

Teaching Jazz to Vocalists

Darmon Meader

LISTEN TO VOCAL JAZZ!

Soloist: Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughn, Dianne Reeves, Nat King Cole, Joe Williams, Billie Holiday, Frank Sinatra, Chet Baker, Nancy Wilson, Carmen McRae, Dinah Washington, Jo Stafford, Mark Murphy, Bobby McFerrin, Mel Tormé, Eddie Jefferson, Elise Regina & Antonio Carlos Jobim, Kurt Elling, Tierney Sutton, Diana Krall, Gregory Porter, Al Jarreau, Shirley Horn, Ernestine Anderson, June Christy, Blossom Dearie, Anita O'Day, Chris Connor, Betty Carter, Cassandra Wilson

The “Next Generation”: Esperanza Spalding, Cyrille Aimée, Becca Stevens, Cécile McLorin Salvant, Jazzmeia Horn, Melody Gardot, Veronica Swift, Gretchen Parlato

Vocal Groups: LH&R, The Hi-Los, The Manhattan Transfer, Real Group, Singers Unlimited, New York Voices, saje, Take 6, Vertical Voices.

LISTEN TO INSTRUMENTAL JAZZ!!!

Duke Ellington, Count Basie Orchestra, Miles Davis (multiple eras), Bill Evans, Chet Baker (again), Herbie Hancock, Dave Brubeck, Stan Getz, Chick Corea, Wynton Marsalis, The Yellowjackets, The Brecker Brothers, Steps Ahead, Weather Report, Christian McBride

More recent: Maria Schneider Big Band, Chris Potter, Bill Charlap Trio, Ingrid Jensen, Snarky Puppy, Anat Cohen, Emmet Cohen, Bria Skonberg, Sean Jones, Chad (LB) Lefkowitz-Brown, Julian Lage

Take time to wander down the YouTube path. It's never ending!

WHAT ARE COMMON ELEMENTS OR FEATURES OF JAZZ?

Groove, Time feel (and manipulation), Inflection, Tone, “Conversational” approach, and of course, **spontaneity**.

Instrumental jazz influences: minimal vibrato, harmonic complexity, big band articulation, back phrasing, complex arrangements, specific instrumental formats (trio, quartet, sextet (trpt, sax, bone), big band

The role of consonants, the role of vowels . . .

Consonants, Vowels, Glottal versus soft vowels, Elision, hard “t” versus soft “t”, conversational English, versus “swinglish”. Fast phrases are like long words “supercalifragilistic, antidisestablishmentarianism”

HOW TO LEARN A NEW SONG

1. Find at least two lead sheets (for comparison)
2. Listen to a few versions. What do you like? What do you not like?
What changes were made by the vocalist in comparison to the lead sheet?
3. Pick an appropriate key! Sop, Alto, Ten, Bass – not as clearly defined when choosing soloist keys. Find the key that feels conversational and relaxed
4. Learn the correct melody before expanding and improvising
5. Start expanding away from the original melody, both rhythmically and melodically
6. Start exploring the chord progression theory, the bass line motion, the common tones, the voice leading etc. This is the “deep end of the pool,” but is the very important if you want to become “Jazz fluent” and not just “Jazz adjacent”

Note: Encourage the WHOLE ensemble to learn the melody. Not just the vocalist.

POP INFLECTION VERSUS JAZZ INFLECTION

Pop melismatic phrasing versus jazz embellishment

Pop/R&B blues versus jazz blues

The “Cher,” “John Legend” and “Country Blues” syndromes...

Traditionally, JAZZ SINGERS DO NOT MANIPULATE THE LANGUAGE!

HARMONY!

A jazz singer MUST have a handle on jazz harmony, song forms, and terminology: Head, bridge, intro, vamp, two beat versus four beat, samba, bossa nova, afro Cuban 12/8, rhythm changes, AABA,

CHORDS: Major, Minor, Dominant (jazz definition, not just V), half-diminished, diminished, and all of the EXTENSIONS!

Vertical versus Horizontal awareness – knowing where you are in the chord structure, thus allowing you to make informed decisions about where to go.

SWING! What makes it happen?

Feeling the triplet subdivision, but not with an aggressive approach.

Within the triplet, allowing the 3rd 8th note be “lively and active.”

Understand and practice a “laid back” approach

Develop an understanding of how swing feel changes from era to era

Develop an understanding of how swing feel changes based on tempo

Use text as articulation AND direction, while feeling resistance

Sing examples of line: I Thought About You, Night and Day, Fly Me to the Moon,
Another You

Specific Phrasing Concepts

- Back-phrasing
- More spoken style
- Instrumental swing energy
- Elasticity – use of vowels “swinglish”
- Short versus long notes: influenced by the lyric, the chord, and the mood

Specific Melodic Interpretation Ideas

- Notes above melody, Note below melody
- Chord tone above, Chord tone below
- Upper extensions
- Moving through the chord tones
- Inversion
- Blues
- Random

“MUST KNOW” TERMINOLOGY:

- Song Forms – Blues, AABA, ABAC, Rhythm Changes etc.
- Swing – 2 beat versus 4 beat feel
- Latin – Samba, Bossa Nova, Songo, Mambo, Rhumba, Bolero, Partito Alto, Baião
- Funk
- Backbeat
- Half-time / Double-time
- Rubato (versus relaxed phrasing)
- Song structure terms: Head, Intro, Tag, Vamp, Pedal, Turnaround, DS versus DC al Coda
- Modulation
- Re-harmonization
- Hi Hat versus Ride in both swing and latin
- “Laid Back”
- 2-5-1 chord progression
- Tritone Substitution

Learn the roles of the rhythm section players and how they interact. The more you can speak the language of the rhythm section players and instrumentalists, the more you are trusted and respected by your instrumental peers.

There Will Never Be Another You

Med. Swing

Music by Harry Warren

Lyric by Mack Gordon

[A] $E^b_{MA}7$ $D_{MI}7(b5)$ $G7$

There will be man - y oth - er nights like this, _____ And

$C_{MI}7$ $(F7)$ $B^b_{MI}9$ E^b13

I'll be stand - ing here with some - one new, _____ There

$A^b_{MA}7$ $D^b9(\#11)$ $E^b_{MA}7$ $C_{MI}7$

will be oth - er songs to sing, An - oth - er fall, an - oth - er spring, But

$F9$ $F_{MI}7$ B^b7

there will nev - er be an - oth - er you. _____ There

[B] $E^b_{MA}7$ $D_{MI}7(b5)$ $G7$

will be oth - er lips that I may kiss, _____ But

$C_{MI}7$ $(F7)$ $B^b_{MI}9$ E^b13

they won't thrill me like yours used to do, _____ Yes,

$A^b_{MA}7$ $D^b9(\#11)$ $E^b_{MA}7$ $(F13 A_{MI}7(b5) D7)$

I may dream a mil - lion dreams but how can they come true if

E^b6 $A^b9(\#11)$ $G_{MI}7$ $C7$ $F_{MI}7$ B^b13 E^b6 (B^b7)

there will nev - er, ev - er, be an - oth - er you?

ANOTHER YOU

MELODIC & RHYTHMIC VARIATION

There will be ma - ny oth - er nights like this, And

I'll be stand - ing here with some - one new. There

will be oth - er songs to sing, A - no - ther fall, a - no - ther spring, But

there will ne - ver be a - no - ther you. There

will be oth - er lips that I may kiss, but

their's won't thrill me like yours used to do, Yes,

I may dream a mil - lion dreams, but how can they come true if

there will ne - ver, e - ver be a - no - ther you.

Chord progressions: EbMa⁷, Dm^{7b5}, G^{7(b9)}, Cm⁷, F⁷, Bbm⁹, Eb¹³, AbMa⁷, Db^{13(#11)}, EbMa⁷, Cm⁹, F^{13(#11)}, Fm⁷, Bb⁷, EbMa⁷, Dm^{7b5}, G^{7(b9)}, Cm⁷, Bbm⁹, Eb¹³, AbMa⁷, Db^{13(#11)}, EbMa⁷, Am⁷, D⁷, EbMa⁶, Ab^{9(#11)}, Gm⁷, C^{7(b9)}, Fm⁷, Bb¹³, EbMa⁶, Bb⁷.