

## Adult Cabaret- Fall Session- Class I, Wednesday, September 17<sup>th</sup> 2025

**Cabaret:** is a form of theatrical entertainment featuring music, song, dance, recitation, or drama. It is mainly distinguished by the performance venue, which might be a pub, a restaurant, or a nightclub with a stage for performances.

### **Quotes about acting through song**

*\*\*from Acting in Musical Theatre: A Comprehensive Course by Joe Deer and Rocco Dal Veral, Second Edition\*\**

**Probably the most important single issue at this stage of the actor (performer's) journey is learning to reconcile the disparity between what something feels like inside and what others receive outside. To help us reconcile this difference, we need to get quality feedback from our colleagues as well as from our directors and teachers. Then we need to learn how to use those responses effectively."**

We want to believe that our songs don't simply materialize. They exist as a means to heighten a scene of spoken dialog. When performing a song out of a particular context, and to fully comprehend the given circumstances when playing the song in context, **it is helpful to our creative process to imagine the scene that has just taken place prior to the beginning of the song. Some dramatic event has just happened to trigger this internal response... and this event must be significant enough that spoken dialog alone would not suffice.**

**"What we really crave, both as actors and as audience members, is a combination of improvisational spontaneity with the clarity of having accumulated a series of good choices in rehearsal."**

**"You may periodically feel a conflict between your desire to express a moment truthfully and your requirement to share that moment with the audience. There is no need to choose one or the other. In fact, you can't successfully meet the demands of any good text unless you can do both simultaneously. In many cases, the energy required to express your truth to the audience will amplify that truth in ways that make the moment more powerful for you and them.**

**"Actors tend to turn inward at the first mention of characterization. They can get caught up in worrying how they will behavior or how they will be seen or understood by the audience. That way of looking at the issue has a built-in problem: if you set out to show something it will look shallow and artificial. You'll also be focusing on yourself and not as available to listen and respond to the other characters onstage. Instead, a focus on relationships will get you out of a concentration on yourself and make you interactively present onstage. Get out of yourself and into the other person. **You can't focus on yourself when you're intent on changing someone else."****

### **Disclaimer:**

*Some of our activities will work right away; others will take several tries. Some will work for some students and not for others. The main requirement is that we all must engage in these activities wholeheartedly and without reservation. Half-measures will do nothing, and **our goal is to give you a lot of tools to use in your future performances!***

## What makes a great and authentic performance?

Okay- so we have all watched great performances... but what makes them great? We tend to think it is only someone's natural talent, or ability. The truth is, just like any skill, performing well and confidently, while simultaneously moving your audience, comes from hard (and fun 😊) work and planning:

- a. **Dissecting the song and lyrics** into ideas you want to communicate with your audience and using the tactics of the fundamental elements of acting and storytelling. (introduced today!)
- b. **Attempting many thoughtful choices in rehearsal** and gaining feedback from others.
- c. **Practicing your acting choices** so you have the flexibility to confidently improvise during a performance.
  - i. Practice makes permanent! (not perfect!) No professional or amateur performer ever gave a moving performance "winging it".
- d. **Focusing on communicating** your chosen acting intentions, rather than the perfection of your performance! 😊

### Two different Perspectives on Acting Through Song:

1. Finding the intentions of your performance through emotional and psychological means. This is called working from the *inside out* as you start with a story/experience internally and then create your performance.
2. Starting with the known external physical and vocal choices of the character/composer/artist and working from the *outside in*.

### **Taking Feedback Guidelines:**

1. The Audience is never wrong
2. Take the note and be grateful for it and gracious about it.
3. Yes! And? (Once you've learned to release yourself from the insecurity of getting notes in public, you can begin to answer each note with this!)
4. Don't defend or explain your performance. (The only communication that matters is what happens in your performance)
5. Your audience is your mirror- don't cloud it by telling us too much! (Ex. Explaining before)

### **Giving Feedback:**

1. Say what you saw and felt, **not what you wished or expected to see and feel.**
2. Clear notes that reflect what you experienced are most useful. (When you did that I felt... I understood, or I saw)

### **Asking for Feedback:**

1. Don't be general. Ask specific questions. "So, what did you think?"- is too general. Try asking questions like "Who did you think I was singing to?" "What do you think my objective was?"

### **How we will give Feedback:**

1. We will always answer the question: What did you notice that was meaningful, evocative, interesting, exciting, and/or striking in the work you just witnessed?

**Our room is a Safe Space!** – performers can experience their most private and revealing moments in public. Singers are brave emotional warriors! Please do not share any personal information from our class with outsiders.

## **Fundamental Elements of the Acting Process we will focus on Today:**

### ***The Magic If...***

Konstantin Stanislavski's "Magic If" describes *an ability to imagine oneself in a set of fictional circumstances and to envision the consequences of finding oneself facing that situation in terms of action*

**Given Circumstances:** The context you live in; all the facts of your life, personal history, relationships, social and physical environment. (*Where is your song taking place in your mind?*)

**Relationship:** Who you are in association to everyone and everything around you and why they matter to you. (*Who you are singing too.*)

**Objective:** What your character wants.

#### **1. Given Circumstances:**

- a. *Who are you and where is your song taking place? Is it in the past, is it in the present, are you in a specific place, or are you in this very room?*
  - i. *The more specific you are with creating the circumstances of your performance the more it will connect with the audience.*

**\*Exercise:** Take an "I Want" song and pick a "given circumstance" and perform the piece in front of the class.

#### **2. Relationship**

- a. *Identifying who or what you are singing to in your performances.*

\*\*\*A focus on relationships will get you out of a concentration on yourself and make you interactively present onstage. Get out of yourself and into the other person. You can't focus on yourself when your intent of changing someone else \*\*

When we are singing a solo, we do not have a physical partner.

**There are four ways we can approach a performance with no partner.** (*Watch examples on Smart Board- and sing "I Want" song*)

#### **1. Inner Directed songs-**

- a. We place another self in front of us and that is the "Me" that needs to change.
  - i. Ex. Soliloquy from Carousel
  - ii. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3cmZxPfk6o>

#### **2. Absent Partner Directed Songs**

- a. The conversation we wish we could have but lack the courage or the opportunity. You might be addressing a person you care about... etc.
  - i. Ex. "Just you Wait" from My Fair Lady
  - ii. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3Mr\\_oQLwS4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3Mr_oQLwS4)

#### **3. Conversations with Higher Power**

- a. Or any deity or supernatural force the character believes in.
  - i. Ex. "Why God" from Miss Saigon
  - ii. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jUq-JBQCRCI>

#### 4. Audience Directed Songs

- a. The song is openly directed to the audience as the partner. This is sometimes called direct address. “What do you think” we are asking?
  - i. Ex. “Greased Lightning” from *Grease* or “Magic to Do” from *Pippin*
  - ii. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fw7SsNNjQGQ>

#### 3. Objective:

- a. What your character (therefore you when performing your song) wants.
  - i. Why you are telling us this story? What do you want to make happen within your song?
    1. Ask yourself:
      - a. What do you want from your other?
      - b. What do you want the other to do, feel, or understand?
      - c. What are you trying to get from the person you are singing too?
  - ii. \*\*This will force you to act!!\*\*

**\*Exercise:** Think of something you want to achieve this week that either involves gaining something for yourself or for another person. Write down the objective using the phrase “I want to.... From (either myself or another person)”

I want to \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_.

*Whenever we pursue an objective, both when we are acting/singing and in real life, we naturally become less self-conscious. Focusing our attention on a goal we want to achieve makes us more present in our circumstances. We respond to what is happening more immediately and spontaneously. Without having to think about it, we engage more of our instrument, and we participate more fully in the activity at hand. We worry less about how we are doing because we are so focused on doing it, and sometimes we do not worry at all.*

#### Without an objective:

The result is what acting teachers call “playing a Mood” which means the performer has chosen “being sad” as his performance goal, rather than finding a more active choice such as “to figure out where things went wrong” This is not to say that we as humans are never sad- we often are. But sadness—or any emotion—is a by-product. Emotions are what happens when performers/characters are thwarted (or succeed) in their pursuit of some other goal.

**\*Exercise:** Learn a new song, “My Favorite Things” and try out some objectives!!

## Okay- Let's get started with choosing your story and song!!!

### \*\*In our class we start with a story so let's think about what storytelling is...

*\*Exercise and notes from: "Long Story Short" by Margot Leitman*

- **Storytelling** is recounting a true experience from your life.
- **Storytelling** is not a rant. (it has a purpose and drops you right into the moment without too much backstory)
- **Storytelling** is not therapy, though of course it can be therapeutic!
- **Storytelling** is not a substitute for a political platform.
- **Storytelling** does not have to be stand-up comedy (although it may get laughs... and be very funny!)

1. **First, think about what people ask you about constantly. What aspect of your life are you asked about the most?** (example- How do you balance work and being a parent?)

2. **Fill in this blank with true statements until you run out...**

*(as you get more specific feel free to jot down any anecdotes that you think of with these statements!)*

a. I AM \_\_\_\_\_

3. **Fill in this blank with true statements until you run out...**

*(think of past jobs you had/things that once scared you... don't get too hung up on it!)*

a. I WAS \_\_\_\_\_

4. **\_Write down a list of 5-10 quirks about yourself...**

*(again, don't overthink- just answer rapid fire and jot down notes of any anecdotes you think of)*

5. **Lastly, fill in this blank with the first things that pop in your head...**

*(don't get hung up on how big this statement is... just write the first things that pop into your head)*

a. \_\_\_\_\_ **IS THE STORY OF MY LIFE**

## Okay- Now that you are brainstorming your personal story let's talk about choosing a song!

### 1. Pick a song that matches the energy of your story and expresses your feelings!!

- Sometimes we are so hung up on the kind of material we think we *should* be choosing that we overlook the very reason we sing in the first place--- we feel the urge to express ourselves through music and text to our listeners with a mission of summoning reciprocal feelings from them in return.
  - But all too often we become too worried with “How does it make *them* feel? Instead of “How does it make *me* feel to sing this song?” (our main goal is to make the audience feel... but if we can't connect to the song first how can they?)

### 2. Choose a good key!

- Listen to the entire song and make sure it fits your range comfortably!
  - A good rule of thumb when selecting songs is to always choose and play *toward* your strengths and *away* from your weaknesses. (Never let them see what you can't do... but this does NOT mean to stop challenging yourself!)

### 3. Pick something you LOVE! If you love it... your audience will!!

- When choosing song material, listen to it carefully and then sing it through. As you do, see if the song connects for you!
- Additionally, be certain that it is a song you can fully grasp as a performer and individual. Would a listener/audience member “buy it” coming from you? A very young singer who has never experienced the shredded nerve-ending longing for the touch of another couldn't credibly deliver Stephen Sondheim's “Losing my Mind.” (This advice is typically for young singers but good to note!)
- Singing your songs should make you feel akin to when you wear a certain dress, suit, or shirt that you know you look attractive in and turns all the eyes in your direction. As you're exploring this, think about how your keys can be changed help to achieve this!
- In summary... does the song generate an honest emotional response as well as that feeling that you will be able to grow to perform your best with it.

For next week:

Pick a personal story to tell the class with the theme ***“Unwrapped.”*** Think back to a moment when something inside you was ready to be revealed whether a hidden dream, a bold decision, or a new path waiting to be discovered. Perhaps you found a strength you didn’t know you had, followed your heart despite expectations, or opened yourself to an adventure that transformed who you are today. You may also utilize the prompts from earlier thinking “\_\_\_” ***is the story of my life.*** Find a piece of music to sing that captures the feeling of your story/and or relates in some way and be ready to sing this for the class.

iii. **Bring a printed copy** of your music for Christopher to play next week OR email him a PDF to: [dasanderz@gmail.com](mailto:dasanderz@gmail.com)

iv. **You can purchase music at:**

1. [www.musicnotes.com](http://www.musicnotes.com)
2. [www.sheetmusicdirect.com](http://www.sheetmusicdirect.com)

\*\*\*Or email me for help! ;)

b. **Challenge yourself** to share something that you haven’t before and pick a song that you have always wanted to sing but have held off on in previous experiences.

c. **Decide...**

- i. Who you are singing to.
- ii. Where you are singing (given circumstances)
- iii. What your objective is in the song. 😊 (Think I want to (do what to)→ whoever you are singing to)