

4 steps for preparing your concert include framing, scripting, staging, and performing.

Framing

1. Consider an artist that you admire. What is their story? Describe them.
2. What is your story? If your fans were to describe you as an artist, what words would they use?
3. Is this the story that you want to be told? What is the story you want to be told?
4. Consider a concert that you were impressed by. Tell the narrative of that concert.
5. What story do you want the audience to tell about your concert?

Scripting

1. Make a list of all of your material, including things you may not have ready, and organize it according to feel or mood, whatever works best for you.
2. For each song make a note of how you want the song to affect the audience. Do you want it to energize them, quiet them, make people dance, make people think about an issue important to you, laugh, be amazed at your musicianship or one of your band members strengths? Your objective is to create a variety of moments along the way to keep the audience engaged and receptive.
3. **Begin your programming.**
 - a. Consider how long your performance will be and gage the number of tunes you can play in that amount of time. A rule of thumb is 5 min per song but that can vary widely depending on your material. It is good to have songs of varying lengths to keep things interesting.

- b. Make a numbered list the length of your set and begin by filling in the positions. Look at your descriptions of the intent of the songs and choose according to that. If you want to start out with an energizing tune look at your song list and pick by feel and description. Rather than choosing one after the other fill in the positions so you create a variety of experiences for the audience.
- c. Separate your program into 2 or 3 parts, each one with a starting point, high point and transition. Plan the places where you will speak (often at the transitions) and also the places where the music flows into the next tune without stopping to talk. In my experience many singers and instrumentalists talk too much and it interrupts the flow of the music. Remember, you are doing a musical performance. Imagine if you went somewhere for dinner and in between each dish the host gave a lengthy speech. Same for the audience. Allow them to appreciate what's happening without constant explanation. Don't be afraid to stay in a mood for a while. If you are in a quiet part of the show let it BE quiet.
- d. Prepare your set list with arrangement notes, keys, feels, tempos, soloist and any notes to yourself of things to remember.
- e. Prepare your charts and arrangements for rehearsal. If you have limited rehearsal it will be helpful to know what you are planning in advance such as arrangements, energy level, soloist, etc. If someone has a better idea in rehearsal then fine, but if not, you have a plan.

Staging

1. Choosing the musicians who will help you bring your musical vision to the bandstand is one of your most creative and rewarding jobs. Choose people you like to play with and who like to play with you.
2. Staging includes setting up how the band is presented to the audience. Is there enough room on the bandstand for all the players? Are there good sight lines for cues and signals? Is it interesting to look at? Do band members present a coherent group?

3. In your program include a feature for each member of your band. Featuring different musicians on tunes ensures the set doesn't progress predictably. Instrumental solos do not need to always be in the middle of a song. A song could start with drums for example and feature a drum solo. Or start with vocal and bass only or drop out to 2 instruments. There are many ways to vary the arrangements of your songs, and to give everyone an opportunity to shine and keep the audience interested.
4. Staging includes rehearsal. Be ready to direct the band during rehearsal and have a clear idea of what you want to accomplish and how you want your music to sound. You are the star and your leadership is crucial.

Performing

Some important skills for performing:

1. *Knowledge of material:* know your tunes. If you are not ready to perform a tune then leave it out of the set. Don't practice on the audience.
2. *Control of your body:* Does your nose itch uncontrollably when you get on the band stand? Does your hair keep falling in your face? Are you too nervous to breathe causing your voice to sound like a little mouse? Do you have odd mannerisms, like pulling at your clothes? Uh oh, now everybody is uncomfortable because you are communicating your anxiety. Control of your body is something to think about in practice. Look in a mirror when you practice. Live performance is a communicative art and as artists we want to communicate our intention, not our subconscious anxiety. Be aware of your body when you practice and when you perform.
3. *An awareness of the visual:* Unless you are in a recording studio, people are looking at you when you perform, and making many assumptions about you. Your sincerity, your ability, your comfort, your experience, your intelligence and your income level are all "out there" for everyone to assume. (Of course, they may not be right, but nonetheless, they are making assumptions.) Our personal appearance matters: it sends a message. Make sure that you are sending the message that you want to send. Are you smiling broadly in a sad song? Are you jumping around while the piano player is playing his solo and stealing attention?

Are your clothes appropriate to what you are trying to say about yourself? Be aware of the visual and make it work for you. Communicate what you wish to communicate.

4. *The ability of keep focus:* You had a fight with your lover, the waiters are clanging glasses, the piano player has invented an entirely new set of changes for your favorite song that you've never heard or even knew existed, your car broke down on the way to the gig, and the guy in the front row is wearing a neon tie and fondling the knee of the lady at the next table. Can you pay attention to what you are trying to do? Knowledge of material comes in really handy here.
5. *The ability to galvanize energy:* They everybody, Look at Me!