

that you are prepared appropriately for the performance in order to feel absolutely at ease on the stage. Choosing a more frivolous anxiety, if you are worried about falling on stage, check that you are wearing shoes that fit you well, are comfortable, and appropriately "scuffed" on the bottom. Then, practice in the hall where you will sing the performance (while wearing the shoes) several times in order to achieve an appropriate comfort level. This method takes a little time, but is well worth the effort in maintaining a comfort and concentration level on stage, which allows you the freedom of expression necessary for an outstanding performance.

WHAT SHOULD I DO TO PREVENT STAGE FRIGHT BEFORE A PERFORMANCE?

The late Madame Sonja Sharnova, noted Chicago voice teacher and contralto with the Chicago Opera Company, outlined several steps for preventing stage fright, which she distributed to her students regularly. Following are Madame Sharnova's ten tips to prevent stage fright before a performance.

First of all, she states: "Fear is the basic condition to be dealt with. What produces fear? Four basic causes are: uncertainty, ignorance, self-consciousness, and lack of concentration. To eliminate these, have the pupil explore and confront every aspect of a singing performance so that familiarity may take the place of uncertainty, knowledge may replace ignorance, poise may replace self-consciousness, and sustained single-mindedness correct faulty concentration." Here are her ten suggestions:

1. Rehearsals should simulate the conditions of actual performances. Visit the auditorium or recital hall beforehand, if possible, to familiarize yourself with the dimensions and acoustics thereof. Frequent preliminary short exposures to an audience, small or large, will also be helpful.
2. Detailed knowledge of the song and text is indispensable. Memorization and performance standards must be trained beyond minimum requirements so that margin of security and ease may be built into the final performance. It

is better to relax down into the desired standard than to stretch and strain up to it. Hence, the policy of overbuilding a technique promotes self-confidence.

3. Proper diet, rest, recreation, and relaxation exercises should not be overlooked during the days and period preceding the performance date.
4. Vigorous spoken declamations of the text will be helpful. An intelligent English translation of a foreign text may be recited and sung aloud, as a practice device, to help capture the essential message of the song or aria. Try paraphrasing the text in ordinary conversational English until the meaning and communicative intent is fully realized. Cultivate conversational ease of expression, not bombast, so that the communicative aspects of singing may be realized. Sing it as if you were saying it. Singing will seem sterile unless there is communicative contact with the listener.
5. Avoid stiffness of posture. Freedom of movement during rehearsal will help to relax the body and prevent awkwardness and stiffness while singing.
6. Try out several different transposed keys so that a sense of tonal fitness and ease may be realized suited to the tessitura of the voice. Avoid foolhardy extremes of pitch, or dynamics of phrasing which might invite a sense of insecurity or incompetence.
7. Be certain that a phrase-wise and not a note-wise reading of the song is developed. Learn to sing through the song without stopping a number of times. Ignore the errors. Don't always chop it up into repeated fragments. Note the errors, if any, separately, and then isolate them for separate treatment without violating the continuity of the song. The final performance should not seem like a series of problems to be overcome. Try to capture the wholeness of the song, its meaning, and its mood. There must be a resolute continuity of forwardness to a song, not hesitancy or uncertainty about what is coming next. The sustained effect must be built into the performance pattern.
8. Know the accompaniment thoroughly and be able to stop or continue at any point of the song, without confusion. Above all, be able to sing

through it mentally or silently, then audibly, without any accompaniment at all.

9. Don't overwork the song but use similar arias and texts that embody similar vocal problems. Flexibility and versatility of expression in the particular idiom will thus be cultivated.
10. Visualize success, not failure. Practice seeing yourself before an audience.

These ten suggestions will help a singer to achieve control over not only the emotions, but the entire situation. They, along with excellent technical preparation, will help the singer in alleviating the need to be a perfectionist, as well as improving low self-esteem. The key to success on the performance stage is appropriate preparation and understanding of the task at hand. When training has been appropriate, the singer will be able to control the emotional as well as the physical aspect of performing.

SINGING WHEN SICK

What Should a Singer Do When Awaking the Day of a Performance with a Sore Throat?

To sing or not to sing, that is the question! The answer to this question, of course, can vary greatly from one singer to another. But, some general suggestions might include the following:

Evaluate the problem. Can you determine a cause for the sore throat? Does it relate to overuse or abuse of the voice previously, or is it a viral or bacterial infection? You may need the help of a physician to make this determination. Do not hesitate to call your personal physician or otolaryngologist in such an instance. If the problem is bacterial, you may need an antibiotic, and you would be doing yourself and everyone else you come in contact with a favor by not exposing them to your ailment. Although viral infections do not respond to antibiotics, you may still want to consult your physician if you think you have a virus. A viral infection can lead to a bacterial infection, which will prolong your recovery time. Always ask your voice teacher and physician for advice on whether you should sing a

performance or an audition on a "sick throat." Frequently, singers cause themselves extensive damage by singing on swollen vocal folds, which should not have been forced to sing. You must trust the advice of your voice teacher and your doctor, so be sure you have both to rely upon in times such as these. In general, the advice for "singing sick" has always been and continues to be—if you could cause damage to your voice by singing, don't sing! If you will sing a bad audition or performance, don't sing! It is far better to cancel a performance than to leave a bad impression as a professional singer.

If the vocal problem seems to be related to too much singing or speaking (overuse or abuse of the voice) rather than to a viral or bacterial infection, there are several things which may help to reduce the effects as follows:

1. Take a hot shower and allow the steam to penetrate your nasal and respiratory passages as much as possible.
2. Try placing a washcloth soaked in tolerably hot water over the nose and mouth and inhale through this to penetrate the nasal passages with moisture and create hypermia.
3. Drink lots of fluids; warm water, or herbal tea will help to rehydrate the injured membranes.
4. Reduce use of your speaking voice to a minimum; allowing the vocal folds to rest as much as possible.
5. Rest as much as possible, and eat a moderate amount of foods rich in protein and carbohydrates to aid the body in healing the injured area.
6. Avoid any caffeine containing products, as well as salty and highly seasoned foods.
7. Vocalize carefully and gently later in the day to prepare the vocal folds for singing. You should be able to recognize whether you will be able to sing or not after a few hours of rest and hydration.
8. Some singers find yoga and meditation helpful in relieving the muscle tension found in neck and shoulder muscles following a day of "bad singing" technique.

This chapter could go on without pause, as new information on physical and mental health care