

# How to Emcee a Performance

## Know some basic emcee skills

- Public speaking basics
- Mic technique
- “No mic” technique!

## Preparation is half the battle (the other half is making sure you plan ahead)

- Get a song order from the director and plan when you’ll speak
- Time your songs!
- Rough-out or write your script (depending on your comfort level) with this in mind:
  - Do not sing/talk/sing/talk. Group your songs and emcee work to break up songs or to set a new scene.
  - Look on the internet for interesting facts about the group you’re performing for, the occasion, the songs. Tie those facts into your introductions.
  - Will you need to “cover” a quartet coming down, chorus getting on risers, etc.?

## Humor is no laughing matter

- Humorous, yes; comedian, no.
- It goes without saying that off-color and/or offensive jokes are out of the question.
  - Self-deprecating humor tends to go over easier than jokes or funny anecdotes. The audience wants to laugh WITH you (but not AT you. It embarrasses them!).
- **Stick to your speech purpose and find the humor from within that subject matter.**

## Set yourself up for an excellent endeavor

- Wear something that fits, makes you feel good, and is comfortable:
- “It’s better to look good than to feel good.” Knowing you took extra care with makeup and hair helps!
- Be fed, but not full; appropriately “medicated,” and well-hydrated...but not too much!
- A thought about notes: wear something with a pocket for your reminder sheet.

## At the performance venue

- Check out the venue for mics, any obstacles you may face, where will the audience be?
- Clarify pronunciations, the group’s official name, if you’re going to be introduced or you need to do it.

## Plan for the unexpected

- What if the mic doesn’t work?
- What if you introduce the wrong song?
- What if the director says “get up there and say something!”?

## Go forth and have fun!

## REPERTOIRE

**All My Lovin':** 1963. Written by Paul McCartney and originally conceived as a country/western song. This Beatles classic was never released as a single, but it was the first song the group played on their first *Ed Sullivan Show* appearance: February 9, 1964. It was a historic telecast, as over 73 million people tuned in. At the time, that was the largest audience ever for a TV show.

**Are You Lonesome Tonight:** 1926. Most associated with Elvis Presley, but was written in 1926 and first published in 1927. Music by Lou Handman, lyrics by Roy Turk, sung by many artists. It was most notably covered by Elvis Presley in 1960 (with the title spelled *Are You Lonesome To-Night?*).

**Carolina In The Morning:** 1922. Over the years the song gradually became a standard, being revived regularly as a popular song into the 1950s. Al Jolson's 1947 re-recording of the song outsold the original.

**Get Happy:** written in 1929 by Harold Arlen, who also wrote music for *The Wizard of Oz* (including *Over the Rainbow*), *That Old Black Magic* and *One For My Baby*. Song most associated with Judy Garland, who performed it in her last MGM film *Summer Stock* (1950).

**God Bless America:** American patriotic song written by Irving Berlin in 1918 and revised/rewritten by him in 1938. The later version has notably been recorded by Kate Smith, becoming her signature song. Berlin wrote the song in 1918 while serving the U.S. Army.

**Good Old Acappella:** 1973; upbeat, fun, about our hobby.

**How We Sang Today:** SAI-centric, but touching lyrics about making each day count. Good for memorial services/anniversaries.

**One Fine Day:** 1963 This was written by songwriters Carole King and Gerry Goffin. It was intended for Little Eva, who was their babysitter and who had a hit the year earlier with their song *Locomotion*. Little Eva's voice did not sound right when they recorded it, so this went to The Chiffons. Carole King finally released her "official" version two decades later; her version reached #12 in the US.

**Side By Side:** 1927. Music by Harry M. Woods. Now considered a standard. It has been recorded by many artists, but is probably best known in a 1953 recording by Kay Starr. Harry Woods, who practiced songwriting only as a sideline, wrote numerous 1920s standards, including "*When the Red, Red Robin Comes Bob-Bob-Bobbing Along*," "*I'm Looking Over a Four-Leaf Clover*," and "*Try a Little Tenderness*." He composed his songs on piano, despite the fact that he was born without fingers on his left hand.

**The Star Spangled Banner:** National anthem of the USA. The poem that formed the basis of the lyrics was penned in 1814 by Francis Scott Key, a 35-year old lawyer who was sent to negotiate with the British in an attempt to gain the release of an American prisoner they were holding. Recognized for official use by the US Navy in 1889 and the White House in 1916. It was made the National Anthem by a Congressional resolution on March 3, 1931. Before 1931, the US National Anthem was *My Country 'Tis Of Thee*.