GUIDELINES FOR PERFORMERS

Here are some brief notes on the performance workshop given by Mel, Susie and the late great John Best at the Boyup Brook festival 2015 by Christine Boult.

If you want to perform at a Muster please call the MC beforehand to let them know (see website for who is the MC and contact details )

**Practise your microphone technique.** Learn how the stands work and how to adjust them yourselves. Watch where other performers stand to see how far back you need to be. If you want to use a handheld microphone, practise with a hairbrush or skipping rope ( or whatever takes your fancy) and see how creative you can be as you integrate your microphone technique into your poem. Fake it ‘til you make it…harness your nerves and practise out loud. Don’t fiddle with the lead.

**Video**: If possible watch yourself on video and see all of your personal habits so that you can leave them at home (fiddling with bra straps, picking your nose…) Time yourself…allow for laughs. **Hats on back of head.**

**Logistics**: Find out where the loo is. Where you can warm up and get yourselves ready before you go on. If possible go on the stage to check out what it feels like. Be aware of the lights, if they’re bright stay there, it means the audience can see you. Prepare yourself as much as you can.

**Slow down**: do whatever you can to relax and make your voice ready. Slow down if you can, when you’re nervous, you tend to speed up your delivery. It’s OK to be nervous.

**Research**: If you don’t know something …ask . (How long is your bracket? Who are you after?....)Find ideas to give you confidence…eg.circle of excellence.

**Memory**: use movements/gestures to help anchor sticky patches and incorporate them into the sense of the poem( you can move more in humorous poems). Revisit poems you haven’t said for a while. Use highlighters or block the poem into units to learn ( try different strategies to find out what works for you). Use the same copy when you are learning. Say poems in different places and in challenging situations until you can say them through anything that might happen to you.

**Talk to the audience** as if they were your friends…**set your mood**. What can I get out of this poem for the audience? Keep your focus and never apologise.

**In a competition**…choose a poem where you can use light and shade, demonstrate a range of emotions and your vocal abilities. Something out of the ordinary helps. Name the poem and the author(poet). Learn the poem and its context, visualise the story.

**Organisation**…made sure you are organised. Learn your preamble (10 points of your marks) and don’t tell the story of the poem. Pick where to breathe, check your breath control and volume. Pace..vary but take your time. Ride the wave of laughter and don’t swallow the ends of your lines. Check your pronunciation. Slow down your poem at the end so that the audience knows you have finished then step back from the microphone and take a bow when the audience claps.

**Presence**…claim the stage.

**Practise…. Practise…. Practise**….Wherever you can to whoever will listen.

**A SPECIAL NOTE FOR NEW PERFORMERS**

Learn a poem that is short, three to four verses is fine and very achievable. There are lots of great short poems that are in our tradition. Also if you are planning on reading …practise. Many of us have a hard copy of the poem ,while we are learning or as a back-up. If you are reading 80% of your performance goes to the page and not the audience. Remember that we are a rhyming poetry club.