Example Set List – Staff Summer Celebration

This is the set list used by the 2015-16 Ensemble in Residence for their performance at the Staff Summer Celebration. Music was needed 14.00–15.30pm. Annotations showing the reasoning behind have been added for your benefit, but are not expected to be included.

Set 1 – 15 minutes

Don’t it Make My Brown Eyes Blue – We always began with one of our favourite pieces, as we knew it really well and it gave us confidence for the rest of the performance.

May it Be – Don’t be afraid to slow the set down, a set that only contains fast, high energy pieces is exhausting for you and the audience.

It Must be Love – One of the more difficult ones in our repertoire, we always sandwiched this between two that we really liked and could do really well in case it didn’t quite go to plan.

Sway (Quien Sera) – This is a really fun, well known piece that became one of our signature songs, so it was always a good one to end a set with.

5 minute break – As a vocal ensemble it was important for us to take regular breaks when singing consistently for such an extended period of time.

Set 2 – 15 minutes

For the Longest Time – This one featured our tenor singing lead so he preferred to do this in the middle of a set once his voice had settled and before we all got tired.

Groovy Kind of Love – Another tricky arrangement, we didn’t really have enough voices to cover all the parts of the original arrangement but we made some edits and ended up with our own version that audiences loved.

Bridge Over Troubled Water – This was a really simple three part arrangement that meant that we could double up on parts or let people have a rest. It was also useful to have smaller arrangements of things for when people were ill and suddenly couldn’t get to a gig.

Rolling in the Deep – This was a brilliant song to end the set as it’s so well known, we could all really get into character and put some emotion into the performance which audiences loved.

5 minute break

Vice Chancellors Speech – talking from experience, it’s important to stay within sight of anyone making a speech, as they usually mention you, it can be awkward for everyone if they thank you for performing and you’ve run off…
Set 3 – 10 minutes – Performance – Choose your favourite crowd pleasers, don’t cram too much into this slot.

Sway (Quien Sera) – Repetition from earlier, but as most guests drifted in no one noticed.

Run to You – Again, slowing it down. This piece didn’t work quite as well as background music (the arrangement was a little too mournful) but it was effective in a performance because it showcased our skills as singers that would have been lost otherwise.

Hallelujah – A crowd favourite, again this didn’t work so well as background music but gave us each a chance to show off in the solo verses.

5 minute break

Set 4 – 15 minutes

Don’t It Make My Brown Eyes Blue – This is the part where we started repeating our background music as people now knew who you were and were more likely to listen properly to the music you sang while they were ignoring you.

Weeping - repeat

It Must Be Love - repeat

Somebody That I Used to Know – As this set is mostly repeating earlier material, we put in a new well known piece to finish and make the set more interesting to sing.

5 minute break

Set 5 – 10 minutes – The final set! If anyone had any requests for repeats, this is where we would slot them in. The event is usually winding down by this point, but it’s still important to keep performing at the same energy and performance level as you were at the beginning – there are still guests around.

Groovy Kind of Love – Crowd pleaser, upbeat, vocally challenging enough to make us concentrate

Rolling in the Deep – crowd pleaser, upbeat, dramatic, character driven and a complex arrangement of repeats and swapping parts meant we had to really think.

For the Longest Time – Our tenor hated putting this one last, but this was the piece that the audience (and events staff) loved the most so we always ended with it. We knew this one like the back of our hands so we had a lot of fun performing it and adding in extra vocal tricks to spice up performances.

After this point, if the event was going on longer than expected we would repeat the set list – but in a different order. Some events wound down earlier than planned, but it’s always important to have a backup plan in case the opposite happens. We worked really hard to create a set list where repeats were spaced out as far as possible to avoid detection. We would probably have repeated Set 3, then Set 1.

You have to play the same music a lot over the year (usually) and there are many different events, so pick music that you all enjoy. We found that it was nice to mix up the genres, because across the year we sang for many different events. Some audiences had heard us before, some hadn’t, but everyone has different music tastes. We created a basic set list at the beginning of the year, which we adapted for different events, and added new music when older repertoire was getting stale through overuse or not appealing to the audiences. We mainly stuck to jazz and pop repertoire, with occasional forays into classical, folk, and African inspired music, as we found that the audiences and events responded really well to this.