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Period 2

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPECIFIC EVENTS

Though the fundamentals of oral interpretation are the same no matter what type of literature you are performing, there are some subtle differences of which you need to be aware in order to effectively perform different interpretation events.

Humorous Interpretation

Since a primary objective in this type of interpretation is to make your audience laugh, you can be more free with your voice and body. Performing a character of the opposite sex or over-exaggerating a character's vocal and physical mannerisms, while distracting in a serious interpretation, can add to the humor in this type of interp. Because of this, it is far more important to take risks vocally and physically in humorous interpretation. Push yourself to the limit. If these risks make you look a little silly, that only enhances the comical nature of your performance.

When selecting literature to perform, it is more important that you select a piece that allows you to take such risks while performing than a piece that is funny. Sure, you want a piece that makes your audience laugh, but only if it also allows you to show off your skill and talent at the same time. For example, many humorous interpreters will perform routines of a stand-up comedians. The material in such a selection may be very funny, but usually doesn't have characters or allow for much more than a mere reading. Therefore, a judge may be entertained by such a piece, but will be more impressed by the material than by your performance.

Dramatic Interpretation

When selecting a dramatic piece of literature to interpret, you will want to find a piece with real emotional impact. You want the audience to be moved by a dramatic piece. You can only do this if the emotion is clear in the literature. Characterization becomes more important in dramatic interpretation. While characters can be flat and one-dimensional in humorous interp, they must be fully developed in dramatic, so you will want to choose literature that has

fewer characters and fully develops those characters. Finally, you must analyze a piece of dramatic literature more carefully than you would humorous literature. Be sure you understand not only the characterization, but also the theme and symbolism (so you can demonstrate those elements to the audience), and know where the literature climaxes (so you can build to that climax throughout the piece).

Duet Interpretation

Though it is not an event sanctioned by the National Forensic League, duet interpretation, the performance of a piece of literature by two interpreters, is offered in many speech contests in many parts of the country and is used in college speech competitions. Therefore, it deserves mention. Each performer in a duet interpretation may assume many characters, but such character switches can be even more confusing than in an interpretation performed by an individual, so if you choose a piece that has more than two characters, be sure that character switches are very clear.

As in all types of interpretation, focus points are used in duet interpretation. This means that, while performing a duet interpretation, you cannot make direct eye contact with your partner. Both interpreters will choose a point in the audience and address that point as if the other character exists there, not next to them. No direct interaction of any kind is allowed. If you shake hands with your partner, you both need to extend your hands toward your focus points and suggest at the hand shake without actually touching. If one character slaps another, the aggressor will point toward the appropriate focus point and slap air while the victim responds as if he or she has been hit. This type of blocking may seem awkward, but a polished and well-coordinated team can make it look very convincing and believable.

As you can see, it is important for a duet interpretation team to be very coordinated and to carefully work out blocking. This is true, not only within the performance, but also in the introduction, transitions, and closing. Performance binders should be opened and closed together and partners should bow their heads simultaneously at the end of the interpretation.

An introduction is required for a duet interpretation, as for all interpretations. The introduction should be written as for any type of interp, but it is important to balance the lines evenly between the two performers. You may either break from character for the introduction or stay in character as you introduce each other and the scene to be performed.

Poetry and Prose Interpretation

Since these two types of interpretation are offered as supplementary events at the national tournament, they will be dealt with in Chapter Six.

PRACTICE

So much of interpretation depends upon timing and consistency. Character switches must be made in a smooth manner; voices, accents, and physical mannerisms must be maintained consistently throughout a performance. The only way to develop the proper timing and consistency in an interpretation of literature is to practice. Following are some ideas on how you can best utilize your practice time:

1. Plan your performance line by line. Before you attempt to perform your interpretation, you need to go through it line by line, word by word, and determine which physical and vocal aspects of delivery you will use to emphasize the literature and to demonstrate your interpretation. As you do this, write notes to yourself on your script so that you will remember the techniques you've planned as you memorize and practice your interpretation. Doing this ensures that you will utilize both the physical and vocal aspects of interpretation and that everything you do in your performance will support the objectives and purposes of your performance.

2. Use stops and starts. Sometimes when practicing, allow those watching you to stop you in the middle of your performance and suggest improvements at the time they notice them. You can then work on that section of your interpretation until you and your audience are satisfied with it before moving on. Not only does this make feedback more immediate, it is also a good way of adding physical and vocal techniques suggested by others and helps you to

maintain characters consistently since your audience can alert you when you slip out of character.

3. Watch yourself perform. As for any event, it is extremely helpful to see yourself perform, either on videotape or in a mirror. This allows you to see how well the physical and vocal techniques you use work, if you maintain characterization consistently, if your gestures are too small or become redundant, or if you use any distracting mannerisms.

4. Time yourself. Often, your performance time will change from what you originally thought as you add dramatic pauses, vocal and physical techniques, and vary your speaking rate for effect. Thus, you need to continually time yourself when you practice your interpretation so you don't find your performance outside the required time limits for your event.

5. Try something different each time you practice. Whenever you practice, try to add a new facial expression, gesture, or vocal change. Experiment with different character voices. Not only will this technique help keep you from becoming bored with your performance, it might just help you to find something, no matter how small, that can improve your interpretation.