

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

The Audience.

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ERIKA MANN.

THE AUDIENCE is one of the most delicate instruments in existence. There is something virtually uncanny about the hyper-sensitiveness of an ordinary listening-crowd whose average member, if addressed individually, would afford the lecturer no greater chance to practice his or her art, than one disconnected string would the violinist. In playing his instrument, the lecturer had better not rely on tricks or mannerisms. Like any instrumentalist, he'll need talent, a sound technique, a measure of practical experience, and - perhaps above all - an inborn love of his tool. ~~Hhhhhh~~ Unless you like your audience, it won't like you, and you'll prove incapable of even a fair performance.

Here are some of the basic rules and tabus which, as a lecturer, I have come to respect:

- (1.) Be present, - the whole of you, with all your ^{FACULTIES} ~~facilities~~; all your heart and mind. Never say a sentence, emptily, as it were, and without having thought and felt its contents. Your audience may not actually know just what perturbs them; yet it reacts instinctively to any absent-mindedness, any half-heartedness on your part, and even one minute of sloppiness and diminished intensity may lose you its precious ear.
- (2.) In the course of your address, look into as many eyes as possible; give everyone in the place the impression that he or she might presently meet with your personal attention. Don't forget your balcony and be especially mindful of your far ends, in the back, as well as on the sides. Your center-front-rows feel close to you anyway, and you might even embarrass them by taking undue advantage of their physical nearness.
- (3.) Whenever you make a mistake, don't try to hush it up; exploit it; turn it into an amusing incident which will enliven your listeners, rather than make them wary and uncertain. This holds true for any disturbance

beyond your ~~control~~ ^{control}. When the ~~game~~ ^{MIKE} refuses properly to function; when it hums, whistles, or falls silent : don't attempt to go on as if nothing had happened. Talk it over with your audience; since they know that you are in a mess, be so generous as to take them into your confidence. Do likewise whenever the hooping-cough overtakes you. Let them in on your sufferings; invite them cordially to do a bit of coughing themselves, and they'll emerge, a grateful and invigorated crowd.

(4.) Though you don't have to start out with a joke, ~~some~~ ^{SOME} fun, ~~served~~ fairly early in the game, is likely to do you good - provided it really fits the occasion. Jokes, not organically and logically connected with what you have to say, may be exceedingly harmful.

(5.) Watch your gestures of which there must be neither too many nor too few and which had better be right, both for size and tempo. When raising a new point, or emphasizing an important one, you may quicken your audience's attention by some slight move of your hands. Steady gesticulating, on the other side, will tend to tire your listeners, and make them acutely nervous.

(6.) Never continue in one vein for too long a period of time. If, in the course of your presentation, you mean to be mild, militant, critical, sad, funny, frightening, comforting, ~~funny~~, and apprehensive, spread all these qualities all over the place, rather than getting stuck in any one mood for more than a few minutes. Also, once in a while, think of the pause that refreshes.

(7.) What else? Dozens of crucial points might be added but ~~the~~ ^{what} following ^{is} embraces most that's important: Don't ever talk down to your audience. - Speak up; everybody wants to hear you, and nobody wants to make an effort to do so. Be patient with hecklers; the more aggressive they get, the more gently amused you'd better appear; never permit a heckler to ally himself with your audience but in a kindly fashion turn them against him, -

he's asked for just that.- Be natural. Be nice; and, if you can help it at all, don't finish on a shrill or depressing note. Grim, as your subject may be, don't send your audience home, sorry and dejected. There's always hope, and in the end, the most disharmonic truths may be dissolved into truthful harmony.

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