**SOME TIPS FOR PIANO ACCOMPANISTS**

By STEPHEN CHIN

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| * Always attempt to get your music well ahead of time. Reference to a recording can be most helpful.
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| * Development of good sight reading skills is extremely important yet fun!
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| * Do lots of “easy” pieces when starting out to boost your confidence.
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| * Check bars numbers, rehearsal figures and repeats – they can vary between editions
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| * Never be afraid to edit. Accompaniments fit roughly into three categories – good, difficult and impossible.
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| * Try to devise musical cuts for long introductions or interludes. Be sure that the phrasing and harmony makes sense.
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| * Maintain good eye contact with your associate artist.
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| * If your associate artist gets lost, try to play their line with your bass line part until a recovery is made.
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| * If YOU get lost, try to maintain one hand - usually the bass line.
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| * Always follow the solo part and be as familiar with it as you can.
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| * Endeavour to match phrasing where possible.
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| * Be wary of fluctuating rhythms – easier sections for the solo part tend to rush and more difficult ones can slow down considerably.
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| * From time to time, it may be beneficial for you to help your associate artist pitch their notes. This can take time but must not dominate the rehearsal.
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| * Practise faster pieces faster than the required tempo just in case your associate artist wishes to go at a brighter pace.
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| * Be prepared for bars, lines or even pages that are skipped.
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| * Read at least one bar ahead – the more the merrier!
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| * It is important to note that instrumentalists especially string players use a different tuning system to the piano’s equal temperament tuning. The lowest string on an instrument will usually have to be sharpened a little.
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| * A D Minor chord is standard for an instrumentalist to tune to. However, violins and basses may tune to a DEGA cluster, whilst cellists and violists may like a CDGA cluster.
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| * Dynamics must be carefully observed but be aware of tonal balance at all times. For instance a piece may be marked forte in both parts but if you are accompanying an eighth size violin, adjustments obviously have to be made.
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| * Page turns need to be addressed – it is fine to make a copy of a page if the turn is difficult. There are some electronic tablets that can display an image by tapping the foot on a pedal.
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| * Try to develop good transposition skills. Often singers like to try pieces in different keys. Baroque instrumentalists will usually play down a semitone.
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| * Beginnings and endings of pieces need to be thoroughly rehearsed.
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| * Regular practise with a metronome is essential. The keyboard part is like the foundations of a building and needs to be solidly supportive.
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| * Familiarise yourself with a wide range of styles – e.g. Contrapuntal, Rock, Latin, Jazz, etc
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| * Observe proper etiquette – your associate artist should acknowledge you and the conclusion of a work. If you are playing a sonata with musically equal parts, then you should take a bow together.
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