



Sacramento Vocal Music
"Where Everybody Sings!"

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Vocal Music Auditions

A Study Guide

An audition is a performer's opportunity to showcase his or her talents, skills, and professionalism to a director, music director, choreographer, or casting director. A well-prepared performer is routinely considered when making casting decisions. A poorly-prepared performer is often overlooked, regardless of his or her talent. The directors for whom you are auditioning are professionals in their fields and expect the performer to exhibit that same level of professionalism, whether one is auditioning for a school play or on Broadway. For some, the scariest part is the vocal audition. Their question is, "**How do I prepare to have an excellent music audition experience?**" These few steps may make the difference between getting cast in a role or the ensemble, or not being selected at all.

Selecting Your Music -

Selecting a song for an audition or performance is likely the most important decision you have to make as you prepare to compete for a role or sing in a concert. This piece must serve several functions:

1. It must show your greatest strengths, skills, virtuosity, and versatility;
 2. It must be appropriate for the event;
 3. It must be consistent with what the director/audience is hoping.
 4. Most importantly, it must show how well you prepare for the audition or concert.
- I. For an audition, the following factors must be considered:
- A. Is the piece from a genre similar to that of the show for which you audition?
 - B. Is the piece from the same composer as the show for which you audition?
 - C. Is the piece from the same style or era of the show for which you audition?
 - D. Does the piece highlight your strengths, virtuosity, and versatility, including your range?
 - E. Does the piece contrast well with another piece you have prepared if so asked by the director (e.g., lyrical vs. upbeat, or traditional vs. contemporary, English vs. foreign language)?
 - F. Is the music easily legible for the accompanist and in a binder that is easily used?
 - G. Have you worked with your private teacher or an accompanist on the piece before the audition?

Remember that each piece you perform should not only be beautiful, but it must have a specific function that serves your audience (director, congregation, or patrons) as well as you as a performer.

Performance -

You have selected the perfect audition piece and practiced it until you now know your music really well, including both the melody and the lyrics. Is that enough? No. You must now perform the piece. Some believe that at an audition the director simply wants to hear the sound of your voice. That's not all there is to it, though. The director also wants to know whether you:

- A. Understand the lyrics enough to tell the story;
- B. Can interpret the story to make it entertaining; and
- C. Are comfortable with movement during the piece.

Unless otherwise requested, you should not dance your audition piece. Hand movements and perhaps minimal movement across the stage may be helpful to your performance. Here are a couple of good rules of thumb:

1. Any hand or arm movement used during a performance should take 3 – 4 beats to accomplish;
2. Arm movements should place your hands between your waist and your shoulders, preferably with straight arms.
3. You should avoid “tyrannosaurus rex” hands.
4. In a piece of 16 to 32 measures, avoid more than three major movements.
5. Keep your knees slightly bent to avoid passing out from lack of blood circulation and to look ready to move.
6. Maintain the story in your face even when you aren’t singing such as during rests.
7. Use excellent posture for your audition piece.
8. One may use one or two dance steps only if called for in the music.

Before and After the Audition –

Always sit calmly and quietly before your name is called. Never, ever talk about another performer before, during, or after he or she sings. It is rude and unprofessional, and the director will take note if you do so.

When you are called forward, present your music to the accompanist in the following way:

- Smile and say, “Good afternoon/evening.”
- Place the music on the piano and guide your accompanist regarding any cuts, changes in tempo, and where in the music you will start and stop.
- Advise the accompanist of your tempo by quietly singing a few bars of your music in your accurate tempo.
- Smile and say, “Thank you.”

Once you are on stage, before you begin singing, be sure you are downstage enough. In a strong, secure, and happy (not silly) voice, you should say the following:

“Good evening. My name is _____, and I will sing ‘ (title of song)’ by (composer’s name)/or from (name of show).”

Then, sing your piece with all the character and virtuosity you have diligently rehearsed. Remember, if something goes awry during your audition, do not let it show on your face or in your actions. Avoid making a frightened and angry face, changing your body posture, or interrupting your story. The best way to describe this is with the axiom, “Never let ‘em see ya sweat!” Instead, you may do one of two things:

1. Let the accompanist continue, and pick up the song where you remember your words;
2. Ask the director/music director if you can begin again. You should only ask once if this action is necessary.

After you complete your number, smile and say, "Thank you."

Return to your seat where you will sit quietly until the audition event is over.

If you are asked to sing something more alone or in a group by the music director, be bold and commit to each activity fully.

You've Successfully Completed Your Audition

Now that your audition is complete, you must wait to hear whether you are cast or not. Remember that being cast is a complex issue, and if you are not cast, it does not necessarily reflect what the director thought of the quality of your performance. If you are adequately prepared, you likely did an excellent job. Be proud of that. If you are cast, understand that you may have simply fit the chemistry of the cast more effectively than others, so be humble and grateful for the opportunity to perform. You should neither speak ill of others who auditioned, nor gloat at having been cast. It shows poor collegiality, and since the theater community is a small one, this type of behavior always returns to the directors. It may affect future casting.

Summary

Auditions are your opportunity to present yourself to a director, music director, and choreographer. You are certainly interested in showing them the best of who you are and the outstanding level of preparation you have done. If you follow the steps described above, this will likely be your outcome. If something didn't go according to plan, learn from the experience. Being disappointed is natural and normal, but try to go beyond that to evaluate why it didn't go as well as you had hoped so that you can make adjustments in the future.

Just remember that no matter how much you want a role, it is up to those making casting decisions regarding who is selected. Their selections reflect solely on their beliefs about the needs of the show. If you have been diligent in your preparation, you can be sure that they have had the best opportunity to know you as a performer, and that is enough. So, to you, prepared auditioner, I say, "Bravo!"