

HOW TO WORK WITH AN ACCOMPANIST

Keith Hancock

Working with an accompanist is an important skill to know as a performer. There will be many times in your life you will need to work with a pianist, and the way you do this can make or break your audition. Many auditions are ruined solely because the singer has not thought about this part of the audition. Here is a list of what you should think about when preparing to work with an accompanist.

Preparation

- Get your sheet music
 - Do not buy the fake book or easy piano version
- Buy a small 1" black binder, and clear plastic sheet protectors
- Photocopy your sheet music
 - Make sure all notes are visible on copied page (do not cut off any notes, especially on the bottom)
- Put your music back-to-back in the sheet protectors
- Put the sheet protectors in your small binder
 - It is a good idea to have a large binder that contains all of your sheet music alphabetized for easy access in the future
- Make sure cuts are very clear (use big, colored markings, making sure not to cover up the music)
- Make sure alternate endings are marked
- Be aware of how much they want you to sing (16 bars, 1 minute, etc.)
- Make sure your song is in the right key (do not expect the accompanist to be able to change your key on the spot)
- Make sure the accompaniment is sight-readable (no Sondheim, hard keys)
- It is beneficial to have music that contains chord symbols above the music
- Have the accompanist turn as few pages as possible

At the audition

- Tell the accompanist where you are starting and ending, as well as other important information (tempo changes, go directly to second ending, no repeat, dynamic markings, etc.)
- Inform the accompanist of any cuts that are made
- Sing the beginning of your selection to give an indication of how fast or slow you want it to go (make sure you are clear). Snap your fingers if that helps.
- Walk confidently to your audition spot and give a little nod to the accompanist when you are ready to begin
- Sing your heart out!