

Music and magic

Music is the greatest art in that it transcends language, international borders and intellectual understanding.

Music is a relatively easy way to increase the entertainment and appeals in your show. given the above, why would you NOT include it?

I am a purist and my magic is untouched.
I don't want to complicate my set up
I don't know what to do.

3 kinds of music use: - silent acts, talking acts, mixture

objective

the two most highly regarded contemporary books on Showmanship: Henning Nelms (Magic and Showmanship) and Ken Weber's (Maximum Success), both give short shrift to music.

Henning Nelms was a director of plays (not musicals). Ken Weber is a Mentalist. In one case, Nelms is just wrong when he states that integrating music is complicated. " Music has great entertainment value... but they present problems that the average performer finds insuperable. Canned music requires expensive equipment. It is cumbersome. Etc;"

Not using today's technology, and in the other, Ken Weber admits he would use more music if given the choice to re-do his show.

Another good book with bad examples is Fitzkee's Showmanship for Magicians. it has some good ideas but there are some dated ones as well. What is acceptable, does change over time. Nevertheless, his commentary about the appeal of precise attack, rhythm, and other musical values are still accurate.

I come from a theatre background, but with particular focus on Dance and movement. I would estimate that at least 50% of my success and showmanship is due to music and the choices I made. I would argue that Nelms is completely wrong and that adding music to a show will be easier and more immediately effective than trying to learn to 'act'.

So let's talk about adding music al appeals to YOUR show:

The least involved use of music is for **transitions**: entrances, exits, people coming To the stage, etc; incidental. 5-15 seconds... can end with a fade. Play on music for the performer should have a definite ending. Other goals: bright, upbeat, and attention getting. EX
If you use a tune for a play on and 'have' to fade, make sure your speaking begins by covering the fade.

Play offs for the audience should end definitely. EX

Play offs for the performer can punctuate and then fade or transition to exit music. EX

AT the very least, use a play on and exit bow music for yourself.

The next level of integration is as **background**: a music 'bed' that fills in the silences in a talking routine. Lower recording levels. EX. timing the length can be difficult. I use a fixed length and use the bow as a second track: Finger Rings. EX. a variation is when the music starts soft and build in volume , tempo or intensity to the climax (Bolero)

The third level would be tightly integrated or choreographed routines. These should always end with punctuation. Failure to end with the music will be obvious. Fade out will Not produce applause.

Newspaper tear: loose integration , jazz with natural ending. Because of variables from show to show, it is good to build a 'cushion' into the arrangement, to cover problems.

Linking Rings: Ballad with an attached ending. Simple use of vocalise. I have also used pop instrumentals for this routine. Choose appropriate music to the scale of the trick.

Sinatra String: intentional use of vocals with an added intro and playoff. Copperfield pioneered the successful use of vocals in magic , until DC, instrumentals were the ONLY possibilities. Be careful when trying to match the words of a song to magic actions. it can appear cutesy,, trite or silly.

Inertia: this trick is stronger with music. Original track was monotonous and required editing. Jazz can be repetitive or worse yet: go off in directions that don't serve your purpose. In this case, edit it into another track: (Drum roll?) and find a musical resolution.

Manipulation Acts rely on music to influence the mood of their magic. Changes of tempo or style can increase energy. Lance Burton took Vivaldi's "The Seasons" and used its unifying length to integrate disparate elements and tricks... making it seem to be all 'of a whole'.

Kinds of music: classical, jazz ,pop.

Here things start to get

Subjective:

music should match the size / scale of the effect: 1812 overture for thimbles?!

Jazz or small arrangements suit manipulation routines, as there are opportunities to exploit musical accents.

Movie sound tracks can be dangerous .. do you really want the audience to be thinking about the Titanic when you are showing a playing card? Richardi was quoted as saying that using unfamiliar music means the audience has no prior associations with memory.

Counter argument: Using familiar music can add texture if used correctly. Sinatra for example. 'Trying to keep Contemporary' means chasing the hit parade. (Franz Harrary)

Music libraries that are often subscription services can provide music. my opinion: this music is soulless and sounds like what used to be called 'elevator music'. There is often nothing wrong with it.. but there isn't much that is inspiring.

Fade out endings weaken any chance of getting additional applause.

Re write the ending of a song by taking an ending from another song from the same recording (session)

Alternately, use a fade that goes into silence to create dramatic effect, and then find a punctuator for an ending.

Get a simple music editing program such as garage band.

musical integrity: generally speaking, musicians are trained in composition and know 'form' Adhere to the music form whenever possible.

use musical contrast.... fast slow, legato , rhythmic. The more contrast you can incorporate into your show, the better. It will appeal to more people and it allows you to do a longer show without losing interest.

Which comes first... the music or the trick?

Both... or either! Like the even older question: lyrics or melody.. it can work either way. I collect music that might be suitable for various routines and sometimes I choose from those. Other times, I have tricks ready, that are waiting for the right tune.

Avoid using what everyone else is using. Just because it fits them, doesn't mean it will fit you.

Do not copy what I have shown here tonight.