

SOLO SINGING WORKSHOPS

These guidelines are intended to help you to get the most out of a solo workshop; you may also find some helpful points for any other solo performance work that you undertake.

- You should bring **two pieces that you have prepared to performance standard**; you may be asked to sing one or both, depending on the length and complexity of the songs, points needing attention, time available etc.
- Make sure that both pieces are **really well learnt** - that you're sure of notes *and* music! It is much better to bring just one really well-learned piece if that's all that you have time to prepare.
- If you aren't able to practise with a pianist regularly, and/or don't play yourself, try to get someone to tape the accompaniment for you as this will give you some experience of 'duetting' with the piano. **You need to know the sound of the accompaniment as well as you know the vocal line.**
- The style of the piece doesn't matter at all; you might choose a classical song, music theatre piece (show, opera or operetta), folk song, pop ballad, children's song, church piece etc.
- **The piece should suit you and your voice**; think about the character of the song, the emotions expressed, the type of person who might be saying these words or might be in this situation or thinking these thoughts. Also take note not just of register – is the piece too high or too low – but of the kind of voice that it suits. If you sound like Julie Andrews don't do a piece that you think needs to sound deep and rich!
- Choose **something that you enjoy and are interested in**. You need to be able to empathise with what the words and music are saying. Do you and the composer and poet have something to say to the audience?
- Think about how you might **introduce your song** to put the audience in a receptive mood! Do they need some background information? Would it help to encourage them to be still and reflective before you sing? Or to laugh at something?
- Try to **memorise your song(s)**; with the exception of church music, including oratorio performances, solo repertoire is usually performed from memory. This enables the singer to internalise the text and music and to get much more involved in 'being' the character or the poet. Just think, have you ever been to a play and seen the actors reading their lines from a script? If you're really struggling with this try using a cue card with key words or beginnings of verses etc. written on it.
- You shouldn't use any sort of costume for this workshop. Occasionally a prop might be helpful e.g. a book or scroll if you were going to sing Leporello's *Catalogue aria* or a basket for Buttercup's song in *Pinafore*. Do however **dress in a way that will enable you to feel relaxed and good about yourself**. Avoid high-heeled shoes or anything tight and restricting, especially around the waist, ribcage and neck! Also make sure that you're not wearing anything highly unsuitable for your song e.g. nothing glitzy if you're supposed to be poor or nothing that will distract the audience from what you are singing about.
- Most of all, remember that the audience is there to enjoy the song and its message. **You are the messenger; do what you can to present the message to the best of your ability but don't mistake yourself for the message!** Remember: a few fluffs are far less important than the overall communication that you have with your audience. Live your song.