

Interpretation and the Expression Category for Quartets

Writing an Emotional Plan & the Use of Word Sheets

In order to reach an emotional performance, start with an emotional plan, then develop dynamics and timing and choreography that support the emotional message.

Use emotionally labile words – specific and intense. “Sad/Happy” are out, “Anguished/Amused” are in.

Identify your audience in the plan. A visual plan can be as simple as using 3 main targets and making sure all singers are looking in the same direction.

- Microphone - an intimate or secretive feel, brings the audience inwards
- Seat 10C - direct eye contact / frank or determined
- Balcony - tell the world / addressing the whole room, not an individual. Can also be done for effect to left or right.

Focus with full body not eyes alone. Eyes that dart about the room make the audience nervous or uncomfortable.

Include your breathing in the plan. You don't get points for running out of breath, but you do get them for an interpretive plan that fits your abilities. And remember – you change emotion on the breath not after it.

What kind of breath will you use?

- Delay breath
- Tempo breath (when singing in tempo)
- Fast breath (breathe-sing, often used in ad lib sections)
- Slow breath (for effect in ballads)

Tips for Interpreting Songs

Uptunes

Usually structured: Intro – chorus – tag
Verse – chorus – tag
Intro – chorus – verse – chorus – tag

What tempo is the song? Swing, downbeat, backbeat? Does it have a stomp section?

Intro and tag are usually ad lib. Sometimes an “interlude” or internal verse can be done ad lib with a return to tempo afterwards. Make sure each ad lib section really sets up the tempo starts.

Where a song is repetitive, use dynamic or rhythmic variation to avoid repetition and keep the energy flowing.

Ballads

Usually structured: Intro/Verse – “Hook”/Chorus – Climax – Tag

Emphasise lyric and melodic structure of the song as you decide your phrasing. Dynamics should be appropriate to the emotional message, should enhance the impact of that message and should be effectively performed by the quartet. The greater the range of dynamics exhibited, the more scope the judge has in rewarding that skill, just remember to make it appropriate.