

IMPORTANT TIPS ON DRAMATIC APPROPRIATENESS AND AVOIDING A “THEATRICAL” PERFORMANCE

(excerpted from the Poetry Out Loud website and *Judge’s Guide*)

In reciting a poem aloud, you are not like an actor, coming to understand, and then to feel yourself in a dramatic part, a fictional person. It’s rather that you come to understand, and then to be, the voice of the poem itself.

–from *Committed to Memory* by John Hollander

(<http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/lesson/committed-memory>)

- A strong performance will rely on a powerful internalization of the poem rather than distracting dramatic gestures.
- Depending on the poem, occasional gestures may be appropriate, but the line between appropriate and overdone is a thin one. When uncertain, leave them out.
- Do not act out the poem. Too much dramatization distracts from the language and voice of the poem. Movement or accents must not detract from the poem’s voice.
- You are the vessel of your poem. Have confidence that your poem is strong enough to communicate without a physical illustration. Let the words of the poem do the work.
- Avoid monotone delivery. However, too much enthusiasm can make your performance seem insincere.
- The style of delivery is more about oral interpretation than dramatic enactment or theatrical performance. (Think storyteller or narrator rather than actor.)

<http://www.poetryoutloud.org/poems-and-performance/tips-on-reciting>