

# Backstage Coach Productions

## Dance Education

BackstageCoach.com

### ACTING AND MOVEMENT FOR SINGERS

by  
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#### ACTING

- Establish “the moment before” by making eye contact before singing.
- Focus on important verbs and play the intention.
- Stress words in the lyrics that tell the story, but don’t keep stressing the same word; for example: *car*, *red car*, *big*, *red car*, and *new*, *big*, *red*, *car*.
- Make specific choices that contextualize the song; for example: Where are you? Who are you talking to and why?
- Practice acting out the lyrics in monologue form versus singing to discover the intention. Now your focus is placed on the meaning of the lyrics instead of trying to find the right note.
- Look for variations in the song and know the beginning, middle, and end. Where does the song peak? Does your intention and expression change with each variation?
- Use an off stage focal point for imaginary circumstances.
- On a scale of 1 to 10 always start lower and build.
- When a phrase or verse repeats itself then build each time it repeats.
- Work on lifting the inflection at the end of a phrase instead of trailing off.
- If you don’t feel comfortable with a particular note then “attack” it and get off.

#### PERFORMANCE

- Overcome stage fright by making what you are doing more important than the nervousness.
- When really nervous stick with a single focal point and don’t waiver.
- Be careful of diluting your focus with a wandering gaze.
- Do not indulge yourself by letting your “inner voice” try to figure out what the audience is thinking about you; this turns your energy inward and causes you to lose connectivity with the viewer.
- If you get lost during the song avoid looking at the pianist; it gives the appearance that you are placing blame.

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#### PERFORMANCE

- Performance energy shapes the package so harness it.

#### GESTURES AND MOVEMENT

- Singing is not about gesticulating. Singing is about sharing the inner body, mind, and spirit.
- Literal gesturing is considered trite; avoid clichés that will turn your act into a novelty such as placing the hand over the heart for love or the hand to the forehead for distress.
- It is appropriate for soloists to stand still so that more concentration is placed on the auditory than visual gestures.
- If orchestral sections (usually about 32 bars) are included in the music then it is appropriate for the singer to walk or travel during this time. If the singer is trained in dance then this is an opportunity to build the energy with movement and link it to the next lyrics to be sung.
- Utilize props or sets on stage; for example: travel down a set of stairs, lean against a pillar, or pick a flower from a basket.
- Finish the song with a strong gesture for greater impact.

For more descriptions of acting, staging, and playwrighting terminology visit the Backstage Library where you will find this resource.

Sawyer, Gina. *The Performance Dictionary*. Dallas: Backstage Coach Productions, 2005.