

Interpretation: What is the Music telling you?

Where is the musical climax?

Sometimes there is a musical climax in the song that is different from the tag.

This is where you want your biggest sound. For example, if you use numbers like 1 thru 10 for your dynamics then this would be your 10. In order to make it clear that you know where the musical climax is avoid using the 10 dynamic any other time. The exception to this is the occasion when an intro to an up tune might require a 10 dynamic.

Motion:

A cappella music requires energized motion, movement supplied by the voices. Most motion is clearly seen when the arranger includes repeats using duets or trios to repeat lyrics or move chords.

Motion is seen as parallel movement (parts moving in the same direction), contrary movement (one part moving up while another moves down) or oblique movement (three parts moving together while one part moves in a different direction). This kind of information helps us to see phrase dynamics.

Patterns:

There are patterns in lyrics, in notes and in rhythms. Interpretation is often based on the concept of theme and variation, meaning that we present the melody once then vary it every time afterwards.

Singer's usually benefit from this type of organizational technique. Knowing how many times a pattern is sung, when it varies and why it varies helps with learning and memorization.

Breathing:

Try really hard not to put the breath marks in first. Let them be more organic than forced and the interpretation will be much more musical.

Tempo/style:

Is it backbeat or downbeat and does it maintain that style thru-out the song? Is the tempo appropriate for all sections of the arrangement? Wordier sections of songs need to avoid racing tempos. It's important to remember that a fast tempo does not mean the sound is more energized.

Energy is a physical and emotional commitment to the song and its plan, not a tempo.

Dynamics:

Consider working both backwards and forwards from the musical climax keeping in mind what dynamic is needed to either build into the climax or leave it. Sing through all dynamic levels dynamics smoothly rather than making large or abrupt changes.

Find the lowest voiced place in the arrangement where you can assign the softest singing. Once you have the loudest and the softest places determined it becomes easier to work out the rest of the songs dynamic plan.

Vocal Production:

Be aware at all times that the skills necessary to pull off your plan must be in place a significant time before your performance. Singers require repetition to perform confidently.

Part technique:

Be sure you are always aware of the part technique required from each section and include a breath plan in your interpretation that allows everyone to be successful.

Color words:

There are always words in the lyrics that help to explain the meaning of each line. Search them out. Be brave and try lots of different variations until it makes emotional sense to you.