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Since 1922, the year of its founding, the American Academy of Teachers of Singing has been actively writing and disseminating papers on all subjects pertaining to the teaching of singing. Inevitable changes in the profession itself and in musical life in general have since demanded that the Statements from the Academy be brought up to date. This Statement, changed to its present form in 1998, was originally prepared in 1959.

AUDITIONS FOR THE SINGER

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing presents the following recommendations on the subject of Auditions in the belief that they may be of service to singers, teachers of singing and sponsors of auditions alike.

Competitive auditions have become the established procedure in choosing singers for engagements in the various fields of professional singing--opera, oratorio, recital, concert, church, stage, radio, and television. Teachers are responsible for choosing suitable audition material, preparing the singer for performance, and advising singers as to their competence for various types of auditions. Sponsors and judges, whose objective is to select the best qualified singer, are responsible for providing a suitable environment and conducting the auditions in such a manner that this aim may be fully realized.

The following material, therefore, is classified for singers, teachers, and sponsors. It should be noted that many of the recommendations addressed to singers will be equally useful to teachers.

FOREWORD

Because being heard is the essence of a singer's life, singers study for the purpose of preparing themselves to do their best when facing an audience, whether the aim of their singing is professional or avocational.

Although singers often regard auditions simply as ordeals, auditions also include an opportunity--the privilege of being heard. For this reason an audition is an experience that can have a maturing value for the young singer. This experience should not be undertaken until a singer is ready, but it should not be avoided when preparatory training has brought that singer to a sufficiently advanced stage. Auditions serve as introductions to competition, an unavoidable part of professional singing.

There are many types of auditions: Some are for a definite engagement, as in church, oratorio, opera, musical shows, television, etc.; others are inspired by altruism, affording help to worthy singers by providing publicity or opportunity for public performance; some offer funds for further study or for help in furthering a career; some exist for the sole purpose of criticism and suggestion.

An audition for a definite engagement is a procedure with an established set-up already planned by

commercial or other interests needing performers. Such auditions are of great importance to the singer, since those selected are given employment in their chosen profession. There is no thought of helping the singer, only of selecting the one best equipped for the employer's immediate needs. For this reason such auditions may often be conducted with little consideration for the applicant-singers. They may be called on to show their abilities under unfavorable conditions, almost always in a strongly competitive atmosphere. They may be allowed to sing only one song in church auditions, one aria in opera auditions, or only sixteen measures of a song (sometimes only eight) as in a first audition for music theater. (Often at these first auditions applicants are simply lined up on the stage and only those of the right type—height, coloring, etc.—are allowed to sing anything.) The singer must therefore be prepared to meet these varying situations and to perform under the conditions that exist.

In a competition an organization, a group, or an individual plans to assist singers by establishing an award: a public performance, a sum of money, or both, or some prize that will afford genuine assistance to the winner. In the best of this type of audition, the winner is given a well-planned and publicized public performance; an attempt is often made to give managerial assistance; a continuing effort may be made to launch the singer on a career. In others, the award may be of lesser value, but yet of real help to the singer. In some, the sponsor may depend on the singers' enrollment fees to defray the expense of the audition or even to provide at least a portion of the award. In some of the latter, the award offered may hardly justify the very considerable expense incurred by the singer in preparing the audition material required by the sponsor. In all classes of auditions, however, all the recommendations given herein apply. The singer must be completely prepared for the audition and must present himself to the best advantage. The degree of altruism intended by each audition varies with the sponsorship, as does the conduct of the audition itself.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SINGERS

APPLY FOR AN AUDITION ONLY WHEN READY

Generally speaking, no singers should either apply for or make auditions unless their own mature consideration and that of their teachers indicate that they are ready. Being ready means being adequately advanced vocally, musically, interpretatively, and artistically.

Singers should not allow themselves to be influenced by parents, friends or others who may encourage them to enter an audition before being fully prepared. Being heard too soon may be dangerous because many organizations keep records of their auditions. A poor rating and an unfavorable impression may jeopardize subsequent chances. On the other hand, singers who are prepared should not avoid auditions, because they will profit from the many values presented by such a test of their ability.

PREPARE THOROUGHLY FOR EVERY AUDITION

After deciding to enter an audition, singers should carefully study the demands in the special field to which the audition leads and prepare thoroughly in order to satisfy these demands in every detail.

If application forms must be submitted, it is important to see that they are completed exactly as requested by the sponsor of the audition.

The material selected for performance should be suitable to the type of audition. Songs or arias should be thoroughly familiar to the singer and should have been sung previously, preferably in public. The material chosen should be well within the singer's present abilities, and show the singer's strengths.

Whether one song or a full recital program is being offered, **ALL MATERIAL MUST BE MEMORIZED.**

It is of utmost importance to have the assistance of an excellent accompanist, and to have sufficient rehearsal.

IMPORTANT ESSENTIALS TO BE OBSERVED BY SINGERS AT AUDITIONS

Keep in mind that singers are seen before being heard. Singers should therefore present a good appearance from the moment the audition begins until it finishes, i.e., good posture, poise, an alert, attentive, and unself-conscious manner.

Singers should dress appropriately for the type of audition being made. They should be prompt, but not upset by a lack of promptness on the part of the judges, or by any other annoyances that may occur. It is well to be on hand about ten or fifteen minutes early.

Because singers are generally allowed to choose the first song or aria, this choice should have been made in advance. It should be adhered to unless there are very compelling reasons for a last minute change. An agent or manager could interfere or override the choice of material decided on by teacher and singer, and the singer must be prepared for this.

Singers should avoid making apologies for physical or vocal condition, for lack of rehearsal with the accompanist, or for any other reason, because judges are not sympathetic to excuses. If singers are unable to do themselves justice for any reason, they should state the fact, not sing, and ask for another appointment if that can be arranged.

Judges may sometimes be prejudiced or uninformed, but singers should keep in mind that future audiences, too, may not always be intelligent, receptive, or fair.

After the audition, singers should not worry about the result. It is well to discuss the performance with the teacher in order to extract benefit from the audition, but otherwise, time is better spent in preparing for the next audition.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO TEACHERS

APPLYING FOR AN AUDITION

It is the responsibility of the teacher to be acquainted with the requirements in all the various fields of singing so that he can advise the student wisely on all details pertaining to them. These include the decision to apply for an audition, the preparation for the audition, and the student's conduct during the audition.

The teacher should not send a student for an audition unless and until the latter is prepared to make a satisfactory showing. It is detrimental to the student's morale to face such a test inadequately prepared, and it also reflects on the teacher. Teachers should have in mind that they often tend to overestimate their student's capability and maturity.

PREPARING FOR AN AUDITION

The teacher should assist the student in selecting the kind of material best suited to the latter's abilities as well as to the type of audition for which he is preparing. The material chosen should be that best fitted to the singer's talents. Naturally the choice will vary greatly depending on the type of audition--opera, recital, church, oratorio, television, etc., each of which requires different repertoire, style, and individual talent.

The material for every audition should be specially prepared by the teacher. Nothing should be left to chance. Regardless of how many times the student has sung the audition numbers, he should re-study the works to be performed even when they are simple song material.

The teacher should instruct the student in all matters concerning the audition, including such factors as proper attire, deportment, stage manners, song presentation, gestures and all details that contribute to a successful audition.

The teacher should make certain that all material to be sung, whether one song or a full recital program, is *memorized*.

The teacher can be most helpful in establishing a proper attitude toward the audition in the mind of the student. It should be clearly realized that even well-equipped and gifted singers may make many auditions before they secure an engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SPONSORS

DUTY OF THE SPONSOR

The term *sponsor* is intended to cover, in all the various fields of singing, those individuals, producers, groups, associations, foundations, etc., offering opportunities to singers through the medium of competitive auditions.

Sponsors should make in advance a general and over-all plan for the audition that will cover adequately all the details of the competition: (1) publicizing it so that the specific opportunity offered may be clearly known to the singers who are qualified to meet the desired standards; (2) providing a suitable environment for the audition; and (3) making sure that the conduct of the audition is such that the singers may be encouraged to do their best and so that the best equipped singer may be fairly chosen.

An award offered should be a genuine effort to promote the welfare of a deserving singer, not just a medium of favorable publicity for the sponsor. Sponsors should not depend on the entrance fees from the singers to finance the cost of the awards, or as a source of possible profit to themselves. The registration fee required from the singer (if any) should be as small as possible.

The work of the teacher in preparing the singer for a successful audition should be respected and his interests protected. The sponsor has the duty of ensuring that there is nothing in the terms of an award, directly or indirectly, that will induce or compel an audition winner to study with another teacher.

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing believes that the preparation of more than one recital program should not be required.

The sponsor has the duty to make certain that all conditions of furthering a good reception for the singer and for the relationship of singer and judges are favorable. These include a normal room as to acoustics, size, and temperature; a well-tuned and adequate piano; a competent accompanist; and an able and qualified panel of judges.

It should be emphasized that the matter of competent judging is the point at which a competitive audition succeeds or fails. The judges must be carefully chosen as to experience, ability, background, and sympathetic understanding. If possible, the same panel of judges should hear both the preliminary and final auditions, hear all the singers, grade them throughout the various stages of elimination, and should continue until the trials are finished and the winners chosen.

The judges must have integrity and impartiality, and no judge should be allowed to serve whenever a pupil of his is entered in the audition, or where impartiality cannot be completely maintained.

The sponsor and the judges should always bear in mind that they are dealing with human beings, not merely numbers on an audition schedule.

CONDUCT OF THE AUDITION

Sponsors of auditions should see to it that everything possible is done to put the singers at ease. There should be an air of complete interest and absorption on the part of the judges at all times. Singers should be treated with respect, kindness, and understanding. Impatience and irritability on the part of the judges are unpardonable.

Ample time should be allowed for each singer auditioning. Judges should keep an open mind as to the singer's ability until the singer has completed his/her audition.

The singer should be permitted to choose his/her first number and be allowed to finish it unless the time factor is so stringent as to necessitate a curtailment.

The pre-arranged schedule of the order of appearance of the singers should be adhered to, although circumstances occasionally do arise where it is only fair to be less rigid.

A well-planned system of rating the singers should be agreed on by the judges prior to the audition.

Whenever possible, an analytical report--either written or verbal--should be made available to the singer by the judges.