translate
 - Foreign language dictionaries
- After word for word translations, do an overall **summary** of the song as well.

Virtual Performing



- Singing for the Camera
 - For the most part, the camera represents the whole audience, not an individual person.
 - Should you look directly at the camera?
 - Yes, but naturally as if a conversation. Don't stare at the camera the whole time (see monologue your song).
 - Who does the camera represent?
 - Generally, the audience as a whole.
 - The camera provides a “wall” so there is a barrier between singer and audience.
 - For live performances, “breaking the wall” depends on the song.
 - For a more intimate song, the camera can represent the person you are singing to.
 - Height of the camera
 - Slightly above eye level
 - Easier for you to keep energy in their face, height in the palate, etc.
 - If camera is too low, you look over the camera, there is a disconnect between singer and audience.
 - This is still a “new normal.” Digital performing & auditioning is now an integral part of singing & performing.
 - Create digital “audition books” and digital “song catalogs”

Singers are story tellers and musicians. There must be a balance between the two. Without connection to the text and music, the performer is not engaged, and the audience will not connect to the performance.

Song Analysis and Singing in Character

How do singers connect to the song beyond the notes?

Ask questions!

Analyze what you're singing. Ask and answer questions about the character and the song. The more you know, the more you can draw from, the more depth you can create. A held note becomes an emotional connection if you can relate it directly back to the character. Start with these questions:

Where is the character physically?

And this doesn't necessarily mean are they in the hall or the kitchen. This could mean:

- Where are they in their life?
- Where are they in relation to the other characters?
- Where are they right before they open their mouths to sing this song?

Where is the character emotionally?

Musicals happen because they take characters to a point where they can't do anything else but sing. So what is the emotional 'why' for the character that they have to break out into song?

Also ask yourself this: Does the character change their physical and emotional state by the end of the song?

What does the character want?

Is your character they trying to make a decision? Do they want to share their feelings about another character? Do they want happiness? A new life? Their old life back? This goes hand in hand with knowing the physical and emotional state of the character. Knowing what the character wants and communicating that in the song is the easiest way to connect to an audience.

What is the moment before?

What happened in the musical/opera that caused the singer to need to sing this song? Remember that songs are supposed to be the immediacy of thoughts that are coming through our head. So, we have to know what motivated you to have to sing.

What's going on in the song?

What is the story of the song? Make sure you understand what's being said. What's happening in the story up to this point. Sometimes musical numbers rely on metaphor and it's easy to catch someone who is only spouting words without any thought behind them. Can you write a one line description of the song?

Who is the character singing to?

Is it a specific person? Is it to the audience? If it's the audience that's fine, but think about what the character is trying to communicate to the audience, or get the audience to do. Be specific, and 'no one' is not an answer.

Song Analysis Sheet

Analyze the lyrics from a musical theatre song. How would you answer the questions?

1. Where is the character physically?
2. Where is the character emotionally?
3. Does the character change their physical or emotional state?
4. What does the character want?
5. What is the moment before?
6. What's going on in the song?
7. Who is the character singing to?
8. How do you relate to the character and what he/she is going through?