

The Marking of a Speech: How to Approach Your Script

After you have selected a piece begins the process of memorization, interpretation, and endless practicing. The easiest, most effective way to do any of these is to connect to your material. But how is that accomplished? Quite simple, really. Print yourself out several copies of your script and begin to interact. Mark-up your script, always being sure to save a clean copy for reference, and watch those words become part of you.

What does it mean to "mark-up?" It is essentially writing your thoughts on the paper. Circle any words or phrases you wish to emphasize, do not understand, or find interesting. Questions that arise as you read the text should be written in the margins to remind you to investigate them further. **Specific ideas you have regarding tempo, tone, gestures, movement, etc. can be scribbled next to the words of inspiration. Marking-up serves as a road-map for what the text meant to you at a certain instant.** Therefore, save all mark-up scripts as evidence of the evolution of your work. One never knows when a previous thought can turn into a delightful, useful tangent to pursue.

A good script should get you wondering about:

Period Related Jargon/Events/People. If there are any words or names mentioned in the script that you cannot devise meaning from circle it as a reminder to research who or what that is. It is your responsibility to know everything about this script. Who is to say that a word or name was dropped to serve as a snide comment? If true, that would certainly alter the tone you use when speaking that word. Diction is crucial to the details of a Declamation; it can be what separates your performance from all others.

Gestures. As you mark-up your Declamation look for defining phrases/words that are the highlights of the text. Find the key rhetoric and underline. Notating where the important bits are help you set-up when or how to gesture. A good hand movement can be the icing on tasty words. This planning helps to elude over gesturing and falsely drawing attention to insignificance.

Movement. Reading a script is a good way to look for a natural break and thus determine when to move across your speaking space. Your break might literally occur at a break on the page (between paragraphs). This might not always be the case as the making of paragraphs can be subjective and left to the editor's judgment. In Declamation it is wise to look for segments when the speech switches to new support, offers a solution, or debunks the opposition. You can also be daring and make a move with climatic rhetoric.

Vocals. Just with movement and gestures, look for those phrases or words that beg to have variation thrust on them. Should this phrase have a swift tempo? Should your voice lower for this sentence of support? If names or jargon are mentioned it could be worthwhile to alter your tone/pace/volume to reflect the speech's attitude towards them. If you have an audio file of the speech it might be good to listen to how another has already processed the words (after you have made your own assessment).

Marking-up a script with these distinct concepts in mind can help better you as a speaker. With every stroke of the pencil on paper you are connecting to your piece in a way that allows you to fully comprehend it and fall in love with every syllable. This intimacy you create with the material will appear in the ownership you display during performance. Further, comprehending your script early in your relationship will make practicing later in the season a cinch as a majority of the hard work will be done, for all will remain is for you to tweak and perfect your performance to earn a first place ranking.