

**Sing Your Life**
A Voice for a Lifetime in 30 Days!

Presents



**THE ART OF STAGE
PRESENCE**

By Chrys Page

The Art of Stage Presence

If you have read the first eBook in our "The Art of..." series, then by now you should have successfully completed and mastered the vocal exercises offered there.

Or perhaps you already know the mechanics of singing.

In any case, this eBook now takes you from just knowing the correct way to sing to understand yourself as an artist and making you comfortable on stage.

Stage Presence is all about taking your attention OFF of yourself!

If your inner "critic" is on your shoulder saying,

- "That didn't sound good", or
- "you went flat on that note", or
- "God! Look at all those people...it's nervous time",

then you won't be able to deliver the song so that it reaches each and every individual who is listening to you, and after all, isn't that the goal?

So if you're satisfied with your vocal technique, and you don't need to "remember" to breathe into your belly, or "remember" to stay down on your body, and can just let the sound float over your vocal cords and out into the world, well then, congratulate yourself because you are now ready to learn the **"Art of Stage Presence"**

How many times have you gone to a concert to hear your favorite artist and been mesmerized by a performance that seemed to touch your very soul? What was it about that performance that reached you, that left you so totally enchanted?

- Was it the beautiful vocal tones of the singer?
- Was it the costumes and the staging?
- Was it the noise of the crowd?
- The special effects?
- Or maybe just being in the presence of someone you admire?

I imagine it could very well have been a combination of all those...and something just a little more.

Maybe what really brings us to that place of sheer adoration for our favorite musical artists is a *quality of communication*.

Now what do I mean by that?

It's that special feeling we get that this performer we are watching and listening to, together with thousands of other people in the same space, **is really singing just for us!**

A place inside of us has been reached by the way the performer is singing a song.

When this happens, that artist has touched us and we feel like a friend, a confidant, an insider into the performer's personal world.

The quality I am talking to you about has nothing to do with the voice...not really, although naturally, if the voice is *on*, and the tone is flawless, the communication with one's audience is free and unencumbered.

But just think of times when you heard a singer perform in concert and his/her voice *wasn't on!* Maybe the voice sounded a little tired or hoarse. It happens to the best of us. Not every single performance is going to be without error.

It is precisely at these moments when a performer needs to take attention off of the sound his/her voice is making, and just **make a connection** with the listener. And there is a formula to making this connection. It is simply:

Preparation + Awareness + Communication = A Good Performance

We took care of the *technical* side of **Preparation** in our primary eBook, "The Art of Singing". Even if you haven't gone through that book, as long as you have practiced sufficiently so that your body now **"knows what to do"**, during moments when your vocal ability is NOT at its best, you will just know that your voice will not let you down and this is a good place to be.

So let's explore this concept of **Preparation** beyond just the mastering of the vocal fundamentals.

Here's a checklist of external factors to prepare for:

- Do you know all your lyrics?
- Do you like what you're about to sing?
- Do the words have meaning for you?
- Have you rehearsed your choreography or stage blocking?
- Do you know where the lighting is the most flattering...or the least?
- Are your vocal arrangements and orchestrations perfect?
- Have you completed your sound checks to your satisfaction?
- Are you comfortable in your choice of costume?

It's always necessary to handle all the **external** things that make a performance great.

But, what about the *internal*?

Look at this list of problems that could arise and interfere with a good performance. You will need to also prepare for them:

- Loss of breath
- Dry mouth
- Increased heartbeat
- Sweaty hands
- Shaking
- Loss of ability to hear the music clearly
- Tension – anywhere in the body
- Stiffening up of the body
- Feeling nauseated

It certainly isn't all that unusual to experience any of these external manifestations in the middle of a performance, right?

But these symptoms can act on the performer *mentally* and take on a life their own.

The physical manifestations then have mental components that go along with them like...

- Forgetting your lyrics
- Forgetting the music
- Losing your sense of timing
- Feeling distracted
- Losing your concentration
- Blaming yourself for not doing well
- Doubting your ability to even be on stage
- Thinking you hadn't practiced enough

- Worried about the equipment malfunctioning
- Afraid that you'll never recover from this if all doesn't go well.

Now on top of your dry mouth, or nausea, you've got that little voice inside (the inner critic) chattering away at you and distracting you from what you're doing up there.

They are examples of **self-interference** which once we overcome, and we CAN of course do that, we will never have to encounter them again.

In order to truly communicate with the audience, we need to silence the inner critic inside of us that causes all these problems.

Okay, so how do we do this?

Good question!

Have you ever started telling a story or a joke to someone? Or maybe it was just relating an incident that just happened to you, good or bad, or something you saw or heard that was so moving you wanted to share it with someone?

You spoke without paying any attention at all to your own voice because you were involved in the **telling of the story** or joke and not in how **you** were sounding telling it. And as the person you were talking to was paying more and more attention to your story, you got more and more into the telling of it. Why?

Because you wanted to create an effect!

Performing a song is the very same thing.

If you are *prepared*, and the **external** things are handled, all that is left is for you to *tell your story* and be **interested** in communicating it to your listeners.

Be more interested than interesting, and you will reach them.

Indeed! You will dazzle them!

I like to think of this "inner critic" I speak of as the small self or **Self** "**s**".

Self "s" is the one that loves the word "**should**" and is always telling us what to do and how to do it.

It loves to predict upcoming failures or comment on things that have already happened with "if only" this or that.

Self "s" is constant. It never shuts up.

It includes not just our own thoughts, but those of our parents, our teachers, and others, and it demands our undivided attention.

Generally, it includes everything we "think" we should be doing or worrying about. We keep **Self "s"** around because we are convinced that we need it. **Self "s"** is our friend.

I personally have come to see the truth about this entity. And I am convinced that **Self "s"** is the *ego*.

And let's face it! It's pretty tough to concentrate on singing with all that chatter going on inside your head all the time, right?

This is why *Preparation* is so important.

- ✓ Practicing until you know your material "blind",
- ✓ taking care of all the external matters, and then
- ✓ becoming totally interested in the quality of your communication will not only move your audience,
- ✓ it'll move you right out of your head and into your song.
- ✓ At this point, you are in contact **with Self "S"**, or the higher Self...for our purposes here, the "**Creative Self**", or the part of us that is in direct contact with our higher being, our soul, or whatever you wish to call it.

Self "S" doesn't do a lot of chattering.

It doesn't even think much.

It acts on instinct, memory, and feeling. And it loves "NOW".

Have you ever been so involved in something you loved doing that time seemed to literally fly? Maybe you were writing a poem or song lyric, or figuring out the fingering on the guitar for a song you liked. Maybe you were simply engrossed in a great book.

Years ago after my Dad died, I decided to write a collection of songs for him that would express my love and sadness.

Every night I'd work on the collection, writing lyrics, choosing melodies, and sketching out the orchestrations. On one particular night when I hadn't had time during the day to eat lunch, I remember thinking, 'I'll just work for an hour tonight and then grab some supper.' It was 7PM.

I sat down to finish a song I had started the night before. It was truly a labor of love and I instantly became enveloped in the activity. What seemed like a few minutes later, my stomach started to growl, so I decided to stop and eat. I looked up at the clock. It was Midnight!

This is Self "S" at work. It has no past or future, only NOW!

And in the present is where the creative mind operates. Once you involve yourself thoroughly in the performing of your song, time goes away, and the **Self "s"/EGO**, which lives in the past and the future, is silenced.

I had student a few years ago, Laura, who was 39 years old and had a dream since childhood of performing in front of an audience. We had been working together for 8 weeks to get her ready for one of my student recitals.

She knew her music, had the words down cold, and looked great! We had done several sound checks in the afternoon so that each student was able to hear themselves through the monitors on stage, and chosen the correct lighting for each number. I was acting as stage manager and a few minutes before Laura was due to go on I couldn't find her.

I opened the stage door that led to the alley in back of the theater and found her bent over throwing up.

"I can't do it! I'm too nervous! My whole family's out there." She cried. I got her to take 3 or 4 deep breaths into her belly, and then told her that all that was needed was to just concentrate on communicating the words of her song and to think of nothing else but that.

As the curtain rose, Laura was in a soft blue spotlight. Her music started. She began singing her song. With each word, she gained confidence. By the 4th measure it was obvious that she was literally **"in the song"**. Needless to say, she brought the house down.

And today, Laura, past 40 years old, is somewhat of a celebrity in her small town of 30, 000. She performs in Community Theater productions, and sings at all the community's civic events, in her church on Sundays and is the main attraction every Wednesday evening at Karaoke Night.

Laura achieved her dream. And you can too!

What I am saying here is that with time and dedication to the music, you discover your way into the performance, learn how to remain in the present and just communicate.

Then the space between the **"critical"** you and the **"Creative"** you gets wider and wider, and your need to have your inner critic dictate your every move diminishes.

Let's understand these entities a little better!

Our teacher, parents and friends may have instilled some fears and doubts in us while they were attempting to be well-meaning and tell us what they thought we **should** be doing with our lives.

Laura's mother had said something like,

- "Why would you want to make a fool of yourself by singing in public?"
- Why isn't being a wife and mother enough for you?
- I love you and I want to spare you the embarrassment, that's all."

Laura had internalized all of the "advise", well-intentioned or not, from her mother and even her friends.

Her husband, however, was very supportive. When she would ask him, "Am I a fool to be singing at a kid's voice recital?" He'd say, "Not at all! If this is what makes you happy, go for it!"

Each of us has the option of choosing not to buy into the input of others that is negative or distracting.

But even *Positive* input from our ego can be a problem.

The Self "s" will say,

- "Don't worry. You'll be great!"
- Just remember to breathe before that long passage so you don't run out of air and swallow the words."

Once the performer understands the ego, the inner critic, and can **embrace** it rather than fight it, then it can be silenced.

Just by acknowledging its presence, we allow our **creative Self** to more fully express itself! We need to have **awareness** and the **intention** to express and communicate.

By staying in the present, we keep the ego occupied so-to-speak, so the chattering stops and it cannot interfere with our intention.

Personally I have frequent conversations with my own ego. And what artist doesn't have one...and a healthy one at that?

I say to my ego, "I know you're just trying to keep me from being hurt, or humiliated, but listen, while I appreciate your advice, I need for you to be quiet right now so I don't get distracted, okay?"

Sounds silly, but for me it works pretty well.

A brief word about "trying".

"Trying" is a sure-fire way to fail.

It creates tension and doubt. Do this.

"Try" to sit in a chair. Go ahead. Do this now.

Stop reading this eBook and walk over to chair in your room there and try and sit in it from a standing position.

Okay! Did you try? What was the result? Did you do it?
Did you try or did you actually sit!

You either sat in the chair, or you didn't sit in the chair.

But can you see that you didn't *try* to sit? You either did sit or you didn't sit.

Trying allows doubt and anxieties to create interference patterns, blocks our natural awareness and creates tension in the body.

And giving ourselves permission to have ourselves totally exposed, flaws and all, eliminates that tension.

A perfect segue into my next aspect of stage presence...that being the expression of "YOU"!

Whether you are performing as yourself or creating a character, if you let "you" come through on stage, you are successful.

When I sent out my CD of songs for my Dad to those who knew him and knew me, I got the most startling reactions. Hundreds of people wrote to me to tell me that what they found most moving about the collection were the places in the songs where I squeaked out a note which they perceived excessive emotions I was feeling. It reached them in a very personal way. It actually made them cry.

Remember Joe Cocker's rendition of "You Are So Beautiful?" Remember the last note? How he cracked on it? Whoever said, "that's a take, next song" is an absolute genius, because that crack made that song Number One on the charts for weeks.

Emotional expression- pure and simple!

Now I'm not saying you should be cracking and squealing all during a performance. What I *am* talking about is letting your emotions, your true feelings come through when you're on stage.

It requires that you do *not* put *on* a mask to show to the world, as some teachers of acting and singing would have you think, but actually *removing* the mask, staying in the "now", and being yourself.

When I first stepped onto a stage at the age of 17, I was scared to death, and although I was prepared musically, I had a lot of "inner critic" chatter to contend with and it was not a good performance.

Luckily, I had a beautiful voice and the band behind me was wonderful, so the negative result was minimized. My accompanist at the time spoke to me on a break and told me that I needed to focus on just one person in the audience...and that singing to that person alone would help me to stay in the moment.

By focusing in one person in the audience, a good friend of mine, I was able to release my self-conscious thoughts and just express the song

This "trick" has been demonstrated by the greatest entertainers in the business, like Frank Sinatra, Celine Dion, Billy Joel, David Bowie, and others who been around for decades...proving that longevity and stage presence go hand in hand.

So what exactly is Letting go!

Think of it this way...

You get into your bed to go to sleep and you cannot fall asleep because all of the events of the day are swimming around in your head, (**self "s"** is talking up a storm), or you're going over your "to-do" list for the following day.

The general thinking out there suggests that we can usually overcome this by counting sheep or simply noticing the ebb and flow of our breathing.

Of course, the pharmaceutical companies would have us believe that the best solution is simply taking a pill to go to sleep.

Singers ESPECIALLY should be most careful of that "solution" because of the damage that can be done to the vocal tissue by drugs.

(More about this in the 3rd eBook in this series, "The Art of Musicianship".

Soon you are no longer trying to control the situation and you slip away into your dreams. You don't order yourself to fall asleep. You don't *make* it happen. It just sort of comes over you when you're not looking.

It's the same with singing. If you're having a problem with some aspect of your singing, like getting enough air, or hitting the right notes, or remembering the words, or letting go of the tension in your body, you will find in most cases, that just your *awareness* will lead you out of the particular problem.

I recall a student who thought she needed to take in more air to complete a particular phrase, and each time she arrived at that phrase she would run out of air.

I asked her to identify the exact moment when she gasped for extra air and notice what occurred at that moment. She saw that her body immediately tensed up and her stomach muscles knotted, she was no longer able to expand her stomach muscles and the extra air she needed wasn't there.

By first becoming aware and then *letting go* of the *need* to grab more air for the phrase, and by concentrating more on just communicating the phrase, she found that she had plenty of air left and the body tension left her.

Preparation, Awareness, and Communication.

Preparation is practicing enough so that the vocal fundamentals are all on auto-pilot, and taking care of all the **external** matters.

Awareness is understanding the components of Self-Interference and staying in the present so that the chattering of the inner critic lessens.

Communication is being yourself and telling your story through song to your audience.

Here's a side note:

Self- awareness may not be comfortable for a lot of people. This material, when followed, may bring up a lot of stuff for you that you'd just as soon forget and leave alone. But, let me tell you that by exploring your inner self, you not only grow as a performer, but as a person. So it can actually become therapeutic!

My son, who is an actor in Hollywood, tells me that although he was never the type to show his feelings, he has learned that through his art form of acting, that he can express himself without fear of reprisals because when he acts, his feelings are all okay!

So even if you don't normally share yourself in the day-to-day world you live in, when you perform, it makes perfect sense to, 'cause people expect it... they even love it when you do.

The next eBook in this series is "The Art of Musicianship", where we will begin to show you how to understand your music, choose the correct material for your voice, your style, range, *and* your limitations.

I recommend it for those singers who really want to become well-rounded musicians, and to command respect in a world where most singers are controlled by the record companies.

You may order it [HERE!](#)