**Prose Performance Guidelines**

**Oral Interpretation**

Prose is expression through sentences and paragraphs, NOT poetry. Any fiction or non-fiction novel, essay, journal, or short story can be selected to be cut for a Prose. Prose tells a story, the use of diction, facials, gestures, eye contact, intonation, and pace will offer a rewarding experience for both interpreter and audience. Every choice made in Prose needs to benefit the piece and help tell the story and aid interpretation.

If there are multiple characters, each one needs to be different as shown through body language, stance, and voice. Effectively telling a story takes lots of practice, devotion, and creativity. The more work you have done interpreting the piece and understanding it, the better you can make the fantasy reality. Strive for the crispness of mental imagery you have when you present.

Writing an Introduction:

* State the title and author of your piece.
* A quote is a good way to start off your introduction.
* State the basic theme of your piece ***without*** summarizing your piece.

EXAMPLE:

*Isaac Bachevas once stated "Doubt is part of religion. All religious thinkers were once doubters." Since the beginning of time religion as sparked some of the biggest arguments throughout history. From the Crusades to the recent troubles with Catholics and Muslims, we have found ourselves wondering where the real struggle lies. With the various religions, or within ourselves? In Jim Grimsley’s "Jesus is Sending You this Message" we find a young man you struggles with this question, and the truths he finds about himself.*

*Jesus is Sending You This Message By: Jim Grimsley*

Information on your analysis:

Style: reflects the author’s attitudes toward the subject matter, it is also a mode of performance; the interpreter’s goal is to match the style of performance with the style of writing. The style of prose is determined by diction, imagery, figurative language, and syntax. Below are clues to finding the Style of a piece:

LANGUAGE

* Connotative words vs. Denotative words: *EXAMPLE -* A general word (such as "home") is more likely to have connotative value than specific language (such as "house,")which describes a type of building.
* Genre of discourse: decide how words are used that indicate the kind of style the writer is trying to convey, *EXAMPLES:* "commit homicide," "blow away," and "murder" all mean to kill someone. They come from legal discourse, vocal slang, and everyday usage. "Blow away" and "murder" each carry a distinct connotative and emotive value. Also, "happen," "occur," "manifest," and "go down" are similar in meaning but come from distinct genres of discourse: everyday usage (happen), formal usage (occur), philosophical discourse (manifest), and slang (go down). "Happen" and "go down" could be used in speech; "occur" and "manifest," being more formal, would not ordinarily be used in speech.
* Allusions, Similes, and Metaphors: the writer’s use of these are an important aspect of literary style. All three can be used to convey connotative meaning.
* Allusions-refer to something that persons with shared experiences: “I hope tonight won’t be another Thanksgiving dinner”.
* Similies- describe what things are like, “I feel ike a mission dollars now!”
* Metaphor- same as another otherwise unrelated object. “He has a heart of stone”, “She’s a real piece of work”
* Syntax: This includes punctuation and how words are grouped together demonstrating their relationship and importance. Your discoveries will dictate your use of pause, rate, emphasis,pitch and inflection.
* Punctuation - Short, simple sentences indicate a direct approach and suggest immediacy of experience; long complicated sentences suggest more sophisticated and evaluative approach. Examples of punctuation indicators in presentation:
  + Semicolon – marks a turn of thought or definite separation between two aspects of the same thought; and usually requires a slight pause
  + Parentheses and double dashes – mark off distinct speech phrases.
  + Single dash or colon – often marks the pause that occurs just before a summing up and implies a reference to some previous portion.
  + Punctuation as a guide but not a rule- Punctuation is more for the eye than for the ear. Keep in mind that the punctuation might change when you begin practicing your piece for presentation. For example: In oral presentation, a comma in the text does not always demand a pause.
* Poetic diction: Poetic language, generally connotative, would stand out in casual conversation. Unusual connotations also carry with them double meanings. For instance, the word "terrific" can be used for its connotation of terrifying;" the word "taxation" for its connotation of "taxing" or stress-inducing. Below are some examples: the first usage is essentially descriptive; the latter more poetic - it is more emotive.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| all together / as one | escape / flee | girl / maiden |
| incessant / unceasing | invisible / unseen | room / chamber |

Tone:

An author's verb choices create the tone of the work. Verbs create the reality depicted in the text, whether physical, interior, or conceptual.

* Action verbs: physical, mental, or conceptual action. Examples:
  + Physical: She expressed her disgust in the strongest language imaginable.
  + Mental: While to all appearances she liked her roommate, she maintained a persistent sense of disgust through all their dealings.
  + Conceptual: Her apparent good intentions were subverted by brief lapses that revealed her true feelings of utter disgust.

The sounds of words an author has chosen are especially important for the interpreter. The sounds of the words carry meaning as well as the word itself. Pace and vocal quality are influenced by the connotative meaning of words. Identifying word combinations of assonance, consonance, will provide tone color (the sounds of words).

TIPS on Dialogue Delivery

Characters Speak and React:

All characters should have some sort of body change that works with the interpretation given to that character. It can be your stance, how you hold your shoulders/head/posture, or specific gestures to that character. Do not go overboard, this should be subtle. Most importantly, BE CONSISTANT, don’t confuse your audience.

* Focal Point – Narrator/Characters’ Placement: which direction do characters focus, when they speak.
* Emotional Content in regards to Face: don’t be afraid to commit to an emotion that the character experiences.
* \*Avoid crying – as the character, sadness can be shown without fake crying
* Characters can react whether they speak or not
* Control your body-Do not rock back and forth, slap your hands to the side of your body, twitch.
* Facials- The audience will be looking at your face. It needs to be alive at all times. Every character's facials need to be appropriate for that character. Practice in front of a mirror is it helps, for some it is distracting, try it first.
* Eye Contact- you should be engaging the audience with eye contact. Use the layout of classroom to your advantage-scanning and picking individuals to look at for an extended time during specified intense moments add to the performance. Though, looking into space can be compelling as well, as long as it it purposeful and is not for the entire piece.
* Voice- After analyzing the piece, your voice is what animates the interpretation most. Play with tone, pitch, rhythm, volume, and all forms of dynamics. The secret with vocals is variation.
* History-know the history and relationship of your characters.

Cutting:

Cut piece must have a Beginning, Middle, End; Conflict, not necessarily resolution (something needs to happen that moves the ‘cut’ forward)Basic plot structure is as follows:

* Exposition (introduction of characters, setting, etc.)
* CONFLICT and Rising Action (the issue is discovered and problems arise due to the conflict)
* Climax (the height of conflict and highest tension; everything is unleashed!)
* Falling Action (things begin to settle down and a solution is sought)
* Dénouement (the resolution/conclusion; things come to an end happily or not).

Organizing your cutting around this will help move the plot along and keep the audience involved. If your author tells the story in a non-linear fashion (flashbacks, in reverse) try your best to craft a cutting that mirrors the structure they have created.

If you are having difficulties, rethink your cutting. Is there any information you left in the piece that has no real reason for being there? Is it absolutely necessary? If the audience does not need to know then cut that bit. Prose cuttings are organic and changing. You can always make adjustments.