



Rehearse

Be as fully rehearsed as you can be. Practice your pieces until you are totally familiar with the lyrics, chord changes and presentation. Don't be afraid to try it out in front of a friend, mirror and/or of recording it.

Engage

Engage the audience throughout the performance. Try and look at as many of your audience as possible. Look directly in their eyes and this will make them feel as if you are performing just for them. Engagement with the audience will give you energy. You can use that energy to help calm your nerves and relax into the meaning of what you are playing

Tuning/instrument changes

Do not tune up on stage. These days we all have access to electronic tuners and it is by far a more professional look to simply take the stage and start to play than to bore the audience silly with a tune-up that could have been done earlier and out of earshot. If you need to change instruments, make sure in advance that you can do it without delay. Practice the changeover if necessary.

Mikes

If you are using a microphone, practise and learn how to use it. Get used to the 'proximity effect', i.e. your voice will sound different when you're close to the mike. Learn about its 'directionality', i.e. volume will drop when you move to the side, but not all mikes are the same. If using the single big mike, see our video (Live@Newport page on the website www.nffc.org.au) – it's a different technique.

Lyric sheets

Learn the lyrics! Music stands are a barrier between you and the audience. If you're looking down, you're cut off from the audience and you're singing at the floor. If you must use lyric sheets, learn the lyrics as best you can so that you only have to glance at the sheet. Sometimes the first line of each verse is enough to remind you. Be brave, go without, better to forget the odd line than spend your whole performance looking at a piece of paper. The more you do it the better you'll get.

Stand up

We know, some instruments can't be played standing up. But most can, and you'll project far more energy and personality if you're standing. You'll definitely sing better standing; sitting restricts the movement of your diaphragm and makes it harder to sing.

Performance

When you get up to perform, you have an 'unwritten contract' with your audience to entertain them. They will happily forgive you if you forget a word or two and also if you blunder with the accompaniment. Everyone knows what it feels like to be nervous on stage. If you are doing your best, laugh it off and carry on, do not apologise and do not ever be so unprepared that the audience can immediately spot it. For example, if you say you have only just heard the piece you are about to play, place the music/lyrics on the floor and then perform to the floor, you are actually insulting your audience.

Support other performers

Arrive at the start of the gig and stick around after your set. Engage with and learn from the other performers. Give them the support you would hope to get for your own performance. That includes not talking all the way through other people's performances.

This advice was adapted from material produced by the Newcastle & Hunter Valley Folk Club.