

## **10 Ways to make sure I will never ask you back to sing at my church!!!!** **By Linda Webb-Khakaba**

So, you didn't follow any of my advice about how to not be hired as Special Music, and you're coming to play at all 3 services of my church in Santa Rosa in a few weeks. What kinds of things make the difference between an easy Sunday for me, or a full-fledged anxiety attack? I can assure you, that if it's the second option, however nice I am to you at the time, you won't be asked back.

So, in the interest of making what can be a very serious, emotional and cathartic experience fun, here's how to totally blow it when you come to my church: namely.....

- 1. Be inflexible about what you're willing to sing ! (or about your needs) Please don't be concerned about what the theme is for the day. It's far more important to sing from your newest cd, or the one you have the greatest inventory that day!**

*My job is to support a service, to create an emotional and energetic environment that completely enfolds my Minister and makes his very difficult job easier. Matching the music to the theme is extremely important where I live. Please flex with me, and be gracious about it. It's my call.*

- 2. Don't be honest about what you can do well and what you really can't do well.**

*Yes, I want you to please me, but be HONEST! If you cannot accompany yourself really well, we will do it for you. If you cannot play on the beat, that's ok, it's called rubato but we don't want to find that out on Sunday morning after working on your music and getting an arrangement together. We WANT YOU TO SHOW UP SOUNDING GREAT. It's not to my benefit for you to show your weak side, and we all have them. I can't sing opera, and I don't read jazz chord charts. It's only a problem if I have the lead in La Boheme. Be honest with me, and the band and I will work with you and we'll have an answer that sounds good....no matter what the problem.*

- 3. Don't give me your cd track and lead sheets beforehand. Or ... Better yet, come without lead sheets at all.**

*I used to be Ms. "in the moment, it'll be great". But, I learned that phrase is a great affirmation and should be backed up with solid rehearsal beforehand! I have a good band, and they like to be ready. So please give us what we need to get ready for you, far enough in advance so I can copy the tracks and get them the lead sheets before our weekly band rehearsal. The better the lead sheet you give us, the better we will support you, and we want to support you.*

- 4. Change what we agreed on.**

*I put a lot of thought and care into the song selection I had a Special Musician visit once who changed songs without putting me or the band in the loop. I've also had people who changed keys (wittingly or unwittingly) or changed the arrangement. Any*

*of this kind of thing really changes the energy in the room. It's gonna be felt. And, stuff happens. I have started a song in the wrong key myself, more than once, cause I thought I "knew" it. The deal is accidental mistakes happen, but don't change the song we've agreed on, unless we've agreed it's ok to change it (almost never happens).*

#### **5. Don't deliver what you promised.**

*I once had a singer come, years ago, at another church (just to indemnify myself) who sent me cds that sounded great. I had an intuitive feeling that something was amiss so I asked for a live demo, which sounded pretty darn good. When she showed up at the church and opened her mouth I could not believe it. Absolutely abysmal. She sounded like Whalesong, I kid you not. And when she asked me later whether I'd ask her back and I said "no", and then explained why, she was complete stunned and surprised. Hope she took voice lessons. Hey, we can all have a lousy day vocally. But there was too much difference in what was in the demo vs what she came up with. Vocal problems we all deal with, and that's ok, but be who you say you are.*

#### **6. Have attitude with the volunteers.**

*Come on, these people are in SEVA, selfless service. Do not mess with them, or with the staff. We pride ourselves on a smoothly running service, and we have policies and rules. Please don't try to come into the Sanctuary during meditation. Please don't bring an open coffee cup into the Sanctuary. And it's really, really, really worth your while to be extremely gracious and kind to the staff and volunteers. They talk, and I listen. Including my band. At my house they are volunteers, so don't mess with them, talk down to them, be rude, act like a Diva. These men are there for me every week. I respect them and love them, and I couldn't do my job as well as I do without them. Play nice.*

#### **7. Wear something inappropriate.**

*Two famous examples stand out. One very wonderful player came in a shirt and pants so rumpled he looked like he had slept in them for several days. The other was when a singer unexpectedly showed up in full angel costume, with wings and a halo. That was NOT an easy Sunday. We look GOOOOOOOOD on Sunday morning. Now that we're doing TV recording we are coordinating colors and going with the stage design. We show up in our best. Please show up neat, clean, pressed, and covered up, not ready for the Renaissance Faire or a Star Wars event.*

#### **8. Create chaos in any way, such as:**

- show up late
- bringing lots of musical equipment that I didn't know about and the sound people cannot possibly set up in the time we have.
- take up so much room on our stage (which is large) that our Minister doesn't have room to walk around
- bring SO MUCH stuff for your ample table that it looks like an Indian Bazaar, including worry beads, Chinese jewelry and lots of things from India we can get at Cost Plus.
- not be ready and centered mentally and physically: book a late gig in a bar the night before so you're exhausted and bleary-eyed.
- Don't be ready spiritually, hey, this is a Spiritual place. We're here to

open hearts, help heal, so do your part. Arrive lifted and centered in Spirit, or go thru several good practitioners until you are.

**9. Don't follow the house rules i.e.,**

-introducing yourself and talking about your song....

*No introductions at my place, it messes with the flow. We are not at a concert. This is not the time to tell your life story, which mountaintop you were on when the song came to you. I understand this one. One Sunday I had the honor to sing at Agape, and I was insecure. I knew nobody there knew who I was and so I was tempted, and I must say I took the bait. I talked a little about being from Santa Rosa. Afterwards Rickie told me...."you didn't need to say a thing, they knew who you were from the minute you started singing." She was right, and I learned my lesson.*

-wandering around backstage or in the bookstore/at your table. Stay in the Sanctuary during the service

-not respecting the time limits I give you. The best singers on this earth are not good enough to make that worthwhile. I'm on a schedule. Some churches are, some are not. But we are, and it works for me when you pay attention to that.

**10. Please don't expect to stay at my house!!**

*Do I have to explain that? Nah.*