

Ballad Techniques

Include your breath timing in the overall plan for pacing the movement of the phrases...to tell the story more cohesively and to set up and build excitement leading to the musical climax.

To be prepared to do this be sure to keep your body well aligned so that a breath *at any tempo* is possible.

Avoid heaviness in your sound. Strive to maintain the ring of your sound in spite of the lack of toe-tapping tempo. A well supported sound is the only sound that will ring and move fluidly.

Try speaking the lyrics to get a sense of the natural pulse of the delivery.

Strive to match musical high points/points of interest with the stress of the lyric content. Usually, the better match you can achieve, the stronger the delivery. Of course, it helps to start out with a really solid arrangement.

Make an effort to “sing the punctuation.” Not every phrase ends with a “period.” Again, speaking the lyrics can often help you establish the emotional movement of the song. Usually, the more emotional the lyric content, the faster the breath should be. You want breath timing that will help you tell the story. This means the breath timing must vary as the emotional content of the story varies.

Be sure to consider dynamics that are inclusive of two or more phrases. A crescendo (or decrescendo) doesn't need to be contained in only one phrase.

The absence of overt tempo needs to be replaced with a floating, fluid sense of pulse and meter. The pulse and meter (e.g.: downbeat, etc.) doesn't go away just because you can't tap your toe. Maintaining the sense of pulse and meter is essential to the movement and even the form of the song.