

## Ten Maxims of Believable Singing Acting

1. **You are the artist AND the art.** Each of us has our own body, voice, desires and personal history. The artistic goal of the acting performer is to make conscious decisions which transform yourself (vocal tone, pacing, physical movement, gestures, etc) which through the rehearsal process become ingrained in your character, the way the music of a pianist becomes ingrained in their hands.
2. **Your characters believe they're real people.** They don't think of themselves as "characters." Most often, they don't know that they are singing, and even if they do, they always have their own internal dialogues running constantly in their heads. Everything a character says and does is motivated by what they want and how they are trying to get it. Everything a character says and does reveals their internal emotional state. The goal is to focus on getting what your character desires, which will reveal, indirectly and naturally, their emotional state.
3. **Your music is your character's expression of their desires, which reveals their emotions.** You cannot portray raw emotion without revealing yourself as the artists instead of the art. The composer has embedded the characters' emotion into the music, but the language is that of desire. Let the music guide you to characters' desires and to the nuances of their responses. Look to it as the primary source of your characters' internal dialogue.
4. **All humans have a common reservoir of needs, expectations and underlying emotions.** Different people may react to the same situation differently, but each of us has the same spectrum of needs – from wanting to be safe to wanting love to being willing to risk injury for those we love – which draws on the same well of emotion – love, anger, fear, joy. Therefore, you have in you the same potential to portray all the desires you need for any role, which will reveal the emotions. By the same token, each member of your audience has the potential to empathize with all of your characters' desires.
5. **If you don't let it show, the audience won't know.** Audiences read actions, not minds; so you must allow your character's thoughts and feelings to be manifested physically. Remember, however, that the audience will assume that every action you make is an expression of your *characters'* thoughts and feelings. Concentrate on getting your character's desires, and their inner state will be revealed naturally.
6. **You are making art.** Since art is created by humans to communicate feelings and ideas, you can count on the fact that every character is created for a reason. You can figure out that reason and use your understanding to interpret your roles. In addition, since you are engaged in bringing to life the artistic creations of others, everything you do in a performance at least on some level of consciousness is an interpretation. Acknowledging that you are an interpretive artist leads you away from the destructive judgments of "right" and "wrong" that thwart most performers and toward the constructive question "Am I being clear?"
7. **Believable characters engages the audience by engaging other characters.** When audience members believe you as your character, they connect with you. Once they connect, they engage their empathy, and experience what you experience. If they suspect you are too aware of the audience (if they see the artist behind the art), the connection is broken – they will disconnect their empathy and the engagement is off.
8. **You make your characters believable by endowing them with convincing, apparently spontaneous, recreations of real human behavior.** The audience knows that you have rehearsed, but they don't want to feel that your characters have. You succeed in this by remaining engaged in what your acting partners are doing and saying, and staying connected to your character's desires.
9. **Play the moment of what is really happening.** You will seem spontaneous if you respond as your character to even the smallest things your colleagues sing or do as their characters.
10. **Never try to repeat results.** When you focus on the details of a past success, your mind cannot be engaged in the present; you lose the sense of spontaneity, and your performances take on a mechanical, unconvincing quality. Focus instead on reviving the your character's desires which motivate their words and actions, and thus reveal their emotions; respond in the present, and you will achieve a new – and subtly different - success.