

How to Keep Your Music from Ruining Your Performance

By: Keith Watson, [edit: bzj]

As a past competitor in both the AJA and IJA Keith knows just how much pressure there is in a competition. It doesn't matter how many hours you perform in front of an audience, competitions are different.

You have practiced months and spent countless hours on every detail of your tricks, transitions and costuming.

You have only minutes to impress the judges and audience. A drop rattles your focus and you pray that it won't throw off the rest of your performance.

A music miss-queue can throw off your routine just as much as a drop.

In years past Keith has run sound for the AJA competitions and has compiled the following list of common music problems in order that you may avoid them:

1. You must provide your music as an MP3 file on a FAT32 formatted USB thumb drive, or email your MP3 to atlantajugglers@gmail.com. In the email you must include your full name, and the artist & title of your music. Please remember that emailing your music to AJA **does not** guarantee that you will be allowed to compete. You **must** still register for the Phil Competition and pay the registration fees by the cutoff time on Saturday morning of the Festival.

We use a laptop to play the music. For the show to run smoothly the MP3 file you provide must be processed and added to the Competition music queue in the correct order that the competitors will appear.

It is safer to bring your music on a thumb drive as they are less likely to be damaged in transit. If you email your music to us, we will acknowledge receipt; however, it is strongly recommended that you still bring a copy of your music with you to the festival just to be safe.

If your thumb drive is not formatted FAT32, we may not be able to read it.

You should also consider bringing two copies of your music, one on a USB thumb drive and one on your phone. That way if you lose one or it gets damaged you still have music for your performance.

2. We will not play music from a phone, YouTube, Spotify, Pandora or any other music device or service. We must have an MP3 file that can be added to the Phil Competition music queue.

This is the most common cause of music miss-queues. You may think your phone/player, etc. is the easiest thing in the world to use, but there are hundreds of devices and all of them have different menus and player applications. We have never used your device before, don't know the application, and have no idea what the name of your music is or where it is stored on your device.

It is also unlikely that we will have an audio adapter that will connect your device to the sound board. In addition, if your device runs out of power, we don't have the power adapter for it.

When the screen saver starts, it usually locks the screen and we don't know how to unlock it. Once it is unlocked the player app may no longer be displayed and we have no idea how to get it back. It will really throw off your performance if you are all set to start and you have to run off stage to get your music to play. This really doesn't look good to the judges nor the audience.

3. Make sure your music is appropriate for the audience.

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We have children in the audience. If your music contains adult themed lyrics you will have to perform without music.

4. Edit your music before you get to the competition.

If you have adult themed lyrics in your music and you still want to use it you can edit the music using tools such as Audacity to mask the offensive language. A common technique is to reverse the audio of the offensive parts. Short pieces of reversed audio are usually undetectable to the audience. Edit your audio before you get to the competition. We will not do it for you.

Don't expect the sound board operators to follow a complex mix of multiple tracks from multiple sources. If you have multiple music sources mix them yourself using a tool like Audacity and save them as a single file before you get to the competition.

5. Drops happen, plan for them.

If your routine is timed to the music, plan ahead for drops so that you know how to get back in sync with the music.

For routines that are not synced to the music you can compensate for drops by having a little more music than you actually need for the routine. If your routine finishes before the music, the sound board operators will do a graceful fade. Be aware that some competitions are very strict about running over time so this will not work in all cases.

6. If you don't follow the above advice, the sound board operators have no obligation to accommodate you. Remember they are now a partner in your act and they have never practiced your routine. Your juggling could be flawless and your new sound partner could unintentionally ruin all your hard work.

References:

USB Thumb Drive

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USB_flash_drive

FAT32

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File_Allocation_Table#FAT32

MP3

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MP3>

Audacity

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Audacity_\(audio_editor\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Audacity_(audio_editor))