

acting the song

tenets & techniques

FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTIONS:

- The world of the musical play is grounded in truth.
- The world of the musical play is a more heightened state than our world.
- Acting is essential to the song.
- The song is essential to acting.

1. Take It Thought by Thought. Find the full life in each moment. Don't play the end or stall in the beginning, play the now. Change with the changes, lyrically and musically — avoid subtle shifts or bleeding over. Thought does not always equal melodic phrase.

2. Turn a Phrase. Shape the melodic phrase as well as the operative text to find meaning and subtextual expression. There are many choices and sometimes contradictions — that's where character is born.

3. Follow the Argument. Thesis - development - conclusion. This relates directly to: Intro - verse - chorus. This relates directly to: What do you want? From whom? What do you do to get it?

4. Sound the Sounds. Sound = opportunity. What do your melody, rhythm, vowel shapes, consonants do to your body? Release this in your acting. Lean into the meaning of sounds, not just the meaning of text.

5. Ask Why. Assume that nothing is random in a well written musical... Structure. Dynamic/Articulation/Tempo/Style Markings. Lyrical Devices. Prose and Poetry. Orchestration. Motif. Tonality. Aesthetic. Feel. WHY is it there? To tell story? To support given circumstances? To elevate character?

6. Be In the Band. You are just one part of the musical ensemble. What is the band doing? What story do they tell in the moments where you aren't singing? How do you fit into the collaboration? When do you lead, follow, or stay beside?

7. Presume Distance. The song needs space to operate. Work from your 360 degree kinesphere.

8. Risk Going Too Far to find the truthful shape of it.

9. Let the Music Do the Work. When can the music speak for itself? What have the composer and lyricist already created, ready to wear, for you to simply execute?

10. Consider the Audience. Every character has their own relationship with the audience. These relationships can evolve. Some musicals include "performative" moments, and even they remain grounded in the truth of specific audience connection.

FUNDAMENTAL PROCESS OF THE ACTOR-SINGER: Rehearse to Release.

Musical Theatre is ephemeral. You can't recreate a performance.

Through rigorous preparation, you create the conditions in performance that allow for freedom.

The conditions: memorized text, music, blocking, choreography... sustainable, repeatable technique... deep understanding of and connection to the play.

The freedoms: to stay open to impulse... to react to real stimuli... to live in the present moment.