

## **CMEA Bay Section: Winter Conference 2012**

### **Vocal Jazz Ensemble 101**

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### **Resources for Repertoire**

UNC Jazz Press

**uncjazzpress.com**

Great source for new and classic vocal jazz repertoire by well known arrangers.

Darmon Meader

**darmonmeader.com**

Arranger for New York Voices. Most charts for sale by UNC jazz press or on his website

Gene Puerling

Original member of the Hi-Lo's and The Singers Unlimited. Most arrangements are available through large publishers like Hal Leonard.

Kerry Marsh

**kerrymarsh.com**

Sacramento State University, arranger, composer, clinician  
Contemporary vocal jazz, makes demos of arrangements and part tracks

Michele Weir

**micheleweir.com**

Publishes her own arrangements through her publishing name "michmusic"  
Has pedagogical books on jazz singing and piano

Greg Murai

**gregmurai.com**

Contra Costa College, composer, arranger

Jennifer Barnes

**jenniferbarnesmusic.com**

University of North Texas, arranger, studio singer, clinician

Phil Mattson

**philmattson.com**

Director of "Voices Iowa". Leading clinician and arranger.  
Many charts published through various large publishers

Matt Falker

**mattfalker.com**

Mira Costa College, Director of "Frequency" vocal jazz ensemble  
Director, Oceanside Jazz Festival

Rosana Eckert

**rosanaeckert.com**

University of North Texas, studio singer, arranger

Sound Music Publication

**smpjazz.com**

Good resource for introductory level repertoire and beyond

Anders Edenroth

**realgroup.se**

Member of "the Real Group." Many charts published by various publishers, and on their website

Jeremy Fox

**jeremyfox.net**

University of Miami, arranger, clinician

Jason Alex Smith

**jasonalexsmith.com**

Southwestern Community College, School for Music Vocations

## **Tips for Vocal Jazz style and Performance Practice**

### **Vowels**

Vowels are the best place to start in giving a choir a contemporary sound. Vocal placement should be similar to classical singing, but the vowels are very bright, with a frontal placement. Most vowels should be sung with a smile, upturned corners of the mouth, lifted cheekbones and eyebrows.

### **Vibrato**

Vocal jazz is often characterized as using no vibrato, or being a "straight tone" style of singing. The absence of vibrato is crucial for tuning very complex/dissonant chords. However, depending on taste, the lead soprano of a group can use vibrato at the ENDS of phrases. Also, if you are going for a gospel or pop sound, more vibrato can be used.

### **Dynamics**

Long held notes in jazz often crescendo all the way to the cut off, with a breath on the release, or "huh" at the end of a phrase. Extreme and exaggerated crescendos are very common. A held note should always have a definite shape to it, unless you are purposely going for the effect of a "flat" dynamic. (This can be eerie and create tension/drama if used appropriately)

### **Diction**

In contemporary jazz and pop style singing, the diction should be similar to vernacular speech. For example, the "T" at the end of a word is often pronounced with a glottal stop rather than an aspirated "T" with the tongue.

### **Scat or non-word syllables**

Syllables such as doo, bah, dah, n, dot, etc, should be sung with the syllables de-emphasized. They should NOT have the same diction as actual words. They are meant to imitate instrumental sounds and phrasing and should be sung accordingly. Try having the group sing these syllables legato, or with a "lazy" diction.

### **Inflections**

Scoops, slides, wiggles, drops and turns are not only allowed in jazz, but they are a must! To learn how to use them appropriately, I recommend listening to lots of different recordings of jazz masters.

### **Vocal Jazz Ensemble Recommended Listening**

New York Voices

Take 6

The Real Group

Singers Unlimited

Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross

Manhattan Transfer

M-Pact

Vertical Voices Live

Sixth Wave

Voices Iowa

### **Jazz Singers**

Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Billie Holiday, Shirley Horn, Nancy Wilson

Louis Armstrong, Nat King Cole, Joe Williams, Frank Sinatra, Chet Baker

Kurt Elling, Bobby McFerrin, Kenny Washington

Tierney Sutton, Dianne Reeves, Karrin Allyson, Diana Krall