

TEN TIPS FOR SINGERS

Darby Dizard

TIP ONE: KNOW THYSELF

There are many steps to becoming a confident and successful singer. Singing can be a hobby or a serious profession. Determining your singing path requires a reality check. What is your experience as a singer? Are you the star in the school musical? Are you a member of the choir? Are you the first to jump up at the karaoke bar or are you a shower singer?

TIP TWO: AN HONEST ASSESSMENT OF YOUR SINGING SKILLS IS A GOOD PLACE TO BEGIN

Can you match pitch? To determine how to match pitch go to a piano, keyboard or a pitch pipe. Play a tone. Can you match the tone? Try a different tone. Listen and match. Singing without an instrument is a great way to work on songs. Being in tune with other singers in a group is a great way to hone your pitch skills. If you are having trouble with pitch issues such as going Sharp (higher) or Flat (lower) work on matching pitch is a good way to expand your singing skills.

TIP THREE: WHAT ARE YOUR MUSICAL SKILL SETS?

Do you play an instrument? Do you read music? Even if you don't play an instrument or read music you can still sing. However, you will be on a better path if you learn to read music and to learn basic keyboard skills. Singing is very different from playing an instrument. In singing, your voice is your instrument. Singers have to pay attention to their bodies. Good health and endurance is a key part of good singing.

TIP FOUR: SINGERS ARE JUDGED BY HOW THEY SOUND

In order for you to perfect your sound a good quality tape recorder is essential. When you sing record yourself. Listen to what you are singing. What do you like? What would you change? It can take a little time getting used to hearing

the sound of your voice. I promise you will improve rapidly if you have to courage to listen to your self.

TIP FIVE: WHAT KIND OF MUSIC DO YOU WANT TO SING?

Who are your favorite singers? Begin by singing songs you love. Listen to your favorite singers to see what it is that makes you want to sing like them. I highly recommend that you dispense with gender issues. I listen to men and I think the contrast of a male phrasing is great for female singers and vice versa. If you are just beginning to sing, find material you feel comfortable with. Singing simple songs will boost your confidence.

TIP SIX: IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU WANT TO BECOME A SOLO SINGER A GOOD TEACHER IS HELPFUL

Your teacher will be trained to listen to your sounds and he/she will help you to develop a solid and reliable technique of vocal production. There are many styles of singing and many teachers specialize in certain styles of music. If you want to be a rock singer, look for a teacher who teaches rock technique. If you want to sing Gospel listen to gospel singers. Try out for a Gospel choir. If your musical director doesn't teach, she/he will know someone who will teach Gospel music. A good source of teachers can be found at www.NATS.org or local music Schools and conservatories. However, if you want to do Pop music don't waste your time on working with a teacher who is teaching a classical technique. Yes, a basic classical technique won't hurt you, but if you want to sing country music, a classical technique with a big vibrato will not be appropriate. Try several teachers out before you commit. Some people stay with the same teachers for years. I don't recommend that. It is useful to have many points of view and input from teaching professionals who are trained to listen and help you evaluate your sound.

TIP SEVEN: WHAT DO SINGING TEACHERS DO?

Singing teacher listen and instruct. You will be given vocal exercises to begin the lesson. These vocalizes are like stretching before you are going to run around the track. In singing we warm up and cool down. We have many small involuntary muscles that we need to strengthen to be able to sing our best. Faithfully working on vocalizes will improve your ability to sing what ever you

want. It is really helpful if your singing teacher is a skilled pianist and knows the repertoire that you are interested in exploring.

TIP EIGHT: HOW TO PRACTICE AT HOME

Begin with your vocalizes. A good warm up should be about twenty minutes. If you have chosen a singing teacher who can play the piano well, ask your teacher to play the music without you singing. This way you will have a recording to practice with. If you can't read music, the recording of the music will save your life. Even if you do read music, having an instrumental recording is a great way to practice. Mind you, live performance is always Live and things are rarely the same. Don't become wedded to that one recording.

TIP NINE: LEARNING A NEW SONG

Learn the tune without the words. Write down the words and learn the words in the rhythm of the song. Once you have the words in rhythm, begin to hum the melody in rhythm. When you have accomplished that, begin to learn to sing the song. Start With a neutral vowel such as Ah or EE.(The EE will keep the chords together , but beware of using the EE above the C above middle C.) Begin by singing the melody on a vowel only. When singing on a vowel you can find the places where you will breathe. Usually the commas in the music will indicate a breath. When you know where you will breathe and know the melody and the rhythm, all you have to do is put it all together and sing!

TIP TEN: LISTEN TO EVERYTHING

Listen to yourself, Listen to your favorite artists. Listen to music that you don't like. Find out where there are live clubs so that you can begin to get an image of yourself on that stage. Take a notebook and write down what you liked about an act. Note also, what you didn't like. Go on line and find singers blogs. Get connected with musicians. Most importantly SING, Sing, SING!

ABOUT DARBY DIZARD

Darby Dizard is a musician, writer and creativity coach. Darby Dizard's lyrics and music straddle the jazz, pop, theater, and classical worlds. She wrote words for Israel, John Carisi's classic made famous by Miles Davis. She has performed at venues ranging from Carnegie Hall to La Fenice, and Saint

Patrick's Cathedral to CBGB's. Ms Dizard is known to be a leading interpreter of the vocal works of Duke Ellington. In 2007 at a performance of Such Sweet Thunder by the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra at the Kennedy Center, she wrote and sang lyrics for two movements. In a concert for Duke Ellington's 100th birthday at Cleveland's Severance Hall she performed the operatic role in A Drum is a Woman and the blues singer in My People. She has recently finished her latest Jazz CD, Down For You, which has received great critical acclaim. Darby also has Silent Night, a CD of Classical Christmas music, in her catalogue. She has been an Adjunct Professor of music at City College of New York, received a Meet the Composer Grant from New York State Council on the Arts, and is a five time winner of the ASCAP's Writer's Award.

