

APPROACH TO SOLO SINGING

Some points to consider:-

- 1) Emotional style and physical application. Decide what the song means to you and how you are going to approach it. What it may signify to the listener and what kind of impact you want it to have. Many songs are actually a kind of narrative so imagine yourself as the storyteller and make it as believable as possible. Use your face and eyes as well as your voice to capture the attention of your audience.

- 2) For traditional solos the application of a Classical approach or a lighter purer sound.

- 3) The correct use of the “belt voice” often used in “West-end” type shows songs or use of supported head voice. In both cases the proper support should be used along with much breath support to avoid any stress to your vocal chords. I don't recommend you try this without proper coaching, this can take months to perfect!

- 4) How much vibrato to use (if any) and where? (i.e. which notes)

- 5) With Gospel singing, a wider approach may be used to create a different timbre in the voice. For example the vowel shapes can be widened to create a more open sound. In the word “my” the middle part of the diphthong (a union of two vowel sounds) can be lengthened, the “Ah” sound and the last part of the diphthong shortened, the “ee” sound. Gospel actually uses a Classical application, mixed with an R & B approach emphasising a “wider smile” feel. This opens up your upper resonators (natural amplification or echo chambers) found in your facial muscles and bone structure (cheekbones), above the mouth and behind the nose area. Place your syllables as highly as possible, using your cheekbone muscles.

- 6) For Pop and Gospel the notes are often approached from underneath (bending) in contrast to Classical or traditional singing where the notes would land right on top of the note. Also, the use of back timing (lengthen notes across the beat) is frequently applied (even if not written).
- 7) For “Pop” songs this is similar to Gospel, but much lighter in style, producing a more “boyish” (or “girlish”) lighter sound.
- 8) Physical application: Choose the right application or style (i.e.: Classical, Gospel, Pop etc). Regardless of style, good breath control, along with diaphragm support are essential and your whole body should be energised at all times
- 9) Vocal chambers or resonators- High (forehead & nasal), mid (mouth & throat) and lower registers (chest).
- 10) Track 17 on the ISS CD release “A greater Wonder” is the Gospel solo “ My child is comin’ home”. When listening to the track, see if you can pick out where extra support is used using the abdominal muscles or diaphragm, the use of vibrato for effect plus the occasional use of the belt voice technique. Also, where I use head voice, supported head voice, chest voice to create different textures in the voice. Listen out for the bending of notes and where I lengthen the middle part of the diphthong to create the wider sound needed for Gospel singing. There are many aspects to performing a song; it’s not enough just to have a good voice. If you don’t communicate, it won’t work! When selecting a solo you should always consider if it will suit your particular voice, don’t just choose it because you like it, it may be totally wrong for you. “It’s all about choosing the right song for the right voice”. You don’t even need the best voice; you can always improve what you have by proper coaching, and regular exercise, just as if you were an athlete.

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