

Effective Tips for singing At Carnatic music contest / auditions

Singing in a concert is quite different from singing at a competition. Time is a key differentiating factor. In a concert ,the time is not limited , and the artiste can showcase his / her talent. In a competition, within the allotted time a performer has in addition to portraying his/her ideas, has also to establish a connect with the audience and the judges.

The concept of competitions has undergone a sea change with the advent of reality shows in classical and non classical music. Television has had a significant role in bringing about this change and reaching carnatic music to millions of people. The demands on a musician (competitor) is at a real high in recent times. .

It takes great skill for a performance to look good on the stage.

"5 minutes on the glamorous stage requires 10 years of hard work offstage!"

The judge looks for a complete package as the winner of a contest. One shall ,besides delivering his best shall also remain composed and hold his nerves in front of the audience.

For those singers who are looking out for some tips in improving the overall effectiveness in their performance, this write-up provides many useful pointers.

1.Choosing a suitable song:

As most gurus would tell you, the importance of one's choice of song cannot be overemphasized. Choosing the correct song has two aspects:

- a) The choice of the song must showcase the inherent strengths of the singer
- b) The song should be aesthetically appealing and refreshing to the listener

The singer must play up the inherent strengths of the voice and mask the weaknesses. In case your lower notes are not very clear, then songs which dwell a lot on the mandhara sthayi should be avoided, similarly those whose voice cracks at the higher notes must avoid songs that begin and dwell on the higher notes.

Songs should not be very easy or overly difficult that you make a mess out of it. In case you choose complicated piece be sure that you know each and every nuance in the song.

2. Being extremely well prepared:

Preparing well has many aspects to it and It goes without saying that the lyrics and sangathis of the song are to be learnt well. Sing and record your piece and listen to it many number of times, This will greatly help the song settle in the subconscious and even in pressure situations chances of forgetting or making errors is largely eliminated. This would also enable one to identify areas of improvements.

At no cost should one listen to any other version of the song sung by someone else, with even mild variations. This will confuse you and you may find yourself in an unfortunate situation of having to decide which way to sing on the stage.

It is desirable that the meaning for the sahityam is learnt so that the correct bhava can be given at appropriate places. Importantly to be noted here is that the words should not be split in the sangathis or for inhaling as this would change the entire meaning of the song. Swarams to the song must be mentally made a note of, so that when asked, you are not caught off guard.

Depending on the mood of the song decide at which pace you are going to sing. A very fast paced rendition may be largely avoided, even though you may be very good at it.

Plan where you are going to do the neraval and kalpana swaram. Ideally look at all options and not just the places where eminent singers have sung.

3. Just before you go on stage

Warm up the voice before you go on to perform onstage. The voice usually cannot perform at its peak in an instant. It is ideal that you sing a little bit before you step on the stage

Drink lots of water to prevent the voice from cracking preferably warm water especially if the auditorium is air conditioned. Avoid foods which are irritants to your voice, The stomach should not be very full or absolutely empty when you perform.

4. On stage

Complete adherence to sruthi is very critical. Listen to the sruthi carefully before you start, especially if the earlier contestant has sung at a different sruthi.

Where to look at on stage- This is a major problem first-timers on stage face. Looking directly at the audience may distract you. It is generally accepted that looking at a point above the (not very high) audience is very suitable. In reality shows looking at the judges is also very crucial.

Microphone- A good distance for the microphone would be around 2-3 inches away from your mouth, but one must also be conscious of not shouting into the microphone when touching the higher octave and about not being inaudible in the lower octave. Usually the higher notes are loud and the lower ones a little feeble so you may move in closer to the microphone if you think you are not heard in the lower notes.

Pay attention to what the judges are telling you and understand what is asked of you before you embark answering them.

5. Miscellaneous :

Ample preparation paves the way for ample confidence. Despite being well prepared bouts of anxiety and nervousness are bound to hitchride with you, but you can calm yourself by understanding that the success in the competition is not the end of the road for you, rather a stepping stone.

Staying calm before and during the performance is necessary. This calmness will reflect in your music too.

Must know a little history about the composition, its composer, the raagam Its origin etc.

It is desirable to present a neat appearance in traditional attires as it adds up to the overall ambience.

Keeping in mind these **effective tips** for singing contests will certainly take you far in whatever competitions you take part!