

Vocal Technique Lesson with Romain – Handout Friday 31 July 2020

Tips for performance

Hello everyone!

This is the last lesson before the summer break, so I thought we would talk a bit about performing as this is something that many of you are already doing or hoping to do.

While it is the dream for most of the musicians, there are other ways to express and develop your musicianship. Do not feel that you have to perform one day, because everybody around you is doing it. You may not like the idea and prefer singing for yourself at home without an audience, or within a band at Core in one of the jam rooms, which is totally fine of course. Music should only be about pleasure. What makes you happy?

But amongst the Core students who haven't performed yet, many students actually wished they could perform but think that they are not ready for it or are afraid of being on stage.

Stage fright is very common, even with musicians who regularly perform. Hopefully this list of tips will help all of you being happier performers.

1/ Choose the right gig

If you have never performed before, start with a smaller audience, not one of the most popular gigs. Possibly at the beginning of a gig, when not too many people are there. Also, consider performing within a band or a group for one or two gigs. And then, try a solo gig.

2/ Practise your performance skills

In the weeks leading to the performance:

- Keep practising your vocal technique without mic to improve your natural vocals
- But also practise with a mic to get familiar with it for the performance. Find the right position, not too close, not too far from you. Keep your upper body up and relaxed, without any tension. Remember to adjust the distance between the mic and your mouth when singing your song. The loudest your natural voice gets, the furthest away your mic should be from your mouth. And the quietest it gets, the closest it should be.
- Imagine singing for people and look at them while singing, remind yourself that music is about sharing, not delivering a perfect performance
- Focus on pronunciation and articulation as vocals always get blurred by a mic

3/ Be ready to perform on the day

There is no right or wrong preparation just before your performance.

Some people prefer not thinking too much about it until it is actually happening. They prefer having a chat and a drink with friends. If it works for you, perfect!

But usually a little bit of vocal preparation is recommended. Not too short, not too long, maybe 15 or 20 minutes before your performing slot. Try and find a little room where you can warm up your voice, either on your own or with other singers. Warm up your body briefly. Then warm up your voice by doing some breathing in order to calm down and connect with your tummy. Maybe do a minute of lip rolls to reconnect with your diaphragm. Then sing scales or arpeggios just for a couple of minutes. Finally, sing your song or some bits of it. Try to focus on your breathing and your diaphragm. Also, make sure that your face, especially your mouth, jaw and lips are relaxed but ready to be engaged. Try to chase any inner voice putting pressure on you, think of why you are here: share a song that you love and a nice moment with people.

4/ Remember that the audience is supportive

The gigs at Core are known for their warm and relaxed atmosphere. The audience is mostly made up of students who are just like you and of teachers. All are very supportive. They all know that performing is a special thing. They also all know that there is no right or wrong performance. What matters is participation. In a way, think of being on stage as the actual achievement. And then your performance is just a bonus. It doesn't matter if it doesn't go as well as you expected because you've done the biggest step by jumping on stage.

5/ Stay focused

It is easy to get distracted by many things when singing for an audience. Here are a few examples:

-You may notice some people in the audience who don't seem to engage with your performance. This is a horrible feeling but it actually happens all the time, because it is impossible to have every single member of an audience constantly on board with you. It doesn't mean that they are not convinced by what you are doing. It just means that they are themselves distracted by something, or they are chatting to someone about something. Anyway, forget about them! Think of the majority of people in the audience who are listening to you, who are giving their time to you.

-You may be singing from memory and having sudden doubts about some lyrics. Another typical thing that happens at the worst moment. Well, firstly trust yourself and your brain as these lyrics will probably come back to your mind while you sing the song. Being stressed makes you forget things, this is a fact. So, relax, and the lyrics will come back once your stress has gone away. Secondly, remind yourself that the majority of the audience members probably don't know the lyrics or don't care if you are singing the right lyrics all the way through. What matters is singing the song through, even if you have to sing one line on 'lalala' or if you have to repeat the lyrics you have already sung.

6/ Balance technique and expression

We should avoid three natural tendencies while performing on stage, being overwhelmed by emotions being too much in control and being on 'automatic pilot':

-Firstly, being overwhelmed by emotions.

You like music and we all like music probably because it is a way of sharing emotions. It is fine of course, to be moved while singing, this is even required. But don't be too moved, otherwise you may be quickly overwhelmed by emotions and this would affect too much your voice and your performance.

-Secondly, being too much in control.

This is very common to all of us especially with songs which have 'technical' challenges. By doing that, we may deliver a better 'technical' performance. But we actually do not satisfy neither our audience nor ourselves. Because audiences don't care about perfection, they want to be moved. And because we need to be enjoying ourselves too!

Many musicians say that they put themselves into a 'bubble' while performing. This is quite a helpful idea as long as this bubble doesn't exclude you completely from your audience. A bubble has to stay soft and transparent and should not become a wall.

Thirdly, being on automatic pilot.

Also very common. You may feel that you have prepared your song so well and sung it so many times, that you can just leave it happen by just letting your voice sing it one more time. You can see yourself performing. In a way you are a spectator of your own singing. Again, in that case you may be delivering a technically near-perfect performance. But both your audience and yourself end up frustrated. Again, what misses is your emotional engagement. Without it, you cannot expect the audience to be moved, this is logical.

To conclude, I would recommend that you should focus on the message of your song. You are just the medium between the person who wrote the song and the audience. Ultimately you want the audience to be more moved by the song than by you. So, avoid being obsessed with technique and perfection. If you believe in the message of the song, then you'll be moved yourself and willing to share it to your audience. This is a real constant balance between sharing emotions while keeping control of your singing.

I hope this all helped...

Have a nice break everybody!