

How to talk to your audition pianist (or collaborator) efficiently

- Think like a conductor, and act like one
- Mark the piano score clearly with everything you have decided
- Tell the collaborator [not audition pianist] what you want to accomplish

Think like a conductor, and act like one

- You are the expert in knowing THIS SONG for this particular performance
- You have decided what you want
 - The composer does not know what you want (& might be dead)
 - The publisher does not know what you want
 - The pianist does not YET know what you want
- Convey a definite and firm intention with gesture more than words
 - Conduct one sample bar with the right character and the tempo at the same time
 - ...like a conductor does
 - Conduct the pianist's part, not your own vocal line
 - If there is a major tempo change coming in somewhere, conduct one sample bar there, too
 - That's all; now we are ready to start the song without any conducting
- Your breaths and phrasing do the conducting during the song

Mark the piano score clearly with everything you have decided

- The piano/vocal score is a direct picture of what you need the pianist to do
 - ...especially the bass line, because it generates the harmony
 - Make the piano part neat and easy to read, not a hastily scribbled mess
 - Make your markings while sitting at a table with businesslike posture
 - If the page turns are in terrible places for the pianist, move them to better places
 - If there are sections to skip, physically remove them
 - Simplify the piano part by taping white space onto piano notes not to play (like under the pickup notes where the voice sets the tempo alone)

- An expert will follow your instructions and intentions... IF s/he understands them! (and especially consider what they'd need to know immediately if they are a non-expert, or if they have never heard the song before)
 - ...so make everything easy to understand, instantly, on the page
 - Put the instructions onto the page in standard musical notation
 - Metronome speed
 - "Agitato"
 - "Rit..."
 - Mark a phrase break or a big-breath spot....)
 - I want silence here, & break the tempo //
 - Accent this >
 - Fermata
 - "Colla voce" here, I stretch this
 - "Waltz, in 1"
 - "Driving 80s rock groove, in 2"
 - Skip this repeat (physically remove it to avoid confusion)
 - "1936 big band" (year and style so the pianist gets context)
 - "Bell tone G"
- If you have marked something, it shows you have thought about it and made a decision
 - ...like a well-prepared conductor (marked parts save rehearsal time)
 - It shows you understand and care about the piano part
- Because you already analyzed the piece and decided what you want, the pianist can simply read it and see your intentions coming BEFORE they happen; the song goes better
- If you feel you "must" say something to the audition pianist as instructions, you should have already marked it...so you don't have to say it (spoken instructions can be "Hello!" and a smile)
- Don't make the pianist remember extra things you didn't mark, but only said; it won't happen
- Efficiency makes everyone's job easier, and so the song goes better
- The free "CamScanner" app is good at making a PDF photo of your marked music (e-mail to yourself); make backup copies as your interpretation grows

Tell the collaborator [not audition pianist] what you want to accomplish

- You have a goal for this performance or this practice session
 - You are selling the song to the audience
 - You KNOW what you are selling
 - You know what needs to happen
 - Be able to state it in 30 seconds or shorter
- You know what that goal is; don't make the collaborator guess
- The collaborator's job is to help you be successful
 - It is in your own best interest to make the pianist's job easy
 - Mark the piano part with everything you already decided for your interpretation
- If you require advice, directly solicit the type of advice you need and want
 - Help me check these notes where I don't feel sure
 - Can you understand my words?
 - Am I on pitch?
 - Is the character of my delivery convincing?
 - Is my phrasing choice convincing?