

## WHAT MAKES A SONG SPECIAL?

A “memorable” musical theatre song considers the following characteristics:

- Repetition
- Simple song structure
- The 4 fundamental needs for human memory:
  - Primacy (what you hear first)
  - Recency (what you hear last)
  - Frequency
  - Vividness

*Example of these qualities: The **overture**, the **entr’acte**, scene change music, and exit music/bows all meet the 4 fundamental needs.*

Structure: An ideal song structure is 32 **measures** long is a good length because it can be divided into 4 sections of 8 measures each.

- A solid, memorable song structure in musical theatre is divided into AABA phrasing.

A	A	B	A
8 m +	8 m +	8 m +	8m

- The B section is also known as the **bridge**. The bridge usually changes key and creates something of a break from the rest of the song.

### Types of Songs

- **Ballad:** a slow song
  - Ballads can be love songs, dramatic, or charming
    - Example of a ballad: *On My Own* from *Les Miserables*
  - Ballads can also function as a soliloquy
    - Example: *Soliloquy* from *Carousel*
- **Rhythm Song:** a song that is defined by a recognizable and distinctive rhythm
  - Example: *Henry Ford* from *Ragtime*
- **Comedy Songs:** there are 2 different types of comedy songs
  - **Long Joke Comedy Song:** the whole chorus is the story with the last line of the song being the joke, or the punchline
    - Example: *Little Tin Box* from *Fiorello!*

- **Short Joke Comedy Song:** a song where the setup for the joke, or the punchline, is 3 lines – delivery is on the 4<sup>th</sup> line
  - A Short Joke song can have multiple jokes
  - The joke, or punchline, can be the same everytime
  - Short Joke songs are usually ballads
  - Example: *Bewitched* from Pal Joey
  
- **Charm Song:** a type of sweet ballad that doesn't necessarily try to make a comic point
  - Example: *Mr. Snow* from Carousel

### Singing 101

1. Relax! – Good sound can only come when you are relaxed. This will help your vocal cords and your jaw to fully relax, allowing for maximum sound and resonance.
2. Breathe! – Just like when we project onstage, we need to use our diaphragm to help support our voice by creating resistance. Aim for full phrases when you sing...in other words, don't breathe in the middle of a word or thought.
3. Listen! – Good singing requires listening to make sure you are singing the correct pitch. *Perfect pitch* is rare – you either have it or you don't! *Relative pitch* can be acquired and improved to the point where it might seem like you have perfect pitch!
4. Posture! – Keeping your diaphragm unobstructed is super important. If you are hunched over, you can impact the amount your diaphragm can expand. Always make sure your chest and stomach area are as open as possible to help maximize your breathing.
5. Health! – Taking care of your voice is incredibly important! Remember the following:
  - a. ALWAYS warm-up before you sing! Your vocal cords are a muscle, and like any muscle, you don't want to exercise it unless you prepare it!
  - b. Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate! Water is your best friend! It keeps mucus from accumulating on your vocal cords.
  - c. Know your limits! If a note feels uncomfortable to sing, then you probably shouldn't sing it!
  - d. Avoid smoking! Smoking not only causes issues with your lungs, but it can also negatively impact your voice long-term. (Not to mention affecting your breathing.)
  - e. Avoid screaming or yelling! Screaming puts immense pressure on your vocal cords and causes them to slam together. Too much slamming together can result in the development of nodules, which are small sores that can impact your ability to speak.