

LESSON 1

SINGING CONFIDENCE

1. Singing, in its essence, is a type of sport. It requires carefully honed skills that can be built up and improved over a period of time. It requires practice, careful attention on the parts of the body being exercised and desire, the same as an athlete.
2. Think of a famous athlete. Think about how this person presents him or herself. Is he or she confident? You might even say that they are overconfident and even pompous? Where do you think this confidence stems from? It is rooted in the fact that confident athletes have something to be confident about: **they have worked hard and practiced for years to get to the top** and be the best at their particular type of sport. They are confident for two reasons. First, they are confident because they deserve to be. Second, they are confident because they have to be.
3. Let's keep looking at confidence and try to apply this to you when you practice singing. **Professional singers are also confident because they have worked hard to be where they are.**
4. Famous singers or any professional for that matter has to be confident. This doesn't mean they have to be arrogant or pretentious, **but they must hold themselves in high regard so that they may keep building upon the skills that they already have.** Artists who have pushed forged ahead and maybe even dared to try something new and exciting have generally been the ones who last longer in their profession and who have been popular for decades.
5. **If you are learning to sing, practicing daily, treating your vocal organs correctly, and pushing yourself to new heights, then you are doing nothing less than what superstars are doing. All of this will lead to greater confidence in your voice.** You have to know that you are developing your singing voice to the best of your ability.
6. **You have to be willing to push your own comfort level so that you will grow as a singer.** You may never get to perform in front of a large audience or be on stage. And, that is OK. Are professionals the only ones who can let their souls cry outward in an expressive melody? No, they are not! You can do the same and feel the same passion and emotion that professional feel. Again, you may not want to perform in this way in front of an audience, but your confidence levels will rise as you gain new heights and new vocal range as you learn to 'feel' and 'monitor' what your voice is doing and how you can control it, on a professional level.
7. Singing with confidence requires you to take chances. If you are going to perform in front of an audience, some steps you can take will increase your chances of performing confidently and well.
 - The first factor you are going to seriously consider is that you will have to learn to take chances. **Be willing to show yourself, your emotion, and your confidence on stage.**
 - **If you can open yourself up to an audience, they too will be responsive and show emotion.**

- Singing in any situation, onstage or not, with any type of audience present is a **bonding experience between the listener and the singer(s)**. However, this means that you will have to be the first one to wear your heart on your sleeve; the audience will follow. Only once you have done this, will you be able to full connect to your audience whether large or small. This is what practice and confidence will bring.
 - Another important factor to keep in mind is to try not to be shy. You may not be an extrovert, but if you are sincere, your audience will know.
8. In order for you to get the odds in your favour before you sing in front of a crowd, choose a song you are familiar with and can sing well. Even if the song is a 'cover' song, that's not a problem. When selecting a song, choose an artist and a song that falls into the same key and tone as you. Choose a song you have sung before and one that 'moves' you.
- **If you choose the right song, are able to stay in key, and are sincere about what you are singing, you will most likely be a hit.** As you practice different songs, choose a selection of songs and artists.
 - **Only when you mimic the greats, and do it with variety, will you begin to develop your own sound, your own style, and get a sense of your true vocal range.**
 - Whether your voice is smooth or raspy, it doesn't matter. Keep your music varied and always practice one step at a time, learning and thinking about what it is that you have gained each day of practice.

LESSON 2

HOW TO SING ON STAGE

1. Music has no limit. New songs will always be written and no two pieces are alike. New words will always be put to a melody and an artist or performer will always manage to capture their audience. **With these limitless possibilities comes plenty of room for expression. And, why shouldn't it be you who expresses yourself in new and enlightening ways?**
2. This sort of expression; however, **comes at a price.** It comes from years **of careful study, devotion, practice, self-monitoring, professional instruction, and a willingness to express yourself in front of others** so that you and your song are brought out to their full capacity.
3. Each famous performer has or had a unique presence on stage that emits from within them and into the audience. The audience, in turn, connects with the singer or performer on stage in what becomes a group connection through song. **Artists that are able to bring people together to not only hear a certain message, but to feel it, are the most adored.**
4. So, it can be safe to say that **performance and message** might be **more important** than voice. This might be true in today's popular music, or mainstream world. If you want to sing in front of any significant audience, be it in a bar, a café, or other venue, **you are going to have to be able to have a certain presence on stage that tells the audience you are sure of yourself and confident in your singing abilities.** Then, you are going to have to lull them into a sort of trance where they connect with you, where the focus is on you and your music. It may take a while for you to overcome your fears and shyness, but it is a necessary procedure if you want your audience to do more than clap.
5. If you are attempting to sell CDs, great! But, the reason that people attend concerts or small music venues is because they have already connected with your song. **Now, they want to connect with you.** You may be able to sing on stage, but you are also going to have to perform. Connecting with your listeners via CD isn't the same as connecting with them live and in person. What are you supposed to do on stage? Or, what are the other members of your group supposed to do? **They should communicate not only with their music and words, but with their bodies, rhythms, and intensity.**
6. While you perform, those watching and listening will monitor all of your actions. If you are not on a stage or raised platform, then you will have an even better opportunity to connect with your listeners. **Remember, your gestures will speak as loud as your music.** Would Elvis Presley have been able to connect with his audience as much as he did without what was considered at the time, his earth-shaking moves? It was his presence on stage, his outward display of emotion through his dancing and movements that allowed his audience to bond with him on another level.

LESSON 3

BATTELING STAGE FRIGHT

You hear your name being called and your knees begin to tremble, you begin to breathe more heavily and your mouth goes dry - a singer's nightmare. Here are some tips:

1. **First, remember that you are an actor performing through song.** If you are shy and have difficulty getting on stage, remember that we all have different sides of personalities. Obviously there is a side of you that enjoys music or you wouldn't be in this position in the first place. So, let go. **Give this "character" the right to take over when it is time to perform. Just like in the acting exercises above, build the character you want your audience to see.**

BOTTOM LINE: perception is everything. Your performance, and all aspects of it, will help people build their perception on whether they are enjoying themselves or not. Who is in control of that perception? You.

2. **You have to get your breath under control.** If you lose your breath control due to nervousness, you have undermined your voice's foundation and it is going to be a long song. Keep this in mind on days of performance and be sure to engage in cardiovascular exercise. If possible, stop and do jumping jacks several times throughout the day. It is also recommended that in addition to your regular vocal warm-up that you do jumping jacks or other low impact cardio-vascular activity around thirty to forty-five minutes prior to performance. **Stay hydrated.**
3. **Also practice getting your breath under control when the nervousness begins.** As soon as you begin to feel that panicky feeling and your heart rate increase, take deep, long and low breaths. This type of breathing will send your brain the message that everything is under control. Short and fast breathing alarms the brain and puts the body (your instrument) into "alarm" mode. Obviously not conducive to giving the performance of your life. Take control of your body and your breathing.
4. To **combat the dry mouth** try to find something that will create saliva when you are nervous and use this knowledge during these times of crises. It may be putting your finger in your mouth; it may be sucking on your tongue or swallowing several times.
5. **Learning to sing, the vocal journey, is usually a very a personal one. Learn to love and enjoy your voice.** If you don't like the way you sound you are sure to express this emotion during performance... so why should others enjoy listening to it? Believe in yourself and learn to use your voice, along with its unique characteristics, to your best advantage.
6. **Finally, focus on what is important throughout the entire performance. Distraction is usually a full body experience.**

LESSON 4

PREPARING FOR THE STAGE

1. The front person of a band has an intense job to do. **No matter what your mood, or how difficult your day, you need to be able to jump up in front of the audience and do a great performance.** This means being able to sing the energized up-tempo numbers as well as the blues ballads even if your day was right out of a soap opera. There needs to be a shift from your daily life into a state of mind that transcends the ordinary.
2. **This state of mind is something you need to build.** You probably already know what it feels like. It's similar to how you feel when you are writing a song and the next thing you know, hours have gone by. **Or, in performance, when you feel so connected to the material that it's effortless--more than that, it flows.** Flow is really what I'm talking about.
3. A lot of skill goes into the craft of singing, into the craft of performing. **No amount of flow will make up for a lack of skill. Without this feeling of connection--to the material, to the moment, to the audience--you can't make the leap to being an "artist."** During your best performances, you will almost feel that the song travels through you if you just get out of its way.
4. Developed a process to get from daily life into the mind-set needed on stage. **It takes getting focused, not being scattered by everyday events or even by the worries of making the performance work. It takes pulling your attention down to the quietest, most centred spot inside you where you know how to find the truth in your performance, where you are sure and confident and, therefore, free. I call this process my pre-performance ritual.**
 - A ritual is something that is done over and over in the same way. It is an ordered sequence of events that helps draw the participant further toward the conclusion through repetition.
 - The first step in your pre-performance ritual is closing the door which emotionally closes out everything else.
 - Then do something physical like stretching for 15 minutes to engage your body in how it moves and feels and get out of your mind for a while. Your body, after all, is your instrument and your major means of expression. You should be connected to it. If you like to swim or run, this is the time. If you don't do anything physical, you'd better start. If you ever have to tour in support of your record, you will need some kind of exercise to keep your mental health as well as your physical stamina.
 - After stretching, I do a form of meditation / prayer.
 - Next, pick the clothing you are going to wear that night and lay it out to look at. Some artists don't wear their stage clothes in their daily lives.
 - Then I take a bath / shower with candles and some good-smelling bath oil. Again, this might not work for everyone, but find something that has meaning for you. The idea is to treat yourself well, to prepare your body for a special event and to focus on the preparations.
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- Next, look at your face in a mirror. Really look. All of your character, the good and the bad, can be seen in your face. Use this time also to vocalize (warm up your voice). Take enough time until your voice feels good and your face looks right. Then get dressed.
 - Load up the car with equipment and, while driving to the gig, listen to a compilation of your current favourite great performances. Listen to praise and worship if you are going to do a gospel performance.
5. As other people start to interfere with your nicely-built calm, you will find that it deteriorates a little but things will still be easier to deal with if you have done your ritual and remain calm. Stay connected to the centre of yourself and you will have a great performance even if things before the show don't always run smoothly.
 6. **Fifteen minutes before you go on, go into a cubicle in the bathroom and do a short, but focused, version of your meditation/prayer.** The feeling of calm will come back and you will be centred again. You might find the first few times you do this it doesn't work as well as I'm telling you it will. That's because it takes time for it to gain strength.
 7. Remember, a ritual has to be repeated for it to work. Also, you may find it's hard to want to slow down and turn inward. Performing is a very out-going experience. Especially when all your friends want to say hello and talk to you about things that are totally unrelated to your gig (not to mention how terrible it is for your voice to shout over the loud music and all the other noise). You may feel that all that adrenaline will be lost if you focus in. But in reality, the opposite will happen. **The adrenaline stays but it's channelled, not scattered. It comes out as powerful, focused personality, as conviction and charisma.** I'm assuming that's what you want.
 8. It's essential that you invent your own ritual, one that helps you centre yourself and prepare for your performance.

LESSON 5

READY, SET PERFORM

1. **Life on stage is very different from ordinary daily life. Performing is not an ordinary activity. If you are going to perform, you need to prepare for it.**
2. It's hard to practice performing since the only time we really do it is in front of an audience. No matter how much you sing to yourself in the mirror in the privacy of your room, it won't even come close to the real thing. The best practice is getting out there on stage.
3. **Rehearsal is the next best thing to being there, provided you actually use the time to rehearse your performance.** Most singers work on arrangements in rehearsal or even on their vocals (though not nearly enough) but few actually **work out the elements of performance beyond singing.** Movements, gestures, interaction with other band members, talk between songs, taking the microphone off the stand, running out into the audience--these are not ordinary behaviour and they aren't easy. They need practice.
4. Many singers say they are uncomfortable trying these things in front of their band. It's embarrassing. But it's hard to imagine a singer trying something totally new in front of an audience if they couldn't do it in front of their band.
5. **The band needs to be set up like a think tank: no idea is made fun of** (unless it's supposed to be funny). When the guitar player puts the guitar over her head and plays her solo backwards, don't tell her it's stupid. **Work on developing that idea into something exciting.** As a band, you need to give every member permission to do whatever they can think of no matter how absurd.
6. **Practicing your act before you perform it mustn't lead to a stale a mechanized presentation.** A memorized gesture that has no feeling behind it looks hollow and vapid. Choreography may be especially susceptible to this danger. The singer seems to be on automatic pilot regurgitating movements that once had meaning. **Instead, the emotion must come first, generating the movement.** Whatever led you to throw your fist in the air and your head back the first time you did it, has to be there every time.
7. **Spontaneity is a crucial part of a vital stage show.** The ability to respond in a moment to whatever stimulus presents itself is essential for every style of artist.
8. **Whatever your personal style, whether it's wild or sedate, fun-loving or serious, you need to be genuinely affected by your material and it has to show.** As the front person, the responsibility for a charismatic performance is mainly on your shoulders. You have many elements at your disposal: music, words, arrangements, movements, costumes, attitudes. Construct a well-practiced framework to perform within, one that's guided by your concept, and it will give you the freedom to improvise.

LESSON 6

WHEN YOU PERFORM

1. When you perform, you are essentially signing an agreement with your listeners. **They are giving you their time and they expect something in return.** And, they expect it to be worthwhile. **You must be prepared to give them something.**
2. **What you must give them is a time to escape.** As they watch you and listen to your music, **they expect you to take them on a journey into another realm.** On this voyage, you are expected to cause feelings or even images to spark into their minds and hearts. Each person will get a feeling from what you are singing. And, this all has to be done so that you take them past their regular, everyday lives. **It has to be able to move them and take them to a different level.**
3. **When you sing, try to sing to the back of the audience as well.** They are there to enjoy your show just as much as those in the front. They also want to be a part of the group and feel the same message the others are getting from you and your music.
4. Also, when you are performing, **don't settle your mind on the fact that everyone is watching you.** While they are watching, it doesn't mean that they are not going to be taken away by what you are singing. The images and feelings that we mentioned in our last session will flood their minds as they connect with you. **Focus on the melody, your singing, and the mood that you are trying to create.**
5. With this said, **it is important to not to force anything on the audience. Not all performances will be the same. Each group of listeners will create their own atmosphere and their own mood** in which you may or may not be able to adjust to or penetrate. If this happens, don't fret. Simply carry on with what you've started. Maybe the ice still hasn't been broken, or maybe they are taking a bit more time to warm up to you. All this comes with time and patience. If it does not, don't take it personally. And, it is not a reflection of your ability to sing whatsoever. Not everyone you encounter will be enthralled by your music, and not every group is going to have the same appreciation for it. The best you can do is to present yourself honestly, and if needed, energetically to them as you perform.

LESSON 7

SINGING ACTING THROUGH SONG

1. A singer is an actor that uses the singing voice as a tool. **Every musical phrase tells a story, which are also affected or shared through body language, facial expression, diction and vocal dynamics.**
2. With this idea, performance preparation should include **analysing song material to determine the song's heart.** What does the song really say on paper, and how are those emotions best expressed in general? Loud or soft? Crisp or warm consonants? Vibrato or not?
3. This part of vocal study is just as important as learning the vocal line, the rhythm, and the lyrics. **It gives you the foundation for a sincere performance.** Once this study is underway begin working with the mechanics needed for you to sing the song. Once you have conquered the basic mechanics and are beginning to sing the song in performance mode, the artistry really begins.
4. **Consider again the motivation for each melody line. As you adjust your voice accordingly, also adjust the rest of your character: body language, facial expression, diction and dynamics to match the sincere message.** Following this type of training concept will help you provide a more sincere performance.
5. **Remember, once you hit the performance stage, very little of your energy should be focused on the mechanics of singing. If you practice regularly, most of your basic mechanic actions should be second nature.** If a track runner had to consistently think of right-left-right-left in order to run the race, he probably would not come in first. You should be "practiced" enough that you are able to focus your concentration on enjoying your voice and conveying the message.
6. To make sure the point about how important sincerity is to singing and live performance is clear, consider this: many singers that might be considered "average" if rated on a "technical scale" receive standing ovations and encore calls; while the singer that performed almost perfect "mechanically" received polite respectful applause. **Engage your audience and sing sincerely.**

LESSON 8

REHEARSING WITH A GROUP OR BAND

1. **The first step is to work on your voices both individually and together in separate sessions.**
2. Learn from each other by watching and listening to the way you sing - do you **breath, stand, relax correctly**? Is there **emotion in the voice**, does the voice sound **natural or forced**? If there is a problem can you identify it - can everyone pitch their voice to the right note easily?
3. **The starts, breaks and stops are important and if you are singing together you all need to start and stop EXACTLY at the same time**, also singing a 'round' (where one person sings, the next comes in partway through or across the other singer) has to be precise - have fun with it and record EVERYTHING for later review.
4. **If you are also playing instruments you should split the rehearsals - 1 vocal practice (sing accappella) and the other with instruments.** If you are including dance moves the same applies but split into 3 sections - a vocal accappella practice, then do a dance walkthrough (mouthing the words, NOT singing) then a full vocal/dance rehearsal with and without backing music.
5. **Practicing in this way will help you to concentrate on the voices and 'fix' the lyrics, pitch, timing, key changes** in your mind plus prepare you for the inevitable day when you're asked to perform at the drop of a hat without the aid of instruments or backing track!
6. When you **listen back to the recordings, learn to identify each other's voices, strengths and weaknesses**, which songs suit all of you and those that don't!
7. When writing and recording your own songs it is easier to sound great as there are no other singers to compare vocal style with ;-). However, if you haven't already done so grab as many cd's of REALLY GREAT SINGERS in all styles and sing along to a few tracks, DON'T try to imitate their voices - it's always best to use your natural voice rather than 'sound like' someone else (unless you aim to be a 'Tribute' act/artist) but do record your efforts and compare how your performance relates to theirs.....**is the timing similar, where are the breathing points, are your notes smooth or rough, clear or out of breath?**
8. Buy a couple of backing tracks or karaoke disks of your favourite songs and **try to re-interpret the songs in your own way to suit your voice.** These are ways to help you to learn about your voice and what it is capable of.
9. Take a critical listen to your demo song - could it be improved? How? Play it to strangers (without telling them you sang it if possible) watch their reaction, ask them what they thought and use their comments to improve the way you write or produce the song. Listen to tracks of popular artists who write in similar styles - how does your song compare? Make sure you and your songs sound original.

10. Play your demo at various volumes on all different types of stereo's including the car! (They all sound slightly different but if the mix is right it should sound good anywhere.) Does the song (and your performance) sound great after the 1000 time? If it does then you're on the right track - if not time to work on the bits that need improvement!
11. Image is very important nowadays so you need to **think carefully about how you present yourselves when performing** - do your clothes/hair/make up suit the way you look and sound? Make sure it's comfortable to move around in your comfortable wearing it on stage.
12. Get someone to VIDEO your dress rehearsals and live performances so you can see how you look and work together from an audience's point of view. If possible video all rehearsals or practice in front of a mirror.
13. You'll need tons of patience, especially when working with other people although it helps if they are friends. **There's bound to be disagreements and differences of opinion so you should work out a 'code of practice'** - an agreement that songs that cause arguments get thrown out and any disagreements forgiven and forgotten about before you go on stage are two items that should be included.
14. If you start getting tired, bored or snappy in rehearsals - your all overdoing it - take a break, go out, have fun and come back to it another day when your refreshed

PERFORMING WITH A GROUP OR A BAND

1. If you are going to be performing with a group or band, you will have to be able to ignore them right from the start. This may sound absurd, and a bit harsh, but **you never want to turn your back on your audience even for just a second**. It is considered a sin on stage to turn your back to your listeners and watchers for any amount of time. If you do, then the bond you are working on strengthening, the relationship of trust you are developing with your listeners will be broken.
2. If you sing towards your band members, such as in a practice session, you will lose your audience's complete attention. **If you are the lead singer, it is your job to be the performer on stage, to capture, indulge, excite, and connect with those who are present**. This rule should be followed whether you are performing in a café, bar, nightclub, or onstage at concert.

HOW TO DELIVER

1. **Singing cover songs of artists and songs that are well known is one way to connect with the audience**. They will most likely know the songs and **sing along with you**. This is exactly what you are aiming for. Watch as they fervently sing along with you. For that one moment in time, they have been transported away from their everyday lives and are singing with you.

LESSON 9

AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS

1. Remember that most people in the audience have no idea about what it takes to be a singer, an artist, and a performer. **An audience is only present to watch the result of so much hard work and practice.** They do not necessarily care what it took to get there nor the dedication and devotion required.
2. **What an audience wants is your best, and nothing less. If you are able to take them away, or make them feel certain emotions, that is all that matters.** They do not care or recognize how much work you've put in.

OVERALL SATISFACTION

1. **It is the hard work and dedication that should reward you, not the applause of those who are only with you for one night.** If you can regulate and monitor, and maybe even separate your feelings, then you will grow and stand strong amidst anything that might come your way. When you are with an audience, care about and nurture them; give them everything you've got. But, when it comes to singing, having satisfaction and confidence in what you do is brought about only through your own reflection and realizing how far you've progressed and how good you've become.
2. Overall, learning to sing, no matter what your goals may be, will be a rewarding experience. The only way to learn and to maintain your singing voice is to **slowly build your skills and by taking care not to hurt your singing organs.**
3. **Only through practice and learning the basic elements of a properly developed singing voice, can you reap the long-lasting benefits that singing will bring;** whether it is in front of an audience or not. If you are not only devoted to learning how to sing, but also truly committed to learning about the art, you will progress, and your voice will bring you, and perhaps others, the benefits of a well-tuned melody.

SINGING TIPS

1. Once you have the confidence to perform in front of others, **the next step is to take your audience past there every day lives and into a new world with your singing.**
2. **Do not drink too much alcohol or caffeinated beverages, and do not smoke.** These things will all contribute to the burning of your larynx and vocal chords, and will reduce the elasticity and flexibility of your vocal organs.
3. On the day of a performance, **try not to drink cold beverages,** talk a lot, breathe in a lot of dust, or get your body too cold.
4. On the day of a performance or intense practice session, **try to avoid dairy foods.** This will not only cause your vocal chords to stiffen, but could also cause the overproduction of phlegm in your lungs and throat.
5. On the day of a performance, do not overexert yourself singing or with exercise.