



The Art of

JAZZ SINGING

PROFESSIONALISM

“Professional behavior” is a reflection of how you feel about yourself and your place in the world. It’s probably also a short list of all the things your Grandma told you, (or should have told you), about how to behave with others.

Be on time

Everybody else’s time is just as valuable as yours. I’ve removed a musician’s name from my “call list” even when I thought they were great musicians and great people. I didn’t want to be kept waiting, or have my client kept waiting, or have the audience kept waiting.

Dress Appropriately for the occasion

Every professional musician should own the appropriate dress for the gigs that they do. Most jazz musicians will be called on to have ‘formal attire,’ from time to time. Although your Uncle Louie may have been just about your size, his old suit on you won’t make you look like you a top-flight professional. And, plunging necklines and mini-skirts may be great for the club gig, but won’t get you asked back to an elegant dinner party (or maybe not as the chanteuse.) “Bed to streetwear,” which is favored by many of us in the comfort of our homes, really makes you look like a slob when you’re on a gig.

Be Prepared To Do Your Job

Are you prepared to sing or play? Do you know the material you’re about to present? Do you have all the equipment you need, in good working order? Do you have your microphone, mic cord, mic stand, music stand, light? Do you have any charts and music that will be needed for the band? Are you ready to play?

Be cheerful

So many things, big and small, can and do go wrong everyday. Trouble finding a parking space? Don't like your playing tonight? Don't like my playing tonight? Touch of indigestion? Nobody wants to be around a crabby, needy person. On the bandstand or on a gig is not the time to whine and complain.

Don't Gossip

Everyone's a critic. As artists we are constantly evaluating our skills and performances and comparing them to what we see and hear around us. This behavior helps us to grow and learn. To belittle our fellow artists is to constrain our own growth and development and to create an atmosphere that is not conducive to creating a supportive environment.

Be a Personality

Everyone on the team needs to be a contributor. Own the gig. Don't phone in your part because you're tired of the tunes, or just generally unenergetic that day. Find new tunes, take some lessons, practice more. Take on your share of the work of keeping the musical community vibrant and thriving. Go out and support your fellow musicians by attending their gigs, check out new artists. Discover yourself as an artist; stand up for yourself.

Don't Undercut Your Fellow Musicians

Maybe you have a good "day" job and make plenty of money and you like to sing and play for fun. Try to remember your fellow musicians; the one's you study with, the one's who've dedicated their lives to playing music. If you offer your services for free or way under market value soon there won't be professional musicians. Ask for a fair wage and then live up to the standard you set.