



SCHMIDT VOCAL ARTS PRESENTS

SECRETS TO SUCCESSFUL AUDITIONS

Adjudicator Insights
and Performance Tips

Schmidt
VOCAL ARTS
INSPIRING FUTURE
GENERATIONS OF SINGERS

Competition is an key component of performance art.

From dancer to actor, musician to vocalist, mime to juggler, all performance artists audition. If you are serious in pursuing your career, you'll need to make the most of every competition.



That's why we've put together this simple guide.

The William E. Schmidt Foundation was founded with the mission of encouraging young vocal artists. Today the foundation sponsors sixteen vocal competitions, a summer institute for talented high school singers, opera outreach programs, needbased college scholarships, and educational master classes throughout the United States.

Our winners have gone on to gain entrance into the finest music programs in the world and include winners of the Metropolitan Opera National Council, the George London Competition, the National Association of Teachers of Singing Artist Competition, and the Classical Singer Competition.

In short, we know competition. And we take seriously our roles as judges, coaches, accompanists and mentors.

All performers share the same concerns.

Many young performers (and their coaches) ask us for pointers... "What should I wear... How can I communicate with the pianist... How much gesturing is too much?" And of course, "What will the judges be looking for?"

So, we asked our adjudicators and accompanists those same questions. These are their "tips" for making the most of your opportunity, with us or in any competition.

This informal guide is a living document. When our staff or volunteers suggest additions, we update the guide. Books have been written about performing — this is not intended to replace your own research, or your coach's guidance. But it does offer a peek into the minds of our competition adjudicators. And that could be just the advantage you need to win.

But win or lose, we encourage you to approach every competition as a learning experience. We are here to help you along your journey. And we see ourselves as more than adjudicators, accompanists and support staff; we are here to help you develop into the best performer you can be.



Tips from Our Adjudicators

- **SPEAKING:** Speak slowly and clearly when introducing yourself and the piece you are singing.
- **BE POLITE:** Remember that your accompanist can be your greatest ally. Always be polite to the pianist and take time to speak before the audition about tempi and dynamics.
- *Professional accompanists can sight-read music, but they can't read minds.*
- **PLAN AHEAD:** Plan your interview answers. Memorize your key talking points. Even if different questions are asked, the material you planned and prepared will be helpful for your composure, clarity and conciseness
- **CHOOSE WISELY:** An appropriate audition piece is one that you feel connected to and one that best represents your abilities. Consider range, tessitura and language.
- *Choosing your audition repertoire is 50% of your success.*
- **PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT:** Practice introducing yourself and your audition pieces. If your speaking voice is pleasant and resonant, your first impression will be stronger. Pay attention to the acoustics of the room when you speak, and be prepared to slow your verbal pace.
- **PRONUNCIATION:** Make sure you can clearly and correctly say the title and composer of all your songs.
- **APPEARANCE:** Remember this: We are here to observe your voice and your presentation, not to be distracted by your clothes.
- **GLASSES:** If you wear eyeglasses, please remove them before you perform.
- **MOVEMENT:** Avoid rocking back and forth as you sing. It distracts from your facial expressions.
- **YOUR STORY:** *Whatever the story of your song or aria is, try to personalize it.*
- **DO YOUR RESEARCH:** If you are singing a piece that is not yet in the public domain, check with the University to see if they require an original copy. (You should own one in any case.)
- **HONESTY:** An honest performance is essential focusing on expressing the text.
- **PASSION:** *Demonstrate that you love to sing!*

“Notes” from the Pianists



1. *Stage presence is indispensable to your performance and contributes greatly to the overall performance score, but a lot of it is mechanical and easy to accomplish. Here are some important stage presence pointers:*

- People begin judging you as soon as you walk in the room, so keep your head up high and make good eye contact with the judges or with your audience in a pleasant-yet-not- totally-engaging smile. Save the big charisma for your performance.
- If you are handing the pianist music and telling him/her/them tempi, try to do so without turning your back to the audience.
- Tell the pianist how you intend to start the piece of music, without nodding at them to start.
- At the end of an audition, break out of character and show your unique, smiley personality with a warm “thank you” to the judges and the pianist.

2. *The way you prepare music for your accompanist can make or break your performance! Pay attention to these items:*

- Do remember that you should own original scores, but sometimes it is easier for the pianist to play from a clean copy.
- Your score must be double sided. If you don’t have the ability to print duplex pages, then tape two single-sided pages together, by applying tape along the outer edge of the page (the edge you would use to turn the page).
- Three-hole punch the music and put it into a 3-ring binder.
- Put an extra pencil in the 3-ring binder/folder for the pianist to use.
- Mark all breaths that are in the middle of a vocal phrase. If there’s a rest in your vocal line, the pianist will know that you breathe at that point, but please mark in any breaths that do not coincide with a rest.
- Use forward and backward arrows to indicate places where you want the pianist to push the tempo or slow the tempo down. Feel free to circle important dynamics and tempo alteration markings in the score.

“Notes” from the Pianists *(continued)*

- Please don't use sheet protectors. They create glare under the lights, make it difficult for your accompanist to make notes, and can even obscure the notes on the score.
- Make sure all the notes in your score are clearly visible. And avoid any extraneous notation that may be intended as reminders for yourself, when you practice, but are not necessary for the accompanist.
- Mark in breaths in both voice and piano parts. If possible, talk with me ahead of time, just so I know what you are going to do.
- Pick songs with lengths that are appropriate for your audition slot. Time your music when you practice and match your practice tempi when you perform.



“ *This is a great program for high school singers to learn the discipline needed to become young professionals.*”

MARILYN MIMS
Soprano/Voice Teacher

“ *Participating in the Schmidt Vocal Competition has been one of the biggest highlights of my vocal experiences.*”

SOPHIA BAETE

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From the perspective of the panel

Singer Name: _____

FIRST IMPRESSIONS	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
Entered the stage with poise and confidence			
Smiled at the audience/panel upon entering			
Moved with purpose to the center of the stage			
Announced name and piece slowly and clearly			
Took a transitional beat before beginning			
Connected with the pianist			

THE PERFORMANCE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
Took a low, expansive singer's breath			
Completed correct notes and rhythms			
Performed with impeccable diction			
Was clearly connected to the text of the piece			
Stayed emotionally engaged through interludes			
Displayed facial expression			
The eyes demonstrated clear focus			
Made strong choices dramatically			
Repertoire was well-rehearsed and stylistically correct			

College Audition Checklist

- Study the college website.
- Note audition requirements (number of pieces, language/style requirements).
- Practice for your interview (i.e., What are your goals? Why did you choose to audition at our school?)
- Pick pieces that show you off vocally and dramatically. Pieces should fit your vocal ability. (More difficult is not necessarily better!)
- Work diligently to perfect your pieces -- correct pitches, rhythms, and diction are a must. Choose an appropriate audition outfit.
- Prepare your music for the pianist.
- Review sight-singing and ear-training exercises.
- Choose recommenders carefully.
- Keep working hard academically!
- Complete application by deadline.
- If pre-screening is necessary, be sure to have quality recordings (audio and video). Schedule a "mock audition" with your teacher, parents, siblings, and friends.

Post-Audition Checklist

- Send thank you notes/emails.
- Express an interest with a follow-up visit/shadow day.
- Arrange sample lessons with private instructors.
- Inquire about additional scholarship opportunities through local organizations.

