

Musical Theatre notes for break out session

The entrance:

For auditions

For concert/recitals

Air

Definition: music not sung within the body of the song (unlike acting, where the actor chooses to have pauses)

Focus

High, low, center, right, left.

Spotting center always gives importance. Good times to spot center:

The first line of the verse, the last line of the verse, the first line of the chorus, the first line of the bridge, the last line of the chorus.

Change focus at the tale end or just after the beginning of a phrase—don't wait to change focus until the last word is dead on your lips.

Don't change focus in the middle of a sentence. Finish what you went there to say and then relate to a new spot.

Keep your "V"

Try to make as many focus changes as the song permits.

Phrasing

There are basically two types of phrasing—phrasing from the lyric and phrasing from the music.

Phrasing from the lyric.

What words mean is given clarity only when the speaker comprehends them, and this comprehension is communicated to the audience through strong phrasing. To do this, first write the lyric down in your own handwriting, separate from the music.

Warning: it's not poetry and when separated from the music, the lyrics may seem trivial. Try several ways of arranging the phrasing until you come up with a structure that communicates your understanding of the song.

Phrasing from the music.

Songs are sung scripts. Phrasing from lyric introduces the actor-singer to the subject by allowing them, in the beginning, to live in a country in which they are still at home: words. But words that you sing are expressed in a far more emotional and universal language—music—a language that has its own rules and its own figures of sung speech.

When phrasing from the music, the choices don't have to be made based on grammar but will stem from what the singer "hears". Listen to people who have a great sense of musicality in how they phrase (Frank Sinatra, Mel Tormé, Cleo Laine, Peggy Lee just to name a few). They are musical vocalists whose voices—along with their understanding of the words—are put to the service of the songs they are singing.

Here's a couple of the possibilities that phrasing from music offers you:

Enharmonic changes (modulation permits a song to leave the home key in which it is scored). It's generally a bad call to breathe as the change is going on if it is part of the vocal line.

Over-the-bar. This is when the singer chooses not to breathe until the lyric phrase has passed "over-the-bar" line, whether or not the sense of the text is served.