

Getting the Most Out of a Master Class

Introduction

While time allows only a limited number of students to perform in a master class, you can still learn life-changing lessons through observation. Whether you get a chance to perform or not, a Master Class is an excellent educational opportunity. Performers often make major breakthroughs when working with a successful, respected “master” for the first time. Observers can gain invaluable insight through active listening and reflection.

Performers

Practice your selection(s) thoroughly. Memorization is expected.

Spend some of this practice time in front of a mirror to monitor your stage presence.

Choose (a) song(s) that you perform well but want to take to the next level.

Practice introducing yourself and your song(s) **clearly, slowly, and loudly**.

Dress professionally but comfortably.

Bring clearly notated sheet music, in the correct key.

Plan to discuss your song(s) briefly with your accompanist to set the tempo and plan tempo changes or cuts.

Take a deep breath!

Deliver your song(s) to the best of your ability.

If something goes wrong, smile and continue on (or)

If you have to stop, be calm, take another deep breath, and try again!

Connect with the lyric, and stay in character. Make active choices.

Be prepared for any type of feedback.

Be prepared to try new “out of the box” exercises to improve your vocal sound, stage presence, connection with the lyric, character interpretation, posture.

Always try your best to do what the “master” asks, even if it feels a little strange. To grow, we all need to take a risk!

Observers

Be prepared to perform at all times. You never know when you might get an unexpected opportunity. (see “performers” above for preparation advice)

Bring your music!

Bring a pencil and notebook, and take notes. Studies have proven that it is much more beneficial to take handwritten notes instead of typing on a device. A typical

master class often touches on dozens of concepts that you may be able to use in your own performing. Challenge yourself to assemble a list of several new ideas to try at home.

Learn by active observing. Imagine you are the person getting coached. Are they incorporating the master's feedback in their work? What would you do in their place?

Evaluate (but don't judge - we're all in this together!) the students who perform. What might you say if you were their teacher? Here are some things to consider:

Storytelling - did the performer make active choices that enhanced the dramatic character and arc?

Emotion - did the performance move you? Can you pinpoint why or why not?

Repertoire choice - was it the right song for this particular performer?

Movement - did the performer look comfortable on stage? was there enough subtle movement? too much? did movement give the song life? distract you?

Vocal production - was the vocal sound consistent?

Pitch - did the performer sing in tune?

Dynamics - did the performer shape the song with both soft and loud passages?

Listening/Revision - did the student listen to comments and try to make changes? did the changes help?

Incorporate - Before too much time goes by, perhaps within 24 hours, try to incorporate what techniques you picked up through observing the class. Film yourself and observe what happens when you utilize the tools discussed in the master class.

CONCLUSION

By using these guidelines, you will make sure to get something out of your master class, whether or not you are able to perform.

Good luck and have fun!