

11. Temperament, diet, energy level of the singer

Interests operate like perpetual machines for the jazz vocalist. When we become interested in something we pay attention to it, and in doing so we become more interested in it. This process can continue until we become so tired that further concentration or dedication is impossible and we need to stop just to breathe and replenish. But almost as quickly as we have become reinforced we are back again grinding away at what we are interested in. Feeling driven sounds dramatic. And why shouldn't it? Singing from the heart brings out the visionary in you. Feeling driven is a healthy way to feel when singing vocal jazz. Practice will either burn you out or inspire you to become driven as well. When you believe in your music, yourself, and know your direction, it is possible to be creative interpreting and trusting your response to the music based on your experience with it. Such trust can breed more trust each time you encounter the same piece of music, as the results will reinforce your confidence in the undertaking. Thus, you never look forward to redo the song the same way. Instead, you trust your judgment of what is effective in your ability to contribute to the inner meaning that you are already derived from that song as you transmit the essence of that message through your music making. This is known as experiencing. It is the ability to channel yourself in the process of song improvisation while memorizing the lyrics and then singing.. Positioning is what the singer brings to the song when they feel the need to say something about the song that is personal.

Good singers have two important qualities: 1) good breathing technique when singing, and 2) the ability to manipulate the voice for the enhancement of their intended vocal delivery. Energy is present when a healthy approach to singing is utilized. Generally, a vocalist uses two resonances: head and chest. For developing deeper breathing system a few suggestions include the following. First, singers might try to imagine the space from the center chest (just below sternum) as the basement in a building and the roof (crown of head) as the head tone. The singer can imagine sound traveling in the body as if on an elevator traveling up and down from the basement to the roof while maintaining an even dynamic - not too loud and not too soft. While adding singing to the exercise, assist the singer in singing a favorite song the first time as if the pressure is coming from behind the eyes... singing as if it feels like the eyes are swelling or as if about to cry. Singing the second time with the imagination of the pressure coming from the front of mouth...as if there is a buzzing feeling from the lips when

singing. Even better is to have the singer imagine singing from the muzzle of the mouth keeping mouth in closed position. The goal is to have each word in the song feels as if it is coming from the same place at the front of the mouth. Second, guide the singer to a comfortable low key sustaining an *ah* or *oh* on one breath while ascending major and minor intervals within comfortable range, returning back to the 1st note known as the root. They should take a breath and descend to a comfortable low. Once completed, have them modulate to the next higher key, repeating the exercise until reaching a comfortable high note. Then the singer should try reversing the exercise until returning back to the first root. This exercise should be repeated until there is no need to take a breath in between. Continue this process until you feel as if you are singing all of the notes in your head; then continue the exercise as you sing stepwise lower tones each time. Eventually you will feel like all of the notes are in your chest. Third, work with the singer on interval exercises with jazz syllables. Eventually, this approach will assist in the 'literacy of scat used in improvisation.

1 3 5 7 9 7 5 3 1
 Shah bah doo wee ooh wee doo bee wah
 9 7 5 3 1 3 5 7 9
 Ooh wee doo bee shah bah doo wee ooh

Fourth, for better skill development, have singers practice from a recording of drones or roots with a funk or bluesy rhythm while working through these exercises. There are several accompaniment tracks available on line to assist in this process. There are also many tools available from the web. Have singers conduct research to acquire this information. Fifth, ensure that the singer feels free to *ad lib* once they have mastered these suggested techniques. *ad lib* simply means to play around with the intervals by changing the interval numbers and the roots. Have fun with it. It is all about building flexibility and confidence in the voice when moving from one resonance to the other. This is not all there is to resonators by any means. It is however a beginning. Mastery does not come easily, and is as ever-changing as is the human condition. Sixth, singers should listen to favorite recordings of instrumental jazz tunes while practicing imitating the sound of each instrument including a saxophone, trumpet, bass, and drum. Have them notice the different tones made by each instrument. There is a particular effect that each independent sound adds to the cohesiveness of the musical group. Have them record in their journal how they felt during this exercise with each instrument that was imitated. Help them to identify which sounds seemed to come easiest from the *roof or basement* resonator.

Seventh, often less is more in jazz vocalizing! Have singers practice mixing volume with resonance for a better delivery. As they select a few songs, for each song have them begin in the chest (basement) with a strong volume. As the melody switches or ascends to higher notes bring the volume down - without increasing the volume just because there are higher notes. They should practice these songs until they have mastered this technique. Eighth, in this exercise singers develop ability to demonstrate versatility by selecting and studying three songs. For each song they should begin at low volume, crescendo to medium loud volume and decrescendo to soft volume on each phrase in each song.

These suggestions for vocal study are intended to strengthen vocal capacity, especially when there is a physical, medical or emotional impediment for the performing singer. Temperament, diet, energy level and many other factors may impede the vocal phonation and timbre thus affecting the outcome for the vocal improviser.

The singer should be encouraged to listen regularly to as much classic jazz as possible. As they listen, assist them in analyzing their favorite vocalists, and instrumentalists according to their most *memorable sound*. In their journals help them to maintain a discography of their listening assignments. Guide them through the process of listening for trademark characteristics of the singer or instrumentalist. The most important goal is to help them discover what it is about the music experience of improvisation that touches and affects them in a meaningful way. Through repeated hearings and sensory experiences to draw from, they will increase their ability to interpret. A jazz vocalist has a unique and personal quality to their sound that beckons the listener to take them seriously. Something within them reaches out in the sound we hear. Strive to find the inner source of your sound identification. This is the first step to building a storehouse of sounds to keep in your mind and have on call, in order to effectively relate to and use when creating music.

Hear *the erupting lava* of sound from *Sarah Vaughan*, or *that attitudinal edge* of *Carmen McRae*. That sub tonal deliberateness of Betty Carter, the ragged earthy spirit of Nina Simone. It was a part of their individual storehouse of sounds. Those characteristics gave us an aura that preceded them. And we remembered these qualities as their vocal trademarks.

12. Vocal Jazz Group Stylists

Following are suggested examples of vocal jazz groups who provide improvisation. These examples are intended to serve as aids for the singer.

The Swingle Singers; the band debuted in 1962 in Paris by Ward Swingle with Anne Germain, Jeanette Baucomont, Jean Cussac, Christiane Legrand and other singers. The band originally started as backup singers for Charles Aznavour, Edith Piaf, Michel Legrand and other French musicians. Until 2011, the group consisted of two sopranos, two altos, two tenors and two basses. The only instruments accompanying the group are the bass and drums.

The Hi Los is a jazz and pop a cappella quartet composed in the 1950s. The members are Gene Puerling, Bob Morse, Don Shelton, Bob Strasen, Franck Allen Howren and Milton R. Chapman. They are well known for their revolution of the vocal ensemble with two tenors, a bass and a lead singer. The name is a reference to their physical as well as vocal differences. They are primarily known for their use of vocalese and improvised harmonies.

Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross is a jazz vocalese trio eponymous to its members Dave, Jon and Annie, respectively, formed in the 1950s in New York City. They are known for their revolutionary approach to the technique of vocalese, by virtue of their use of big band arrangements (as opposed to the usual intimate, small combos usually associated with vocalese before), as well as their proficiency in improvised harmonies. Annie Ross who had been called upon as a vocalist to train a twelve men choir was later asked to join in the newer initiative of studio multitracking to recreate the arrangement, and so the band was born.

Jon Hendricks; a member of the group mentioned above originally was an R&B solo singer and lyricist whom enlisted the help of Dave Lambert to record the music to his lyrics for the Woody Herman's "Four Brothers"; from then on, the two formed a team.

Naturally Seven; Originally started by Roger, his brother Warren and five other singers in 1999, in New York City. This group is known for a blend of a cappella and traditional jazz performance, with a passion for distinctive harmonic arrangements.

New York Group (New York Voices); a quintet composed of Darmon Meader, Peter Eldridge, Kim Nazarian, Caprice Fox, and Sara Krieger, the band can be said to have formed under the tutelage of Dave, Jazz director at Ithaca College through an alumni band created for the purpose of the European Jazz Festival in the summer of 1986. This group is well renowned for their tight harmonies and a vocal blend, making them comfortable in any setting, from small ensemble to an orchestral arrangement.

The Real Group; is a vocal group based in Sweden. All the members graduated from the Royal Academy of Music in 1989 (Stockholm), versatile in the genres of jazz, pop and Nordic European choir music. This band is well known for the precision of

their sound and the use of voice as their only instrument.

Take Six; Composed of Claude McKnight, Mark Kibble, Joel Kibble, Dave Thomas, Alvin Chea and Khristian Dentley, formed in Huntsville, Alabama. This band is known for its singers' a cappella arrangements mixed with syncopated rhythms and tight harmonies.

Manhattan Transfer; This a cappella group was created in the Fall of 1972, by Tim Hauser, creator of an earlier Manhattan Transfer combo an aspiring young singer named Laurel Massé. Later on, Hauser met Janis Siegel; although already in a group, Siegel agreed to collaborate on some demos, until she permanently joined the group. Finally, Alan Paul, who was co-starring in the original production of *Grease*, joined the band. Later on, Janis Siegel (after an accident) did not re-integrate the group and was replaced by Cheryl Bentyne.

Andrew Sisters; a band formed in the 1940s from Alabama. These are three sisters led by the youngest, and energetic Patty, followed by Maxene with a harmonic range giving the impression of four rather than three voices, completed the eldest, LaVerne.

All the groups mentioned above hold a common use of the technique of vocalese, with a significant capacity to hold tight harmonies and vary their sound, regardless of the number of singers in the band. They are pioneers of and highly influenced by modern jazz.

13. Instrumental Jazz Stylists

I recommend the following suggested examples of instrumental jazz groups of improvisation inspiration. These pivotal artists contributed to the establishment of new styles of a free form of jazz developed in the 1950s and 1960s.

Gil Evans is a Canadian pianist and composer who worked extensively with Miles Davis. **Miles Davis** is an American trumpet player and bandleader. One of his main associations was with John Coltrane in his **John Coltrane** is an American saxophone player and composer.

Jon Hendricks is an American singer and lyricist. Other than being of the best scat singers he is also known for writing lyrics on top of very intricate melodies and solos.

14. Summary

One of the greatest compliments that I received in my career in print was from a journalist who described my voice. "Her voice can be described as three-dimensional. To the up and down she adds in and out, a plasticity of dynamics stretched and deepened by changes of vowel and tonal color, from breathy contralto to high, flute-like tones." I

thought wow, he got me! He hears what I feel and try to convey in my musical expression.

It is not always the case that all others can receive what you attempt to communicate. A singer becomes a stylist, acquiring vocal skill and discipline for interpretation. A singer can not fully appreciate their own sound as others do, so we must try to send clear messages musically with the hope that we can be understood. A jazz singer tells a story and conveys the nuances of a personal philosophy and a particular sound. A jazz vocalist has a personal sound that remains virtually unchanged over time even if vocal range, versatility and vocal technique are improved or distorted. It is where the presence of color and texture is well established and present in the voice, out front in their song delivery. Like a banner, the singer wears it in vocal delivery identity. It is that aura that precedes the literal singer.

Vocal ecosystem is an aid to the jazz vocalist reaching for new adventures and frontiers when improvising. It is offered as a concept to encourage the self-directed collaboration of vocalists, artists and technologists in vocal improvisational performance.

The vocal improviser's performance can be aided by incorporating as many domains as possible in an inclusive and participatory manner with fellow musicians. Such benefit can stem from planning an improvisational strategy before engaging in the activity that includes a systematic approach to enhance the production, consumption and performance of a song creation. As part of vocal ecology vocal ecosystem offers a supportive stimulating tool for enhancing creativity in vocal performance. When jazz vocalizing involves a deliberate quest for improvisation, the singing performer may intentionally use stimuli to prompt imitative behavior. The interaction of the four principle domains: vocal language, culture, sound and environment are offered to enhance musical stimulation in vocal improvisation, furthering jazz vocal improvisation exploration. For the jazz vocalist, including one or more of these domains in a musical improvisation will aid her ability to create, build and participate in improvisation. For further related information see also [1], [2], [3], [5] and [6].

15. References

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