

## Ensemble Skills: Stage Presence

*Even if you are in a jam session there is a bit of “performance” required to succeed. You might need to work on skills to combat nervousness or even stage fright. There are things you can do to prepare yourself for success and cut down on some of the pressure.*

- 1. It’s just music.** Playing music is very personal. You are bearing your soul and your feelings to the world. It can feel very embarrassing to make a mistake in front of others and it can be discouraging to try hard and fail. IT can be intimidating to play with musicians who are better than you are, and it often takes a lot to get over these hurdles. Keep in mind that it’s just music. Even if the whole song falls apart and crashes, no one gets hurt, no one dies, and you can always try to get back into it. Find a song you love and play it.
- 2. You are expressing yourself.** There is a lot to be said for transcribing solos and learning from others. There are certainly many players who imitate others. They are often very good and make really good music. But the goal of playing music is not to mimic who someone else is, but rather to find out who you are. It is a journey of self-discovery. If you can’t play all the licks you want, or you don’t sound like another player you admire, that’s ok. All you have to do is sound like you and strive to improve. Find a song that touches you and play it.
- 3. Everyone wants you to succeed.** People play music because they love it, and they listen to music because they love it. They want to hear the song you are playing, and they are on your team. All you have to do is keep moving forward. If you make a mistake, carry on. If you have to stop and start a verse again, that’s ok. If you miss the kickoff and need to start over, that’s ok too. People are rooting for you. Show everyone you love a song, and they will love it too.
- 4. Pay attention to how you look on stage.** What is the image you want to convey? Who are you as a person? You can play a character, but that needs to be sincere. People can see through a schtick, or a false face. Your best bet is to be absolutely yourself. Where are you from? How do you feel? Why do you like playing music? Find a song that suits you and play it.
- 5. Pay attention to how your stage looks.** It goes a long way to have your backdrop cleared of gear and stuff. You want the focus to be on you and your music, not on your instrument cases, gear cases, coats, etc. Try to present a nice show to your audience. Give your songs the best environment you can.