

SNEAK PEEK

Chapter 10: **The Audience**

POWER OF PERFORMANCE

Becoming The
Artist You Are
Meant To Be

Written By:
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CHAPTER 10

THE AUDIENCE

As you come to the end of this workbook, you should have a better understanding of the number of hours required to develop your craft. You have certainly put in the time to focus on each chapter in this workbook. You have also deepened your understanding of what makes you unique, and refined tools to execute every aspect of what makes you a dynamic performer. We have talked about how being a great singer isn't enough. You have to be a storyteller and be able to tell your story to a live audience or the audience behind a camera lens.

We have addressed the audience, in some facet, in just about every chapter in this workbook, but now we should look at the different aspects of the audience and your relationship with them. You need to think about who your audience is and how you can best connect with them. To truly become the Artist you are meant to be, we should start by highlighting two important areas. Who is in the audience and what are their expectations?

THE AUDIENCE

When you really think about it, there are two types of audiences; an audience who knows you and the audience who does not. With the first, your objective is to keep those fans. With the second, your objective is to make sure

they become your fans. In both cases, you want your audience to be interested, engaged and wanting more.

It is the responsibility of the performer to be able to gauge what type of audience they are performing for, and then adapt their performance accordingly. Depending on your observations, you would be wise to consider possibly changing the order of the songs in your set or how you might want to address the audience between songs. You might decide to change how you interact with the audience or where you want to place certain performance moments. Knowing who your audience is and being flexible with the flow of your show can make or break its success.

It is also advisable to keep looking at who your audience is as you embark on each and every step of your career. As your career grows and evolves, so will your audience. You have an ability to win over new fans with every piece of content you put out into the world. Understanding your audience is the key to a long and fulfilling career.

AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS

Take some time to put yourself in the position of the audience. It is a great starting place to help you understand what the audience expects. We often tell performers we work with, the audience expects you to be good. They assume that anyone standing in front of a microphone must be good or they wouldn't be up on the stage. The truth is, most people would never get up on a stage and perform. They cannot do what you do! Knowing this can really give you added confidence. Embrace the fact that the audience wants you to be great.

That being said, if you don't live up to the audience's expectation within the first few moments, they can lose confidence in you very quickly. You never want this to happen. Doing the work ahead of time will ensure a positive and successful experience for both you and the audience. It's a crucial part of your professionalism. Further to this, the industry today is less forgiving than it once was. Audiences can capture every moment of your show on their mobile phones and post it on all forms of social

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media platforms. As a result, it is vital to recognize the need to be 'on point' for each and every live performance. Your goal is to prove yourself a worthy Artist for the audience to invest in.

Audiences today have a multitude of options to experience entertainment. Sometimes they are looking to escape their worries and stress of the day. Other times, the audience is looking to feel something deeply. Either way, the responsibility of performers is to create and transform the event into something wonderful they and the audience can fully experience together. Your audience isn't necessarily looking for perfection, but they are interested in an authentic and genuine performance. You should now have the skills necessary to create a memorable performance with a high level of engagement and honesty.

If you haven't already started, you should begin attending a wide variety of performances and take notes on what seems to work and what doesn't. Observe how the audience responds when the performer interacts with them and at what points in the show the interactions seem to have the most effect. Give some thought to name acts you could open for. Make a list of the shows you would like to be part of. Think about what the audiences

at these shows are doing during the performance. Are they sitting or standing? What do you think the audience's expectations are? Making these observations gives you an excellent idea of the level you need to be performing at in order to succeed at these types of shows. So when the opportunity presents itself, you need to ask yourself, am I ready?

THE AGREEMENT

Artists long to perform at the highest level possible. You will know you have put in the necessary work to truly captivate the audience when the audience asks for more.

After all your planning, training, and practicing, your ultimate success will be determined by the connection you make with your audience. This is an unspoken 'agreement' between you and your audience. Once you have it, you will know it immediately.

There are three levels of agreement:

The **first level of agreement** is with yourself; your true artistic vision that becomes the core of who you are and what you create. The work you did at the beginning of this workbook is the foundation of who you want to be as an Artist. From this place, you can make choices that align with your persona and your career. The number of choices that will become available, within each aspect of your career, are directly related to your overall skill level in each area. The more skills you develop, the greater your choices will be. The tricky part is trusting yourself enough to make powerful choices that move you and the audience. You sometimes have to make quick choices in the moment. There are limitless possibilities and knowing any number of options could work is powerful. Any choice you make can be the right choice. Once you make a choice, let go of the other possibilities and trust your decisions will resonate within you first and foremost. This first level of agreement is the compass by which you can guide your authentic path and success.

The **second level of agreement** is with the people closest to you,

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whether it be your manager, agent, the studio engineer or people who share the stage with you. You need to choose wisely when building your team. Making decisions is part of the collaboration process, so when you don't have a shared level of agreement, it can be challenging. For example, the music feels strained, the project lacks clarity, the marketing is unfocussed, and quite often, relationships break down. Trust the choices you and your team mutually agree on as these are often the right ones for right now.

Finally, the **third level of agreement** is the agreement between you and the audience. They ultimately have the power to decide if they like your performance or not. This type of judgement is often the most difficult part for any Artist. Do they add your songs to their playlists? Do they share your music? Do they love your live shows? Do they leave wanting to hear more? Do they recommend you and your show to their friends and family? This third level of agreement with the audience is the ultimate test that reflects whether or not what you are creating resonates with them.

Developing a thick skin and strong work ethic is crucial in fulfilling this agreement with your audience. You must figure out a system for dealing with success and failure.

There may be times when the audience doesn't respond positively to what you are doing. In this case, are you strong enough to re-evaluate and put in more effort? You need to be honest. Ask yourself if what you have created is as good as it can be. Do you need go back to rework the material? You will know you've established this sense of agreement with your audience when together, you become a powerful force sharing a common experience. It's a high that cannot be replaced and a feeling all performers crave. When you reach that moment, you will discover the audience craves this feeling as well.

CONNECTING WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

At each step of your career, take time to 'check-in' on whether or not you are meeting and maintaining all three levels of agreement. You have collaborated with other songwriters and producers to create music that reflects who you are. You have invested in all sorts of ways to market yourself and your music on various platforms. You have the skills to perform anywhere, on any stage, for any size of crowd.

The various platforms for discovering and experiencing music have changed over the years and will continue to change. The one constant is your ability to create a relationship with your audience that is lasting. It needs to withstand whatever changes are happening in the industry.

Once you've decided to become an Artist, you need to start creating and putting out content. Your material needs to embody your persona. Part of that involves sharing your journey with the audience. Audiences historically embrace Artists who are willing to share their imperfections and discoveries. They love to a part of an Artist's journey; from the beginning of their career to when they become successful. Whether you choose to share every personal detail or prefer a more subtle exchange, it will establish the dynamic of your relationship.

When you authentically engage with your audience, they are more apt to forgive you when you make a mistake, trip on stage, crack on a note,

or have to cancel a show due to illness. An Artist who shares personal stories is usually able to connect deeply with their audience. Whether you speak intimately on social media or stand in front of 20,000 people at a music festival, most audiences are interested in an Artist who isn't afraid to share who they are. Every Artist, at some point in their career, needs to take risks. These new challenges can include experimenting with other genres, or finding new performance opportunities.

Remind yourself of the three agreements; with yourself, your team and the audience. It will give you the strength to take risks, grow, and find greater success as a result.

THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN YOU AND THE AUDIENCE

When everything works, the agreement with the audience translates into a really cool conversation between the performer and audience. You perform and the audience applauds. This perfectly timed back and forth dialogue is what every performer longs for. However, it can be a moment when some performers feel vulnerable and awkward. They forget their adjectives. They step back into being their normal selves, possibly being insecure and shy. The performer might start the next song immediately or walk off the stage without realizing the audience needs to acknowledge the performance by clapping and cheering. This exchange is important for the audience.

On the other hand, the performer may be desperately waiting for the audience to validate them. They can't quite generate the necessary energy without having an audience in front of them. These Artists have a hard time defining who they are. They often change their persona from audience to audience, show to show. Their performance is often inconsistent in content and energy. There are some Artists who stay on the stage longer than they need to, waiting for every clap and cheer to fade before walking off the stage.

In either case, finding the perfect timing of how long an audience should

applaud for, is a delicate balance that truly comes with experience. The more you perform and are comfortable with who you are, the better this beautiful conversation with the audience will be.

There are performers who suffer terribly from stage fright. It is impossible for these Artists to have an easy conversation with the audience. It is important to discuss the two common reasons people suffer from stage fright. The first is not being sufficiently prepared and the other is not having enough experience. Remember, you train your voice to sound untrained, you practice your patter with the audience in order to appear spontaneous, and you rehearse your staging until you develop muscle memory. Your training ensures you are confident in your ability to manage any extenuating circumstances, for example, to modify melodies or length of notes when you're voice isn't 100% (due to fatigue or illness). You don't want to disappoint your audience – ever. Contrary to what many Artists think, the more you prepare and rehearse, the more grounded and successful you will be as a performer.

With proper preparation, you won't have to worry about what you are going to sing or say. You'll have the freedom to enjoy the unpredictable nature of any given audience. Your ability to address the audience appropriately is a direct result of your practice. Being intuitive about the needs of your audience will help you from show to show. You may want to wait to interact with your audience if you notice they are a bit reserved. Once you feel you have them engaged, that's the time to ask them to sing with you. You may have planned to ask them to sing earlier, but they may not be ready. For now, understand this is an integral skill you need to develop to prevent potentially awkward moments. You will know you have achieved success when the audience confirms it in their agreement with you. Show your gratitude for your audience's level of engagement and they will be loyal for years to come.

EXERCISES

1. Who is your audience? Describe them?

2. What do you want the audience to think and feel during your performance?

3. Describe how you want your audience to see you. Use your adjectives.

4. When the audience walks out of your show, what do you want them to say to themselves?

5. What can you do to ensure they will want to come back to see you again?

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



LORRAINE LAWSON

Is one of the most successful coaches in North America. She specializes in Contemporary Vocal & Performance Coaching, Artist Development and producing Vocal and Stage productions.

Lorraine is privileged to be the Vocal Coach for CTV's 'The Launch' and Season 5 of the hit show 'Schitt's Creek'. Other clients include Grammy nominee Kai, dance sensation; Blake McGrath, Canadian superstars; Roy Woods (OVO), Kira Isabella, Scott Helman (Warner), as well as working with Musical Theatre and TV Actors; Ian Lake, Brenton Thwaites and Emily Hampshire.

Called "Canada's Mariah Carey" by the National Post, Lorraine has released three critically-acclaimed jazz and pop CDs, countless dance singles, radio jingles, and has performed all over the world.

Lorraine is the proud founder of Lawson Vocal Studios where she is able to combine her years of experience coaching, recording and performing. She is committed to providing singers with innovative programming and achieving exceptional results.

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MARY-LU ZAHALAN

Is a Juno-nominated recording Artist with three CDs to her credit. She was signed to a publishing deal with Sony Music and worked with such renowned producers as David Foster and Humberto Gatica.

In addition to having a long music career, Mary-Lu has numerous TV and film credits as an actor. She is the creator and head of the Commercial Vocal Department in the Music Theatre program at Sheridan Institute of Advanced Learning and Technology. She is also an Honours graduate of this program.

She now holds the distinction of being a Professor of Popular Music Theory and Performance after completing her Masters (cum laude) in The Beatles, Popular Music and Society at Liverpool Hope University in the UK. Mary-Lu's dissertation, *Cultural Capital: The Beatles in Canada* was published in 2011 by The Beatle Works (Chicago, IL).

Mary-Lu is a celebrated guest coach at Lawson Vocal Studios and continues to teach Commercial Performance master classes all over North America.

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“Lorraine & Mary-Lu share a passion for Artists of all genres and help them reach their greatest potential. These two world-class coaches recognized the need to expand what they have been teaching for over several decades and have put their combined expertise into this performance workbook

Randy Lennox

Music & Media

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