

Seven Tips for Projecting Your Voice from the Stage

By Sharon Abreu, voice teacher and co-creator of "Penguins on Thin Ice"
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- (1) When you're talking or singing a solo, always face downstage (out to the audience). Even if you're singing to another actor who is behind you on the stage, don't turn your back on the audience. It's better to face out directly or stand at an angle, so you're partly facing the audience and partly facing the other actor.
- (2) When you're talking or singing a solo, be down near the foot of the stage, near the audience.
- (3) Have good posture. Stand up straight, but not so straight that you create tension. Imagine you have a string going from the top of your head way up into the sky and you're suspended like a marionette puppet. This way you'll be standing straight but in a relaxed way.
- (4) Focus your attention at the back of the room or auditorium - this will help the sound to carry all the way from the stage to the back of the room. Imagine you're telling whatever you're saying or singing to someone in the back of the room.
- (5) Focus the sound across the mask of your face - across your cheek bones and the bridge of your nose. This helps the sound to radiate forward, rather than letting it go back into your throat. (Hum on an "mmm" sound to see how this feels.)
- (6) Use your breath to cushion the air that the sound rides on. Practice breathing slowly and deeply into your belly. Then use the air, without trying to 'save' it. ('Saving' air is actually holding air - which stops the air from flowing freely and can create tension.)
- (7) Really use all the space in your mouth - it's your 'resonator', like the hollow body of a guitar. The more space in your mouth, the more sound you'll make and the richer. (Don't get stuck listening to the sound in your head - trust these tools and keep your attention focused outward.)

Note: Babies do # 4, 5 and 6 naturally! That's how they make so much sound! They're not so concerned with making the sound 'beautiful', just with getting what they want. And they're pretty good at that!

A Note about Warming Up Your Voice:

It's always a good practice to stretch your body and do some vocal warm-ups before you speak publicly or sing, like a runner warming up before going jogging. Humming is good; also scales (Do re mi fa so la ti do), on syllables or just on a vowel sound. Another good warm-up is pretending you're chewing something soft and chewy, like you have big soft pieces of chewing gum between your upper and lower molars. Chewing like this, slowly and gently, loosens up the jaw muscles. And you can squish your tongue around in your mouth to loosen up the back of the tongue, where tension sometimes accumulates.

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