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HOW TO LEARN A SONG

1. Go find the sheet music.
2. Choose the correct key. (*This will be the key that allows you to sing in the appropriate style most comfortably.*)
3. If you are unsure of the vocal style of the piece, listen to an original (or authentic) recording, but only to get a sense of the song.
4. Speak the text out of rhythm, like a monologue. This allows you to connect emotionally with the lyrics and to find your natural speaking inflections, which will later inform your rhythmic choices.
5. Count and clap the rhythm. This incorporates kinesthetic, visual, and aural learning.
6. Speak the text with the correct rhythms.
7. Play the melody on the keyboard.
8. Play and sing the melody on solfège or a neutral syllable—or both!
9. Add the text back in—combing rhythm, pitches, and lyrics.
10. You will know you know the piece when you can audiate the vocal line and sing it *a cappella*.

Don't move on to the next step until you're sure you've got the previous one. At first this may seem like a tremendous amount of detail work, but this is what it takes.

HOW TO PRACTICE A SONG

1. Turn off any distractions.
2. Turn on a recording device.
3. Warm up.
4. Stand if you can. Brain research indicates we learn better with movement. Standing is better than sitting.
5. If you will be accompanying yourself, learn the parts separately before putting them together. You'll be working different brain processes to do this, so get the individual parts down first.
6. Sing through the song. When you get to a place where you are unsure of the rhythm or pitches, isolate that spot and work it before moving on. Do this as many times as you can without frustration. Eventually, it will click. Don't just run the piece!
7. Record yourself practicing so that you can go back and reference trouble spots. You'll be listening with just your outer ear.
8. When memorizing, it can be good to work backward from the end of the piece, so that the ending gets worked just as much as the beginning.
9. Memorize text before rhythm before pitches.
10. Repeat.

The more you can incorporate kinesthetic, visual, and aural learning processes (or whole-brain learning), the more efficient your learning process will be. Remember to use your body, eyes, and ears!