

THE DECLINE OF VOCAL JAZZ EDUCATION IN NEW JERSEY'S
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
AND THE EFFORTS BEING MADE TO PROMOTE ITS RESURGENCE

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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The Decline of Vocal Jazz Education in New Jersey's Public Schools and the Efforts Being Made to Promote Its Resurgence explores possible reasons for the decline in student and teacher interest. This was accomplished through a survey of over two-hundred New Jersey high school vocal music teachers as well as interviews with several professional jazz vocalists, composers, arrangers and clinicians. The paper also offers up solutions to help stimulate, promote and cultivate a renewed interest in the art form, as well as keep it from fading. One solution would be to have higher institutions offer more vocal jazz courses for music educators. Another remedy would be to give more exposure of the genre to vocal students. In addition, I believe more support is needed from administrations for teachers to attend the annual New Jersey Jazz Conference. Administrative support is also needed in giving teachers financial support for both vocal jazz clinicians as well as purchasing necessary books and materials offered by these clinicians. This would help teachers become more acquainted with the style of the music in order to give them the confidence to teach the material.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have come to realization due to the turn of events that happened over the past few years with the decline in the number of students auditioning for North Jersey Region Vocal Jazz. In the spring of 2016, with the turnout so low and eventually the cancellation of the group, I thought it was time for a course of action and decided to actually change the topic for my thesis to something that I had a real passion for. It was during the end of the spring semester 2016 that my thesis topic began to take shape and I approached Dr. Lewis Porter and Dr. Henry Martin with my idea and they both agreed to allow me to change my topic and follow this new journey into the problems with vocal jazz education.

This paper would not have been possible without the help of many people. I would like to personally thank my professors at Rutgers University Newark, Lewis Porter and Henry Martin, for their help and guidance throughout this journey over the past year. I would like to personally thank the both of them for sharing their knowledge of the history of jazz with me and others in the program and coaching us to always do our personal best in our research.

I would also like to personally thank the following jazz musicians and educators: Jacques Rizzo, Holli Ross, Sheila Jordan, Doug Heyburn, Kerry Marsh, Roseanna Vitro and Steve Bishop. These amazing and talented people shared their personal time with me by allowing me to interview them – some in their homes, and some on the telephone.

I would like to thank the many New Jersey music educators who took the time to answer the survey that was sent out in the fall of 2016. The information received was

vital to the completion of this paper. Thanks to my colleague, Diane Giangreco, for her last minute help in formatting this paper.

I want to thank my parents, Judith and Charles Postas, Sr., for bringing me to piano lessons for years as a child and giving me the gift of music. They sat with me for hours while I practiced and sacrificed much so I could eventually have a career in music – thanks mom and dad.

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INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2016, for the first time in several years, North Jersey Region I Vocal Jazz did not perform with the Region I Jazz Band due to lack of interest. There were less than ten vocalists who sent in audition applications. This lack of interest in something of such importance to me brought to the forefront the urgency in which this needed to be addressed and it was at that moment that my thesis topic was born.

(Postscript - In the spring of 2017 there were only three vocalists who sent in applications throughout the *entire state of New Jersey*, with the exception of students from Burlington Township High School.) This is frustrating news and just supports the need for this paper even more. It also supports the fact that further research needs to be done into how we, as vocal jazz educators, can develop solutions for stirring the interest of students and teachers alike. Those solutions need to be developed into an effective action plan.

When compared to instrumental music teachers in secondary schools, vocal music teachers today do not have the proper background and are untrained to teach vocal jazz performance to their high school students. This paper proves that the reason for this lack of preparedness is not only the responsibility of the educational institution where the teacher received his or her degree, but the responsibility of the teachers themselves and the school districts in which they teach. These responsibilities are to teach all vocal music students the importance of jazz which, many scholars say, is America's only true original art form. With this unpreparedness comes a decline in interest on the part of the teacher as well as the student. This lack of interest shows up in a decline of students

auditioning for all-region and all-state groups. It also shows an almost non-existence in extra-curricular vocal jazz groups throughout high schools in the state.

This paper shares detailed conclusions on how this waning teacher/student interest may be remedied going forward. Such examples are: the development of teacher skills and their education about vocal jazz health, prejudices and ignorance concerning vocal jazz, vocal jazz requirements for music education degrees and administrative changes in high school curriculum are just a few examples of areas that need change in order to remedy the problem.

My thesis consists of several major components, all of which in some way or another relate to the diminishing indifference to vocal jazz education in New Jersey's Public Schools as mentioned above. It begins with defining what vocal jazz is, then moves forward to include a brief history of jazz education and then specifically vocal jazz education. These help prepare the reader in understanding how this genre got to where it is today.

In keeping with the historical perspective, the administrative end is looked at and we see how jazz educational organizations developed over the years and how the inconsistencies of their demise and rebirth slow the growth of vocal jazz education.

Next, problems within the vocal music educational system are addressed which hinder the growth of vocal jazz as well as solutions to those problems that the vocal jazz education system is encountering. These solutions are based on my research as well as my own personal experiences as a vocal music educator for the past twenty-one years. They are also based on changes I've seen over the past several years as

Coordinator/Director for the North Jersey Region I Vocal Jazz for NJAJE (New Jersey Association of Jazz Educators).

These solutions are followed up by results of a survey questionnaire sent to over two hundred secondary vocal music educators in the state of New Jersey with analysis and conclusions based on those results.

This survey is complimented by interviews with several current and retired New Jersey vocal music educators as well as college/university vocal jazz educators and vocal jazz performers with conclusions based on these interviews. Persons interviewed include Kerry Marsh (arranger and director of vocal jazz studies at University of Northern Colorado), Roseanna Vitro (jazz performer, clinician, recording artist and vocal instructor), Doug Heyburn (high school vocal jazz teacher), Steve Bishop (high school vocal jazz teacher and NJ state vocal jazz liaison to NJAJE), Holli Ross (professional jazz vocalist, arranger and recording artist), Jacques Rizzo (retired public school vocal music director and vocal jazz composer/arranger).

(In addition to the interviews above, the author included material from an interview with vocal jazz legend Sheila Jordan in the spring of 2016 while doing research for a paper on pianists who worked with Charlie Parker. The interview was on her relationship with Parker; however, she shared stories of her early experiences and how she learned to sing jazz, which is quoted in this paper.)

In her article “Vocal Jazz – A Look Back,” Sheryl Monkelién states, “Vocal jazz is part of the American art form which has been nurtured and advanced by singers, vocal

groups and educators for the past 75 years. It will take learning from the past to ensure vocal jazz has the future it deserves.”¹

With this statement, Monkelién stresses the importance of continued cultivation and promotion of this art form. This is the exact reason for my research in the following paper. As a vocal music educator having taught for the past 21 years in New Jersey’s schools and being involved at the regional and state levels, I see many issues currently at hand that are doing more detriment than good for vocal jazz. Without the revival of this art form it could easily disappear in a relatively short amount of time.

¹ Sheryl Monkelién, “Vocal Jazz – A Look Back.” http://acdaeast.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Vocal_JazzA_Look_Back.Troubadour.F08. Accessed 9 October, 2016.

CHAPTER I – LOOKING BACK

DEFINING VOCAL JAZZ

There are several schools of thought regarding the definition of vocal jazz. When asked about the characteristics that are needed in order for a singer's style or performance to be regarded as 'vocal jazz' one may get a number of answers – depending upon who is being asked. Below are definitions by several prominent music educators who are/were leaders in the field of vocal jazz.

In his article, "Beginning Improvisation for the Vocal Jazz Ensemble," H. David Caffey states simply, "If a group is to call itself a 'Jazz' Ensemble then it **must** improvise!"²

Dr. Scott Fredrickson backs up this statement in further detail by sharing the overall importance of the introduction of improvisation stating, "Improvisation is educationally valid as a supplement to the total choral musical curriculum, increasing creativity in individual students and enhancing the overall musicianship of entire ensembles."³

² H. David Caffey, "Beginning Improvisation for the Vocal Jazz Ensemble." *Jazz Educator's Journal Vol. XIV No.1* (October/November 1981): 13.

³ Dr. Scott Fredrickson, "Teaching Beginning Vocal Improvisation." *Jazz Educator's Journal Vol. XXVI No.1* (October 1993): 35.

In a 1982 interview with the *Christian Science Monitor*'s Amy Duncan, jazz educator Gene Aitken shares his viewpoint by going beyond just improvisation and discusses other characteristics which help to delineate the vocal jazz style. "The essence of vocal jazz is improvisation . . . Many times it helps a vocal jazz soloist if he can visualize himself as a saxophone or trumpet player. And, of course, vocal jazz involves both scat singing and vocalese – the former being the improvisational singing of nonsense syllables; the latter, previously improvised jazz solos to which words have been set."⁴

In a 2012 interview with long-time jazz music educator Jacques Rizzo, the author asked him how he defines the term 'jazz vocalist'. He gave the following answer: "They have the phrasing. They have the swing feeling with the right accents and articulation. That they bend the lyric to make it swing, in other words, they'll take words that some other singer might sing long and they'll sing it short. You go back to *Lady Day*, she never scatted (not that I can recall) but my God, what an emotional feeling. Frank Sinatra – all those singers who came up during the swing age ... a good number of them could swing and that's part of it. I think it was Louis who said when somebody asked him what is jazz, he says 'You'll know it when you hear it.'"⁵

In an article for *NAJE Educator* magazine titled "What is Vocal Jazz?," Gene Aitken wrote "most important, is that vocal jazz implies improvisation . . . for

⁴ Amy Duncan, "Groundbreaker for Vocal Jazz." *Christian Science Monitor*, 12 August 1982. <http://www.csmonitor.com/1982/0812/081201.html> Accessed 12 October, 2016.

⁵ Jacques Rizzo, Interview by the author, 9 August 2012, New Jersey. Digital recording.

improvisation is the essence of jazz. Vocal jazz improvisation is not a shotgun approach to the use of nonsense syllables (scat-singing), but a studied, thinking approach based on many hours, days, and years of practice, listening and experimentation. No one all of a sudden wakes up in the morning and lucks upon improvisation. The vocalist must put in as much ‘dues’ time as the jazz instrumentalist.”⁶

Jazz singer, arranger and educator Holli Ross shares her take on what makes a jazz vocalist in an interview with the author stating, “If they can’t swing or improvise then they’re not jazz vocalists. By the way, I’m not a firm believer that you have to be an improvisationalist to be a jazz singer, because we know that Nancy Wilson did not scat; Billie (Holiday) and Dinah Washington didn’t . . . there were enough amazingly swinging singers that did not improvise. Shirley Horne, she didn’t have to improvise – she was amazing. Everything out of her mouth oozed jazz at its most developed, cerebral - and swingin’ . . . My goal, as a singer, is to sound like an instrument. I want to sound like an instrument, but I have words to tell, I have a verbal story to tell . . . That’s my approach to what makes a jazz singer – it’s not the improv, it’s the swing factor. It’s the attack of the note, but also how you sing your whole phrase as well.”⁷

Ross mentions that Billie Holiday did not scat in the same sentence where she says that you don’t have to improvise to be a jazz singer, which the author holds the same belief. However, let us not forget that Billie did improvise her melodic lines. One prime

⁶ Gene Aitken, “What is Vocal Jazz?” *NAJE Educator* (October/November 1980): 10.

⁷ Holli Ross, Interview by the author, 31 July 2012, New Jersey. Digital recording.

example is her 1952 recording of “These Foolish Things” with Oscar Peterson on piano and Ray Brown on bass. Her phrasing in the opening verse and her melodic lines are a thing of beauty, the first four bars in each phrase actually paraphrase the original melody – just enough to allow the listener to recall what song it is that she is singing.

The main point is that although we have heard different definitions from several recognized professionals in the field of vocal jazz, they all seem to agree on one key thing; improvisation is an important, defining characteristic of vocal jazz. The importance of agreeing on the defining characteristic of improvisation which identifies vocal jazz cannot be dismissed. This characteristic which simply means to ‘create in the moment’ is something that very few vocal music educators can do because of their lack of experience. This diminishes their comfort level in the skill. As in anything taught in life, if you aren’t comfortable doing something, you are not going to be able to teach it. Therefore, if a teacher hasn’t been introduced to improvisation, how can they possibly teach it? As we will see later on, this problem will be addressed and recommendations made for a solution.

Another characteristic in vocal jazz which is just as important is the ability to swing. I’m sure most jazz vocalists would agree. This is a skill that many music educators also do not possess and if they are to teach it, it needs to be addressed as well.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF JAZZ EDUCATION

In his article “A Brief History of Jazz Education Prior to 1950” from his blog, Keith Karns discusses the importance of informal and semi-formal jazz education, stating that “this is perhaps the most well-known element of jazz education during the first half

of the twentieth century. Most jazz and early music education started at home. This could be as simple as playing jazz records in the house or family members singing. Many jazz musicians took lessons from music teachers who went door to door, teaching in the home. Children of professional or amateur musicians often absorbed music that way. Music in the home was often a gateway into other music communities outside the home.”⁸

This was commonplace throughout the United States. A perfect example is the life my grandfather led as an amateur musician. Born in 1908, he grew up learning saxophone in the late teens and early twenties. He apprenticed as a barber in his late teens and by 1925 he owned and operated a barbershop. This was his livelihood, but his passion was for music. He played club dates almost until he died at the age of 88. (My father plays saxophone as well and learned to play because his father was playing music in the house all the time.)

Private instructors served as mentors and role models for many young jazz musicians during the first half of the twentieth century. Most were older and more experienced players who helped the younger players in developing their skills. This also helped to refine the skills of the already established players. There were other learning opportunities that were strictly informal. “The hang” was any place where a younger player had the opportunity to learn from older, more experienced players but not in such a formal atmosphere such as that of private lessons. In his book *Thinking in Jazz* by Paul

⁸ Keith Karns, “A Brief History of Jazz Education Prior to 1950.”
<http://keithkarnsmusic.com/blog/blog/a-brief-history-of-jazz-education-prior-to-1950>. Accessed 6 January, 2017.

Berliner, the author mentions that these places could be anywhere from a record store to a music shop or a nightclub or a musician's home. Jam sessions were also important because they offered musicians opportunities to discuss their music and provide feedback for each other as well as informally audition for other players. Any of these venues created opportunities for the younger player so he could further his education by gleaning from what he heard by networking throughout the jazz community.⁹

Although there were many opportunities for young aspiring jazz musicians for informal education, there was nothing significant in the way of resources devoted to published jazz educational materials during this period. Materials available consisted of journal publications as well as artist interviews, concert reviews and liner notes. The most valuable resource was the recorded performances. Students would use these to transcribe and memorize solos.

During the spring of 2016, I had the good fortune of conducting a telephone interview with vocal jazz legend Sheila Jordan. During our conversation, she shared the point at which she knew she wanted to make her career as a jazz singer. In the early 1940's in Detroit, she was in a hamburger place with a girlfriend and heard Charlie Parker on the jukebox. From that point on she was hooked on jazz and spent all her money buying records, playing them over and over so she could learn all of his music.¹⁰

⁹ Paul F. Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 37.

¹⁰ Sheila Jordan, Interview by the author, April 2016, New Jersey. Digital recording.

Jazz, as popular music, has been around since the 1890's. But, jazz within an educational setting began in the late 1940's when a few pioneering colleges and high schools started jazz dance bands. However, things changed in the summer of 1967 when participants met for two weeks in Tanglewood, Massachusetts. The Tanglewood Symposium was sponsored by the Music Educator's National Conference and consisted of music educators as well as sociologists, scientists, corporate representatives, and labor leaders as well as other people in the music industry. Its purpose was to discuss the role of music education in American society during a time of continual social, cultural and economic changes. It would make recommendations in the form of a vision statement and the Tanglewood Declaration was established which called for the inclusion of jazz as part of the music education curriculum.¹¹ The Tanglewood Symposium took place as a response to the Yale Symposium which happened four years previously where composers, performers, music theorists, administrators and musicologists met to discuss the state of music education in our nation's public schools. Of the 31 participants, only five were actively involved in music education in the schools and they brought little knowledge of music education to the table.

It was after the Tanglewood Declaration had been established that jazz in public schools began to grow at a rapid rate. By 1979 it was estimated that there were more than 500,000 students in jazz-related ensembles across the country, and over 70 percent

¹¹ <http://tanglewoodsymposium.blogspot.com/p/the-tanglewood-declaration.html>. Accessed 9 January, 2017.

of middle and high schools had at least one instrumental jazz ensemble. Unfortunately, the growth of vocal jazz ensembles has not been as steady or as widespread.¹²

VOCAL JAZZ HISTORY

As far back as jazz history is documented, the voice is one of its primary instruments. From the field hollers to the early blues, vocal jazz is up there riding in the front seat with the instrumentalists. When we talk about early vocal jazz soloists, names such as Bessie Smith, Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan (just to name a few) come to mind. Early groups who were pioneers in vocal jazz were the Rhythm Boys, the Boswell sisters and the Mills Brothers. These early vocalists and vocal groups are important for young singers to listen to because they are pioneers in the early jazz style. Studying their repertoire and recordings helps in recognizing features that define vocal jazz. Characteristics such as jazz phrasing and swing rhythms were used by all performers. Jazz greats like Louis and Ella are great examples to show young jazz singers the art of vocal improvisation.

Jacques Rizzo is a vocal jazz composer/arranger who currently resides in Pompton Plains, New Jersey. He began his composing career while still in college writing jingles for a small vocal group. Throughout his writing career he wrote vocal arrangements for Columbia Screen Gems and was the first to write a *Jazz Choir Series* at Warner Brothers back in the 70's and 80's. Rizzo has close to three-hundred charts published and still writes to this day. He has worked for the New Jersey Council for the

¹² Monkeliën, “Vocal Jazz – A Look Back”

arts as a critique person and has also led reading sessions for MENC conventions. He retired some nineteen years ago as music supervisor in the Wayne Public Schools district. After retirement, Rizzo founded a once a month jazz choir reading session in New York City which includes professional jazz vocalists, arrangers as well as talented amateurs.

In the summer of 2012, I interviewed Rizzo for a research paper I was writing on jazz vocalists for an independent study course I was taking at Rutgers, Newark. Rizzo shares about hearing Ella for the first time: “I can still remember the first time I heard Ella Fitzgerald. I was just a kid. I couldn’t have been more than maybe in junior high; and I heard this record called *Smooth Sailing* and it was like all scat; and I can’t remember what the tune was . . . It just blew my mind.”¹³

Again, this just reinforces that fact that Ella Fitzgerald was one of the earliest jazz vocalists to add her unique vocal style. She (as well as Armstrong) had the ability to scat where the performer creates an improvised melodic line and adds gibberish or nonsense syllables to her improvisation instead of the spoken word. Ella also had the ability to swing hard and, as mentioned earlier, is an important characteristic of vocal jazz. Here again, we see the importance of improvisation and swing and their lifetime influence on just one jazz musician and composer.

As jazz progressed into the swing era, each of the top big bands had a vocalist or vocal group that fronted them. Some of these were: The Modernaires who fronted the Glenn Miller band, The Pied Pipers who sang with Tommy Dorsey, the Mel-Tones who worked with Artie Shaw, and the Andrews Sisters who sang with bandleader/arranger

¹³ Rizzo Interview.

Vic Shoen. Rizzo continues to share his listening experiences with the Mel-Tones by discussing what a ground-breaking group they were by how much they were featured: “The other group that blew my mind in those days was Mel Torme’s group, the Mel-Tones. Up until then it seemed to me there were no real arrangements that featured a vocal group that there was some kind of structure to the arrangement and his arrangements there was like an intro. and an interlude, and the head. They were different than the band playing the chart and the vocal group coming up (four or five guys or girls) and they sing the chorus and they go back to the band – you know what I’m trying to say? This was like the vocal group all the way through . . .”¹⁴

As jazz developed further over the decades harmonically and rhythmically, vocal jazz became more sophisticated as well. During the 1950’s, the popularity of vocal groups peaked. Some of the most popular groups were the Hi-Lo’s and the Four Freshmen – each having their own unique style. The Hi-Lo’s performed harmonically complex arrangements by Gene Puerling which covered many different musical styles. The Four Freshmen was one of the most influential groups of the decade who sang in close-harmony style. In the late 1950’s, Lambert, Hendricks and Ross who payed homage to bebop style of the 1940’s by singing the tunes from this era. With only a rhythm section as accompaniment, they brought a new twist to the music by incorporating vocalese to the melodic lines as well as scatting to the changes.

Moving forward, we have the Singers Unlimited who were very popular in the 1970’s with their intricate harmonies, as well as the Manhattan Transfer, who have been continually performing since their inception in 1972. The 1980’s brought us the group

¹⁴ Ibid.

Rare Silk (who disbanded by the end of the decade) as well as Take 6 which still carries a strong presence in the vocal jazz world. Other vocal groups from the 1980's to present include the Real Group (formed in 1984), OneVoice (formed in 1986) and New York Voices (formed in 1987). Two popular groups that began in the late 1990's are, Vocalogy and Groove for Thought - both groups having been established in 1998.

These groups are historically important for the jazz singer to study. They show the progression of the vocal jazz style from the early swing years up through present day and also characteristics for each style. One of the characteristics would be the development of more advanced harmonies in addition to closer harmonies within the voice parts. Many of the vocal jazz groups today sing *a cappella* without the use of a rhythm section, which takes a good ear plus perfect intonation. The art of improvisation within some of these groups is exceptional. If one listens to the vocal group New York Voices, one hears four vocalists who are some of the finest musicians in their field. Each has the ability to command a presence onstage as a soloist and each is capable of improvising a beautiful melodic line. Together they sound like a well-oiled machine. The group is a perfect example of what a vocal jazz group should strive to sound like.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF VOCAL JAZZ EDUCATION

It wasn't until the 1960's that the undertaking for vocal jazz ensembles really began and vocal jazz education commenced being taught in public schools in the United States.

Cheryl Monkelian wrote an article for the American Choral Director's Association (ACDA) East entitled "Vocal Jazz – A Look Back." In the article she states, "The vocal jazz ensemble movement in an educational setting was initiated by three men whose unique talents, educational training, musical experiences, mutual support systems and friendships enabled them to conceive and implement the first vocal jazz ensembles. Waldo King, Hal Malcom, and John Moawad are the recognized pioneers that led the vocal jazz movement in Washington and Oregon in the early 1960's."¹⁵

Waldo King was a music director at Roosevelt High School in Seattle, Washington. He was the first to have established vocal jazz as a regular class in 1971. Hal Malcolm's Mount Hood Jazz Choir performed at the MENC National Convention in Anaheim, California in 1974. This was the first time a vocal jazz ensemble had performed in such an important venue which brought national attention to the concept of vocal jazz. These three influenced another generation of vocal jazz educators who continued the movement by sharing their knowledge of vocal jazz through workshops, clinics, summer camps and vocal jazz festivals.¹⁶

Other vocal jazz educators that have been influenced by these three are well-known names in the field of vocal jazz education such as Larry Lapin, creator of the vocal jazz program at the University of Miami, Paris Rutherford from the University of North Texas and Steve Zegree at Western Michigan University (who recently passed

¹⁵ Monkelian, "Vocal Jazz – A Look Back"

¹⁶ Ibid.

away in March of 2015) as well as Kirby Shaw who has been writing vocal jazz charts since the early 1970's.¹⁷

Holli Ross is a jazz vocalist, arranger and music educator who lives in northern New Jersey and works in the greater metropolitan area. She shares teaching details between Montclair State University (a position which she acquired through the recommendation of jazz great Darmon Meader), as well as Hofstra University where she is an adjunct faculty member. She also conducts clinics and jazz master classes nationally and abroad. As Holli was making her way as a young jazz vocalist on the New York scene, she caught the ear of Jon Hendricks and they were close for many years, with her often being called up to sing with him at performances.

Besides sharing the stage with Jon Hendricks, Ross has also worked with such jazz figures as Bill Charlap, Jon Faddis, Darmon Meader, Bucky Pizzarelli, and Rufus Reid. Holli also arranges for and leads her vocal group, String of Pearls, which has been performing for over twenty-five years now. She has toured nationally with the group at such venues as the JVC Jazz Festival, the 92nd Street Y, Town Hall, and the Kennedy Center.

During a July 2012 interview, the author discussed what kind of education there was available in vocal jazz during the time when Ross was growing up as a teen in the New York area. Although vocal jazz education was being cultivated on the west coast during the 1970's, there was no formal pedagogy for vocal jazz on the east coast which Ross confirms: "So my parents encouraged me to go into opera (we're talking thirty or forty years ago). Nobody gave jazz voice lessons – it wasn't done. (Maybe it was but it

¹⁷ Ibid.

certainly wasn't advertised.) So, you want voice lessons – you go to the closest temple or church and you speak to the choir director or you hear about voice teachers . . . I found that instrumentalists were willing to teach singers about jazz – they were the only ones doing it.”¹⁸

Once again, we see that even going back as far as the 1970's, there wasn't much happening in the New York metropolitan area as far as vocal jazz education in the schools was concerned. Teens wanting to learn the craft of singing vocal jazz had to be educated outside the classroom, which cost money.

ORGANIZATIONS FOR JAZZ EDUCATORS

The National Association for Jazz Education (NAJE) was founded in the United States in 1968. The organization was formed to ensure the inclusion of jazz in music education programs. Stressing the importance of the groups' mission, the founders were able to (through the support of the jazz community) build the association's membership to over 1,000 members quickly. They also were able to establish a quarterly publication - *The Jazz Educators Journal*.

In 1989, the organization formally changed its name to the International Association for Jazz Education (IAJE) and operated as a not-for-profit corporation based in the city of Manhattan in Kansas.

The IAJE was recognized as the largest annual gathering of the global Jazz community, with upwards of 7,000 educators, musicians, record executives, and jazz

¹⁸ Ross Interview.

supporters from over thirty countries. The group held annual conferences which featured over 100 performances by internationally recognized artists. In addition, there were over 50 clinics, workshops, panel sessions, video and technology presentations and research presentations. The conferences were of interest to anyone involved in the teaching, performance, presentation or appreciation of jazz.

Education, teacher training and networking were at the heart of the conference agenda combined with one of the strongest and most diverse performance schedules in its 39-year history. The 35th and final Annual IAJE Conference was held in January 2008 in Toronto, Canada. In April of 2008, IAJE filed for bankruptcy and all future events were cancelled and the organization closed.

The demise of this 40-year-old organization that was over 10,000 members strong seems to be a mystery. Research shows that it was approximately \$1.5 million in debt and it just couldn't get itself above water. There are conflicting reports between the executive director and its board members on how this could have happened. Some reports say that the director didn't share a complete financial picture to the board members therefore, they didn't know just how bad the finances were.¹⁹

In any case, within several months, the educational jazz community rebounded and in June 2008, the Jazz Education Network (JEN) was founded in Chicago. Like the two previous jazz organizations, it is a non-profit group whose mission is to advance jazz education and promote performance as well as cultivate new listeners who appreciate the

¹⁹ Marc Hopkins, "IAJE: Miseducation". <https://jazztimes.com/features/iaje-miseducation/>. Accessed 30 March, 2017.

music. The organization is represented in 23 countries, every state in the United States and seven Canadian provinces.

JEN offers several programs for members which include the following:

- A K-8 jazz education program
- A mentoring program
- Scholarships and awards for worthy students

JEN also publishes a magazine called *JazzED* which is currently bimonthly, and offers articles for jazz educators – although there is very little in the way of vocal jazz. JEN holds an annual jazz conference for music educators and anyone else who may wish to attend. The workshops available are quite extensive with research presentations being given on anything having to do with jazz – from history to performance to improvisational techniques to technology. They also have clinicians who come in and give hands-on workshops to attendees.

In June of 2008, as the IAJE was filing for bankruptcy, the New Jersey chapter (or NJIAJE) met and evaluated the status of their chapter and how to keep it in perpetuity. They came up with a new name for the group – New Jersey Association of Jazz Educators (NJAJE) which has been in existence since that time. The group began under the new name with a total of 28 members. The NJAJE had their first conference in Newark in November of 2008 with All-State Jazz Band and Honors Choir performing that evening. (The groups also performed at the NJ Teacher's Convention in Atlantic City earlier that month.) With its membership quickly growing to 101 members by January of the following year, NJAJE had three region jazz bands (north, central and southern New Jersey) giving concerts in the spring. The NJAJE region vocal jazz groups

began their existence in the spring of 2012, and the author became the first director and coordinator of the Region I vocal jazz group. Region I vocal jazz performed during the region jazz concerts for a period of four years until 2015 when it was determined that there weren't enough student applications to support a group in 2016.

CHAPTER II – PROBLEMS WITH VOCAL JAZZ TODAY

THE STATUS OF VOCAL JAZZ TODAY

So now the question is asked, “What is happening pedagogically with vocal jazz throughout high schools in New Jersey?” As someone who has a particular interest in this music and has seen firsthand the loss of interest in this genre from an educator's point of view, the author stresses that a course of action needs to be taken. Research has been done to uncover problems which may be causing apathy among educators as well as students.

In this section, the author points out several problem areas that are seen as detrimental to the progress of further growth in vocal jazz education. One of the huge hurdles that vocal music educators in general must overcome is the plain fact that, for the most part, vocalists and instrumentalists are very different in their musical training – not only in how much education they receive but also in how they receive it and to what extent. Other issues discussed here include the stigma of the negative impact of singing jazz on a student's vocal health, the lack of singing opportunities available for vocal groups singing this style of music, as well as the lack of interest in the genre of jazz on the part of the teacher as well as the student. Finally, the author discusses in detail the

virtual non-existence of jazz requirements for teachers in music education degree programs.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN JAZZ VOCALISTS AND JAZZ INSTRUMENTALISTS

In a fall 2016 interview, the author discusses differences between vocalists and instrumentalists with West Milford High School vocal music director Doug Heyburn. I mention in our discussion how the instrumental students are taught scales, they learn music notation and how to sight read as well as rhythmic patterns. In my experience as a music teacher it's not nearly as extensive with the vocal students because they come into the classroom and want to make music right away. They don't have nearly the musical training that the instrumental students do. Like most vocal music programs throughout the state, teachers don't have the luxury of time to teach lessons to vocal music students like they do with instrumental students.

Heyburn shares his take during the interview on how he deals with the lack of time he has in being able to develop musicianship skills with his students here: "The other thing is, my group has never rehearsed more than one and a half hours a week so all the listening they should've and could've done they didn't do. We didn't sit for thirty minutes and listen to instrumental groups so that we would know – we did it a little bit. You know what it's like – you've got music to teach, you gotta get this show up and running! And it's a shame that it's like that but – these are the busy kids in the school, so you take what you can get."²⁰ Again, Heyburn's statement just supports the point that the vocal music students are not nearly as musically educated as the instrumental students.

²⁰ Doug Heyburn, Interview by the author, 3 October 2016, New Jersey. Digital

Jacques Rizzo adds his take on differences between jazz singers and instrumentalists saying “But a jazz singer isn’t the same as a jazz instrumentalist. A jazz instrumentalist is someone who (if they are decent) has conquered all the intricacies of blowing through changes and everything like that – there aren’t a hell of a lot of singers that can go through changes. I mean really, I keep going back to Ella and Mel Torme . . . but they could sing through “Giant Steps” if you wanted them to do that . . .”²¹

Rizzo tends to go a bit further by saying that comparing singers to instrumentalists is like comparing apples to oranges in the fact that an instrumentalist has developed technique. He is saying that the instrumentalist can “blow through changes” means that they would have a working knowledge of harmony as well.

In a May 1998 article for *Jazz Educators Journal*, Michele Weir discusses in great detail differences between jazz singers versus instrumentalists. Some of the topics she talks about are the approach each takes towards improvisation. She explains that singers don’t improvise or scat nearly as often as instrumentalists do, and because of their knowledge of harmonic content when they do improvise, they are more characteristic of the swing style rather than bop or more modern styles. She goes on to discuss improvisational traditions sharing, “Instrumentalists’ featured solos are considered to be the improvisation they play *after* the melody, whereas singers’ featured solos are generally considered to be the creative interpretation *of* the melody.”²² What she

recording.

²¹ Rizzo Interview.

²² Michele Weir, “Singers Are From Krypton and Instrumentalists Are From Ork” *Jazz Educator’s Journal Vol. XXX No.6* (May 1998): 72.

basically means is that where an instrumentalist will totally improvise a new melody after the melody or ‘head’ has been stated, a singer will just create an interpretation of that melody by staying very close to the melodic line. Personally, I happen to disagree with her on this statement – there are many wonderful jazz vocalists, past and present, who can improvise beautiful melodic lines without simply interpreting the melody.

Another difference that Weir mentions has to do with opportunities for each. She continues saying, “Players have opportunities to improvise in a variety of settings: jazz band, jazz combo, jam sessions, ad gigs. Even when singers are interested in developing their improvisation skills, there is very little opportunity for them to get practical experience with a rhythm section. In jazz choirs, few charts offer much improvisational solo space – and when they do, it may be a token sixteen bars or so; singers are not always allowed to join small-group combos in school, and when they are, they may be limited to singing the melodies . . .”²³

I happen to agree with Weir on this statement. It has been my personal experience that most often charts written for either a jazz band and singer or a vocal jazz group with rhythm section do not allow for much improvisational room for the vocalists. Where in a strictly instrumental jazz band you will have room for the soloists to take one or more choruses to expand a solo, it’s very rare that singers have that opportunity.

SINGERS ARE NOT READERS

Another problem which hinders the progress of not only jazz singers but a majority of young vocalists is their inability to read music. In my twenty-one years of

²³ Ibid.

teaching music in New Jersey schools, there are very few vocal music students who have shown any proficiency in reading music notation and the ones that did were, for the most part, also students that either played a band instrument or took private piano lessons. This is again due to the fact that it is rare for a student to take private voice lessons where they would be taught the basics of reading treble clef notation as well as rhythmic notation and developing sight-reading skills.

Holli Ross shares her thoughts on this skill that vocalists lack: “First of all, and I’m sorry to say this, but singers as a whole are not readers. This is awful. I’ve heard so many talented singers (certainly Ella being one of them), can’t read a note. It’s rare that you give out parts and vocalists can just read them down. Now, my big band partner at Montclair, he does six to eight charts; I’m happy if I can eke out four – it takes my group twelve weeks to learn four tunes.”²⁴

During an interview with the author back in 2012, jazz educator/composer/arranger Jacques Rizzo was asked if jazz vocalists today should have some basic sight-reading skills. His response was, “Traditionally, I think jazz singers didn’t read too much, but nowadays they should. I think few, if any, teach that. In fact, I’ve had in my vocal group through the years, people like Nancy Marano who teaches at William Paterson, another girl who teaches at the New School, Patty Dunham who has been with my group from the beginning who teaches vocal jazz at the Manhattan School. But (the school shall remain nameless), when I first retired I was looking for groups to write for and I went to one of the jazz schools in New York City . . . the girl over there who was

²⁴ Ross Interview.

running the jazz vocal program was very competent. It really is a crime because I'm thinking of a second school which is a major jazz school in New York. In both cases the kids couldn't read – *they didn't want to read*, and there was pressure on the teacher to keep the kids because of the tuition they paid and that would keep the course open. So there's a financial thing there where the teachers didn't have the strength of purpose and these were both teachers who were excellent singers, read, played piano, did everything you would wish of a jazz singer, and were teaching this because they had to keep the program open and these kids were being cheated – they are running them through the school with a degree in vocal jazz.”²⁵

This is huge! First of all, going back to the beginning of Rizzo's statement, he says that although they should be able to read, most are not being taught. This is in line with what Ross states prior to Rizzo. We have two experts on the same page sharing that many singers do not have basic sight-reading skills! What's even more disturbing however, is the fact that Rizzo mentions the major jazz school in New York City that is pushing students through the program with a degree in vocal jazz because of the financial factor.

LACK OF TEACHER INTEREST

As an active member in the NJAJE, the author is always networking with vocal music directors throughout the state especially at the regional level. In the past there has been much informal conversation with high school choral directors about the decline in numbers for North Jersey Region I Vocal Jazz and the interest level is one of the major

²⁵ Rizzo Interview.

factors here. Doug Heyburn shared in the interview, “I don’t think the teachers are versed in vocal jazz – I don’t think a lot of them have any interest in it! You know, jazz is tough, I think it takes a certain kind of person to want to sit in a club and listen to a ten-minute saxophone solo – it takes a certain kind of listener. It’s a very highly intellectual music.”²⁶

This final comment could be construed as sounding a bit snobby however, Heyburn continues with his thought saying, “It’s like everything else – you contact people and you figure well, they’re not getting back to us, they’re not sending us kids, they must not like it. Nope – they’re busy. They just let it fall by the wayside – it wasn’t personal, it wasn’t ‘cause they hated you . . . it’s just if it’s not in their normal routine, often time it falls by the wayside.”²⁷ I believe Heyburn clears the air explaining what he thinks the teacher is really feeling and how they decide to deal with it.

This lack of interest on the part of educators may be for a number of reasons, it could be because the teacher doesn’t have the time in his/her day to teach an extra curriculum class, it could be that the music just doesn’t stimulate the teacher and they just want to focus on music they like (that’s if they have the freedom in the curriculum to teach what they want).

After sending out the survey discussed below and reading through the results from the music educators, it is the conclusion of the author that the main reason for the lack of interest in teaching vocal jazz to students is due to the fact that most music teachers

²⁶ Heyburn Interview.

²⁷ Ibid.

simply don't have the experience needed for teaching within the genre. We will soon revisit this fact after a few others have been touched upon.

MINIMAL SINGING OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

High school instrumental jazz programs took an upward swing in the 1970's and early 1980's with the popularity of touring jazz bands like Buddy Rich, Maynard Ferguson and Stan Kenton. This created a need for jazz education advocates like Jamey Aebersold, David Baker and Jerry Coker who developed jazz pedagogical techniques to help band directors throughout the country.

Similarly, as previously mentioned, vocal jazz gurus like Waldo King and Hal Malcolm also helped pioneer vocal jazz education. However, instead of their expertise in vocal jazz pedagogy spreading ubiquitously throughout the country, it seems to have been confined to pockets throughout different parts of the United States which David vonKampen seems to support with his statement on his blog: "In Nebraska, where I live/teach/compose/conduct, there are over 400 high schools, and by my count, there are exactly ten high school jazz choirs in the state. That's a real bad batting average. If a school has the resources to field a jazz band, there is absolutely no reason why they shouldn't have a corresponding vocal jazz ensemble. Instead, many vocal music departments choose to pour resources into ensembles that sing much less challenging music, devoting large sections of rehearsal time to organized movement, costuming, and other things that aren't music."²⁸

²⁸ David vonKampen, "Why Vocal Jazz Matters (And How to Stop Not Doing It)." 30 September, 2016. <http://www.davidvonkampen.com.blog2016/9/28/why-vocal-jazz-matters-and-how-to-stop-not-doing-it>. Accessed 18 October, 2016.

Schools such as the University of North Texas and the University of Northern Colorado, on the contrary, have very strong vocal jazz departments. Much of this has to do with the long history of very strong jazz departments in general, but also in the directors they hire to lead their vocal groups.

During the fall of 2016, the author conducted an interview with Kerry Marsh – Director of Vocal Jazz at the University of Northern Colorado. Marsh shared that although vocal jazz is thriving in schools in California and the Pacific Northwest, he understands that it is struggling in the NYC area. “I absolutely get why, if you live in the northeast though, it seems like it is. Because culturally there I’ve noticed it’s not happening much . . . it’s very spotty . . . it’s historical and the momentum of jazz . . . it’s much more about instrumental jazz and more about solo performance . . . those conservatories in New York and the areas . . . they have really strong respected programs are also not geared very much toward vocal jazz ensemble music . . .”²⁹

This same phenomenon was also brought up during the author’s interview with Steve Bishop when our conversation turned toward colleges and universities with strong vocal jazz departments like UNC and North Texas. It was agreed that colleges and universities closer to New Jersey – like the Berklee College of Music in Boston and William Paterson University – both have very strong jazz departments; however, for some unknown reason, their strengths were only in instrumental jazz and not in vocal jazz. When you don’t have strong vocal jazz departments at the collegiate level, it has a

²⁹ Kerry Marsh, Interview by the author, 14 October 2016, New Jersey. Digital recording.

trickle-down effect where high school vocal music departments are concerned. Often strong vocal jazz departments at the collegiate level offer music festivals for area high schools in which to participate. If high school students see a college or a university with a strong vocal jazz department they will be more apt to want to participate in these types of festivals. Unfortunately, for schools at the collegiate level in New Jersey, there is currently nothing available like this happening.

Doug Heyburn further expounds on this unfortunate circumstance: “The other negative is that there’s not a lot of opportunities to sing. You know, my colleague who runs the band, they’re out every single week (it seems) in a competition and what not in festivals all over the place and like I said, I go to the Roxbury (High School) festival and I go to the Berklee festival (you have to drive to Boston to go to that one) – there’s not a lot. I believe there is a debut festival that one of the NJAJE guys is gonna start at their school this year – even that, that’s two hours away. So, opportunities to sing and compete and be in the festivals – there’s not a lot. And I know from conducting region and being a presence in the honors jazz program that you know the kids aren’t coming out – the choir directors aren’t sending them so, you know – it’s tough.”³⁰

Steve Bishop further illustrates the lack of vocal jazz festivals: “We used to have James Madison University in Virginia – they used to have a really strong vocal jazz program – not so much anymore. That’s really not even in the northeast. So, there’s not really any models right now on the collegiate level either on the east coast, to speak of.

What the universities with strong vocal jazz programs have done is sponsor jazz festivals and summer vocal jazz camps and it’s really spawned teachers that are really

³⁰ Heyburn Interview.

into that world. You know, it explodes the area. There's contests out there, there's performance opportunities, there's all kinds of adjudicated things to go to if you are a high school vocal jazz group out there. There's not that many opportunities on the east coast right now."³¹

Heyburn and Bishop are both trying to bring up an important point, which is that without the strong influence of the collegiate age musicians for high school students to see and hear, they will not have role models to look up to throughout their formative years which is crucial to the development of their musicianship skills as jazz vocalists.

THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF SINGING JAZZ ON VOCAL HEALTH

In an article for *NAJE Educator* from 1980, Grammy-nominated jazz educator and clinician Gene Aitken discusses the bad rap that jazz gets on vocal health. He writes, "to dispel an 'old wives' tale', singing vocal jazz literature will not injure or ruin the voice. Usually what happens is that literature is chosen which is beyond the capabilities of an ensemble such that the vocalists have to misuse their voice to obtain the end product. This, plus a lack of teaching good basic voice fundamentals create the so-called problem, not the music. Misusing a voice can be equally attributed to the concert and church choirs."³²

³¹ Steven Bishop, Interview by the author, 30 October 2016, New Jersey. Digital recording.

³² Gene Aitken, "What is Vocal Jazz?" *NAJE Educator* (October/November 1980): 10.

Gene Aitken goes on to bring the expertise of a classically trained opera singer to the table to help support his position on vocal health and the jazz singer. In an interview with Metropolitan Opera baritone Sherrill Milnes, Aitken asks him if vocal jazz can be of value to the voice major. Milnes replies, “Definitely! It is valuable for pitch development, articulation, diction, singing complex harmonies, developing sight-reading skills and working on breath support . . . Without a doubt, singing in a good vocal jazz group, develops the ability to deal with complex musical harmonies and the ability to sight read.”³³

What Aitken is saying here is that there is absolutely no definitive proof that singing jazz is bad for vocal health. What he points out is the fact that the reason jazz singers run into vocal health issues is because of the incompetency of the educator. And in his interview, Milnes actually gives reasons for the value of being a jazz singer!

In an interview with Sue Rarus (for NAFME), Chris Venesile shares, “All contemporary styles of singing that are healthy for the singer use similar techniques . . . Diana Spradling, a renowned vocal jazz pedagogue, makes a case for contemporary singing as healthy singing – as much as traditional art singing. In classical singing and popular singing, Spradling emphasizes that techniques need not be defined as ‘good’ and ‘bad’, but just different. It’s in the manipulation of resonance where the differences occur. By comparing the visual ‘picture’ of recordings of voices of great jazz singers (through

³³ Gene Aitken, “Sherill Milnes Baritone Extraordinaire Talks About Vocal Jazz.” *Jazz Educator’s Journal Vol. XIX No.1* (October/November 1986): 19-20.

spectrographic analysis . . . Spradling demonstrated one can ‘see’ various vocal properties) . . . and determine the technical ‘healthiness’ of the production.”³⁴

In another article for *TRIAD* journal on vocal jazz pedagogy, Chris Venesile further discusses Spradling’s findings: “Recent acoustic, physiologic, and pedagogic research challenges the widely-held belief that classically-based voice techniques alone can serve the world’s diversity of singing styles. Through the use of modern technology, we can now identify significant acoustic differences when comprising vocal performances in different genres. The admission from a respected traditional body that jazz and other contemporary styles need and deserve tailored approaches in teaching must have seemed like a message sent from heaven to jazz vocal pedagogues.”³⁵ By sharing Spradling’s scientific data here in these two articles, Venesile has discredited the myth that singing jazz is detrimental to vocal health.

Jazz vocalist Roseanna Vitro has toured the world as a performer, clinician, recording artist, vocal instructor and ambassador, having proven herself a reigning member of the jazz community. During a personal interview with the author in October 2016, she offered up some ideas on how classically trained singers view vocal jazz and its effect on vocal health through firsthand experience: “You see the protectionism and the fear about jazz teaching or learning comes from the classical community and I got this even when I was touring for the State Department, you know. I taught Russian singers,

³⁴ Sue Rarus – Chris Venesile interview <http://www.nafme.org/jazz-it-up-vocally/>. Accessed 18 October, 2016

³⁵ Chris Venesile, "Jazz Vocal Pedagogy: New Perspectives through Research and Technology" *Ohio Music Education Association TRIAD journal* (May/June 2010): 77-81.

classical singers, all kinds of interesting (groups) of singers who knew nothing about jazz and there's been a great fear in teaching about jazz because the early jazz singers were not schooled singers. Classical teachers were always afraid, you know, you're teaching them something unhealthy if you're teaching them jazz. That's just this misinformation that jazz singers are not trained singers. So many of the teachers out right now that are good theatre or classical teachers want nothing to do with jazz – they don't even own a metronome. They have not a clue – they cannot snap on two and four and it's sad, really sad. And they're afraid of jazz – they're afraid of what they don't know.”³⁶

Steven Bishop sums up the vocal health issue here simply stating, “I think last and still just as important is there is still a perception that vocal jazz is not vocal music, that it is somehow not embracing the kind of choral technique we should be teaching.”³⁷

NO JAZZ REQUIREMENTS FOR MUSIC EDUCATION DEGREES

This section looks at a number of thoughts and ideas through research articles from periodicals written by well-known music educators as well as interviews with vocal jazz music educators. It also shares select findings from the author's survey and conclusions from the findings. All of the information relates to the problem of higher education institutions not having jazz requirements in order to receive a music education degree.

³⁶ Roseanna Vitro, Interview by the author, 22 October 2016, New Jersey. Digital recording.

³⁷ Bishop Interview.

In an article for *Jazz Educator's Journal*, Katchie Cartwright shares her thoughts: “There are surprisingly still a number of programs in which singers are systematically excluded from crucial course sequences and ensembles and/or offered watered-down vocal alternatives to classes in performance practice that are open to all other instrumentalists. Moreover, vocal courses in lieu of improvisation classes, if they are offered at all, are all-too-frequently taught by either instrumentalists, who don’t sing or singers who don’t improvise. These are the kinds of curricular decisions that create and perpetuate unnecessary educational barriers between singers and other players. If . . . singers entering university programs tend to lag behind instrumentalists in their theoretical grasp or practical experience at improvising, it makes sense to give them more rather than fewer educational options and opportunities.”³⁸ Cartwright’s point here is obvious – that these music education programs need to be re-evaluated with the proper instructors teaching the proper curriculum.

During our interview, when asked about having jazz requirements for singers pursuing a vocal education degree, Roseanna Vitro shares her thoughts: “I certainly think knowing the history of vocal jazz is really important you know, because it’s part of the history of our country, I mean jazz encompasses everything from the early gospel music through the racism, political issues of the early days – and today . . . I think it should be required, I absolutely do . . . I think the history of jazz has to be in there, absolutely.”³⁹ Although she doesn’t touch on the performance aspect here, a knowledge of vocal jazz

³⁸ Katchie Cartwright, “If You Can’t Sing It...” *Jazz Educator's Journal Vol. XXVIII No.3* (November 1995): 27-30.

³⁹ Vitro Interview.

history is still important for a vocal music educator to have in order to be a well-rounded teacher that is prepared to share with the student.

During our fall 2016 interview, the author asked Doug Heyburn why he thought there were very few high school vocal jazz ensembles in New Jersey's public school music programs. He responded with the following: "Because the teachers are not versed in this. First of all, they're coming out of the Westminsters and these other programs highly educated in wonderful choral music and boy, it's really there for the taking. There's so many wonderful choral programs in these colleges . . . But they're not coming out with this kind of experience unless, like me, they answered a poster on the wall (bulletin board) that said 'Come audition for the jazz choir'. You know, it certainly wasn't *mandatory*."⁴⁰

Obviously, the point here is not about the great choral programs that are turning out great music educators but, they aren't getting a balanced education which includes vocal jazz. The problem is that when these educators get hired to teach, they lack the well-rounded education and unfortunately, their students suffer for it. They miss out on an opportunity to learn about an amazing art form which they may never get anywhere else. These could be students that may find a love for the music but we'll never know. And so the cycle continues to perpetuate itself.

In an article for *Jazz Educator's Journal* back in September of 1996, Luis C. Engelke wrote that most universities now offer courses in jazz improvisation, jazz theory, jazz history, jazz composition and arranging, jazz pedagogy and applied jazz

⁴⁰ Heyburn Interview.

performance. They also offer performance ensembles such as big bands, combos and some vocal jazz ensembles. These represent quite a diverse core of any jazz curriculum. He says, “Yet the National Association for Schools of Music, an organization that supports the National Standards, has no requirement for university students with a projected B.M.E. degree to take any of these courses.”⁴¹ Engelke continues, sharing a quote from Rich Matteson from an interview in *The Instrumentalist*: “Many colleges insufficiently prepare teachers for a life in public school music . . . they usually don’t cover the base called jazz education. Most high schools now have a jazz band. No music education program would send a graduate out to teach without performing and conducting experience. It would not send someone out to lead a school’s marching band without marching band experience; but colleges frequently send people to teach jazz band who have had no experience in the care and feeding of a jazz band. Most colleges don’t offer any courses on that, so the new band director has to learn on the job, using trial and error, creating a bad situation for all. The college didn’t train him, [or her] because it didn’t think jazz education is worthwhile.”⁴²

If the sentiment is that negative for a jazz band director, then how much lower is it for a vocal jazz director? Although this article was written over twenty years ago, not much has changed in the world of higher education. Of the sixty respondents to the author’s survey, fifty-five of them answered the question as to what institution they

⁴¹ Luis C. Engelke, “Jazz Education: The Critical Link in Meeting the National Standards,” *Jazz Educator’s Journal* Vol. XXIX No.2 (September 1996): 35.

⁴² Engelke, *Jazz Educator’s Journal* Vol. XXIX No.2, 35-36.

received their music education degree. Of those who responded, nine of them were graduates of Westminster Choir College, four were graduates of William Paterson University, four were graduates of Rutgers University, four were graduates of The College of New Jersey and the rest were graduates of five other New Jersey state universities and others outside New Jersey. Only one out of the New Jersey colleges currently has a mandatory jazz requirement for graduation, which is Kean University. The other three colleges which have some mandatory jazz requirement are out of state.

In our fall 2016 interview, Steve Bishop had this to say about requirements for a vocal music education major: “Well, there should be a jazz and contemporary music component to all music education programs – whether it’s vocal or instrumental. Because quite frankly, if one of our tenants (especially with the new dictums by this particular state of job readiness) – if we’re really going to be looking at those in a brutally honest way, more students in vocal music have a chance of having a career in the popular or vocal jazz arenas. There’s not a lot of paying choral jobs in the world.”⁴³

I agreed with him adding the fact that just as one semester of choral conducting is needed in order to graduate; you wouldn’t think that it would be asking too much to make one semester of teaching vocal jazz styles as a mandatory requirement for graduation.

When we spoke further and I asked Heyburn what he thought about the idea of having vocal jazz as a required part of the curriculum in order to graduate, he agreed – however not before adding some other thoughts: “I think it’s a great idea. I do think it’s a great idea – I think the music is worthy of it . . . Listen Charlie, popular music is now part of the university curriculum – people are now majoring in pop music. Like, are you

⁴³ Bishop Interview.

kidding me – does anybody really need to major in popular music? You know, didn't we all learn popular music on our own, in our own basements with our own bands with our own songwriting? Now somebody's gonna teach you? Ridiculous! And why do you think? Because they don't want to lose these kids that don't have the classical chops to get into college anymore. There's more kids being turned away than were being let in. So you've got all these pop music majors in college now – ten years ago you couldn't strum a rock tune on your guitar and get into college. You might be a good rock musician, but there wasn't really a place for you in college . . . Now you can go to school for that, so if you can do that then yeah, I think you're right – it could be more of the college curriculum.”⁴⁴

I believe I struck a nerve which, for whatever reason, allowed him to expound on his thoughts. He showed a personal passion here in the fact that popular music was now being infused into the college curriculum, not as an elective type of class, but as an actual major. He shared that no longer does one have to have the years of study and skills to be accepted as a music major. I believe this is the sentiment of many music educators who spent years paying their dues only to see younger folks taking the 'easy way out' in order to get a music degree. In any case, he wrapped up his thoughts and got his point across.

In September 2016, a survey was sent out to approximately 240 New Jersey high school vocal music directors with questions pertaining to vocal jazz education. Questions about where they received their music teaching certification, if they teach a vocal jazz class, what type of training (if any) they had at the collegiate level and were there

⁴⁴ Heyburn Interview.

requirements to take any type of jazz education courses at the university they attended.

60 responses were received from the survey (approximately a 25 percent return). The following is a summary of the results.

One of the major issues uncovered was that music teachers were not offered courses in teaching vocal jazz at the university level. Part of the study the author did for this thesis asked the question, “Did you receive any jazz teaching experience in college while studying for your music education degree?” Out of 60 responses, 41 respondents had not received any jazz training whatsoever. That is a shocking 68 percent! Some 23 of the responses were just a simple “No,” while others expounded further. Following are some answers to that question:

- I was classically trained and unfortunately, didn't receive any jazz training because there were NO jazz classes offered in my conservatory.
- As a student teacher I helped with the extra-curricular boys' swing choir.
- I did not receive any formal instruction in Jazz. I am the Minister of Music at a large African American Church, so I play gospel music all the time, which is largely based on jazz harmonies. Therefore, I am able to FAKE my way through the Jazz pieces I do. Needless to say, a true Jazz musician would recognize that I am not really a jazz musician.
- No, all classical.
- No, I did not receive any jazz training in college.
- No, my focus was classical.
- Not really, mostly we studied classical music and counterpoint. We did sing other genres, including jazz standards in our choral ensemble and jazz was imbedded in

theory classes amongst other genres. We did not have a specific jazz ensemble or theory class.

- No, mostly classical composition study/theory/ear training.
- I did not receive any Jazz teaching experience.
- My TA as a graduate student was directing an ensemble, but other than that all of my experience has come through being a member of the ensembles offered to me in high school and college. I've never had jazz specific courses of study.
- We did some vocal jazz repertoire as a part of our chamber choir and concert choir on occasion, but no formalized training in the education of jazz harmony.

As is obvious by the open-ended responses, most teachers did not receive any formalized jazz training. Some performed jazz repertoire within vocal ensembles which looks as if it was spotty at best; however, nothing seemed to focus on characteristics such as jazz technique, articulation, phrasing, swing, *et cetera*.

Out of the nineteen responders who had received some jazz teaching experience, the author asked if the class was a mandatory requirement for a degree in music education from the learning institution where they received their teaching degree. Only four respondents (6.7% of the total respondents) answered yes. This is appalling to see! Public schools are supposed to offer students opportunities to learn all styles of music from all periods of music history. How is a music teacher supposed to teach our country's only original art form if they are not taught how to teach it?

One of the most important questions on the survey was to complete the statement: “There are very few high school vocal jazz ensembles in the New Jersey public school music programs because . . .” The most common answers were:

- Lack of comfort level or experience teaching the subject – 7 respondents
- Scheduling conflicts or conflicts with the curriculum – 6 respondents
- There is just not time in the school day – 6 respondents
- Higher institutions are not preparing or not training them to teach jazz – 5 respondents

Some other individual responses the author thought were interesting include:

- There is not much repertoire. There is not much history of choral jazz besides groups I consider modern barbershop groups: Manhattan Transfer, etc.
- Many teachers say that they teach healthy technique, but I've never heard healthy technique from a jazz choir.

Other responses which are interesting as well as concerning to the author are:

- The style can/is intimidating and needs to have more professional development.
- MANY vocal teachers feel completely overwhelmed by the idea of teaching jazz, due to their own limited jazz knowledge/prejudice regarding vocal jazz as a viable vocal performance medium.
- My belief is that most choral directors are strictly classically trained and do extra work in churches.
- not many of us receive jazz vocal instruction in high school. Therefore, when we go to college, not many of us are comfortable joining a jazz vocal group or pursuing further jazz education. Therefore, not many of us are comfortable

teaching vocal jazz. Therefore, not many of the next generation of teachers have jazz vocal instruction in high school. And the cycle continues.

Most of these statements have been touched upon throughout this paper while many have been discussed on several planes. The overall conclusion is that these issues need to be addressed immediately if we want to preserve the art form as well as help it progress.

CHAPTER III – SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

Following are some solutions given to address the issues that vocal music educators deal with which impede the progress in learning to teach vocal jazz. It is the author's hope that solutions offered here will help to raise awareness within music educators with the ultimate goal being to spark a renewed interest in the music. Issues addressed are listening and accompanying skills, knowledge of the language, available materials for the vocal teacher, and finally, administrative and curriculum changes.

LISTENING SKILLS

In our interview, Heyburn and I discussed the importance of listening. I mentioned you've got to do a lot of listening to this kind of music if you're going to lock in the specific style and groove and being able to swing. He replied: "You know the problem is – it's our American music. We should be learning it – we should know

something about our own music. I would like to see if we can't get it started more on a high school level – you know, it's up to us, we gotta do it.”⁴⁵

Roseanna Vitro expanded on this conversation during our interview by sharing an example about her students and the importance of listening: “My kids at NJPAC for thirteen years . . . I would always ask them at the beginning of the two semesters ‘what are you listening to, I want to know what you’re listening to because I don’t understand what you’re listening to and I want to be turned on because I’m going to be turning you on to jazz.’ That was kind of cool because at that time I would be able to, I could listen to who they were listening to in their singing who they’re being influenced by. They’re just going to school – they just haven’t been turned on – that’s all it is.”⁴⁶

This is a wonderful illustration because not only does it show the importance of listening to great examples of jazz singers, but it also stresses the importance of knowing what your students listen to so you can relate to them at their musical level – this will allow students a level of trust in their teacher which helps break down barriers.

One solution given by many jazz educators throughout this research is to simply do more listening. In their article on “Vocal Jazz Improvisation”, Gene Aitken and Jamey Aebersold stress the fact that, “Singers should listen to jazz instrumentalists’ recordings and try to imitate both the sound and the articulation of the instrument. Articulation and sound are important concepts . . . when Chet Baker scat sings, he sounds like a trumpet player. When he plays his trumpet . . . he sounds like someone singing.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Heyburn Interview.

⁴⁶ Vitro Interview.

⁴⁷ Gene Aitken and Jamey Aebersold, “Vocal Jazz Improvisation: An Instrumental Approach,” *Jazz Educator’s Journal Vol. XVI No.1* (October/November 1983):

Although this article is aimed at the student, the educator can utilize this information to help him feel more comfortable with the genre and ultimately share this information with his voice students. They go on to also include the act of imitation and its importance in learning to sing jazz in a stylistically accurate manner.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE LANGUAGE

Bishop shares in the interview what he thinks is the major issue with teachers and their lack of teaching vocal jazz: “I think it’s absolutely a lack of comfort and expertise . . . As soon as you say jazz, their first mind goes to improvisation – ‘Well, I don’t do that’. Well you do – you just do it with words. You’re in a classroom – I’m sure you’re forced to improvise every single day - not necessarily musically . . . You’ve got to be able to duck and bob and weave. And, those teachers who feel like they can’t improvise are doing it verbally all the time. What we need to be able to do is shift that same skill into the musical world . . .”⁴⁸ This is a great analogy and should be shared with any teacher who doesn’t think they can improvise.

In an article for *Jazz Educator’s Journal*, Denis Diblasio says, “If you want to scat jazz, you have to study jazz. It doesn’t come just because you want it to or because you have a good voice. Some of the greatest scat singers are instrumentalists with totally

10-13.

⁴⁸ Bishop Interview.

untrained voices. No one has the magic pill.”⁴⁹ DiBlasio supports the old saying that if you want to get good at anything in life, you must work hard.

It’s also important that vocalists who intend to become music educators have an education that’s well-rounded in different styles/genres so they feel confident in teaching whatever curriculum currently exists in the school district in which they are hired. It will also give them the confidence (as well as an edge over an interviewee who may be unfamiliar with vocal jazz) as they go through the interview process when asked about their experience in teaching different styles of vocal music.

Jan Shapiro, vocal professor at Berklee College of Music, has this to say, “Students who intend to be teachers need as broad a background in jazz as they have in the classical realm, if they are to be effective instructors in the classroom. We need good musicians who are flexible in classical music, in jazz, and commercial music, even though as musicians, our forte will most likely be in one of these idioms.”⁵⁰

ACCOMPANYING SKILLS

Just as any choral director needs to have a basic amount of accompanying skills in order to teach a vocal group, a director for a jazz vocal group needs to be able to do the same. The only difference is that accompanying for a choral group is like having the piano skills of a regular choral director – but on steroids! There are a couple of reasons I

⁴⁹ Denis DiBlasio, “Scat Singing: Imitating Instruments,” *Jazz Educator’s Journal Vol. XXVIII No.5* (March 1996): 35.

⁵⁰ Jan Shapiro, “The Realities of Vocal Jazz Style,” *Jazz Educator’s Journal Vol. XIX No.1* (October/November 1986): 57.

say this. First, you must be able to not only be able to bang out voice parts, but play parts that go way beyond diatonic tertial harmonies. Jazz is harmonically challenging and many times vocal charts call for extensions far beyond the seventh – often times they reach the ninth, eleventh and thirteenth and altered harmonies as well. Also, the director must be able to play several different voicings – open as well as close harmony.

In addition, when accompanying for a vocal jazz group, at times the director needs to be able to read chord changes from a lead sheet as well as a bass line. Bishop expounds upon this: “I think quite frankly. . . the piano playing component is a challenge for a lot of teachers in vocal music . . . unless they were a piano player to begin with . . . if you’re a singer and you go to Westminster and you take your two semesters of piano – you ain’t doin’ no swingin’ – ever. So, now you have to do what with an accompaniment – play changes? Walk a bass line? Well, but the bass line’s not written . . .”⁵¹

These skills are necessary in order for a choral director to become proficient and effective at what they do. This is scary for many young musicians in a vocal music program – especially without piano skills. Most choral directors I’ve come across over the past twenty years don’t even have the piano skills to get by accompanying for their basic choirs. Today, many directors use accompaniment tracks to supplement their incompetency, which is really sad.

AVAILABLE SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

One of the issues that came up in the survey was that of available materials to help vocal jazz educators in teaching skills needed to sing the style of music. As

⁵¹ Bishop Interview.

previously mentioned, most teachers don't have the keyboard skills to accompany their groups, so these supplemental materials are available for them. Vocal jazz educators like Rosanna Vitro, Michele Weir and Bob Stoloff, as well as others, have play along CD's and MP3 files available. These are people that have been clinicians at our workshops before (the annual NJAJE conventions at NJPAC in Newark). These materials are readily available – much of it can be found on Amazon however, I'm sure a lot of these teachers don't even know what's out there. Included in the available materials are books on such things as vocal jazz warm-ups, jazz scales such as blues scales, scatting exercises and improvisational exercises on blues progressions, just to name a few.

Another issue that came up is the availability of jazz charts on the market. During our interview, Bishop addresses this topic: "Right, they don't know that there's folks like Kerry Marsh that are putting out things on tracks and stuff like that. They also aren't aware that folks like the Kerry Marshes of the world and folks like um, even Paris Rutherford, some of his better stuff from North Texas, guys like Roger Treese, their stuff is very choral group friendly and you could actually introduce it to your choir and all it does is it speaks a slightly different harmonic language. If we're really in praise of Eric Whitacre ('cause that's what every choral teacher feels he's the person that we should be in praise of), what's interesting about Eric Whitacre to me is two things: number one is that he's using a harmonic language that's not jazz, but it's got the same dissonance base like a lot of our jazz is and two, his choir – they sing virtually straight tone. So are you gonna tell me that singing straight tone is harmful when the poster child for choral music

right now has one of the best choral groups in the world and they're pretty straight tone too?"⁵²

ADMINISTRATIVE/CURRICULUM CHANGES

In my interview with Steve Bishop, I mentioned to him that up to this point, the instrumental versus the vocal musicians have been two separate animals and the instrumental students have been the more serious musicians, while the vocal students have been learning music just for fun – it's more of a 'club' for them. The follow up to this statement is that I just don't think the administration takes it as seriously as the band kids.

I do not think public school administrations take music, in general, very seriously. It has been my experience over the past twenty-one years that most administrators plug it into the curriculum because they have to. There are constant budget cuts and it is almost always the arts that get cut first. The football team will always get new jerseys before the band replaces that trombone with the cracked bell. Administrators are much more interested in getting the SAT scores up or making sure that the percentage of students passing some type of standardized test increases each year. That's just the nature of the beast and I personally don't see a change happening anytime soon.

In his article for the *Massachusetts Music Educators Journal*, "The Missing Piece: The Establishment of Jazz Choirs in School Choral Programs," Kevin McDonald, Director of Choral Activities for Wellesley High School writes: "A comprehensive school choral program should explore the music of various styles and cultures, including

⁵² Ibid.

American music. Jazz is generally considered one of the most significant forms of American music. Yet, school choral programs often do not include jazz choir as a curricular course of study . . . the existence of a jazz choir is far less common than are other types of choral ensembles, including the ever-increasing number of school *a cappella* groups.”⁵³

McDonald again reinforces with this statement, the fact that choral programs are not including vocal jazz into the curriculum. One other thing he mentions is the increasing number of *a cappella* groups which, I believe, have gotten popular over the past 5-10 years largely because of media exposure. I don’t have a problem with this – these groups have their place in the extracurricular vocal music world. What I do have a problem with is the fact that they shouldn’t take place at the expense of the vocal jazz group.

Administrators need to be educated and maybe now they will sit up and take notice. With the recent attainment of the arts as now being considered Common Core Standards throughout the country, hopefully change will begin. This is a huge accomplishment for music teachers. Bishop shares his thoughts on the subject: “One of the things is also educating the administrators you know, we have a document, uh a strategic plan for the arts. One of our concerns was we didn’t want the arts to be viewed simply as the ‘dog and pony show’ for the district. You know, ‘Hey, we’ve got something important coming up – well, we’ll just bring in the kids to sing’. We’re trying

⁵³ Kevin McDonald, “The Missing Piece: The Establishment of Jazz Choirs in School Choral Programs,” *Massachusetts Music Educators Journal*. (Vol. 64, No.3 – Spring 2016): 40-41.

to say, ‘Well wait a minute guys – nationally and state-wide, the arts is a Core Standard now’. So, if that’s the case, we have educational dynamics that have to be enforced!”⁵⁴

Bishop continues: “If we’re really going to be looking at those in a brutally honest way, more students in vocal music have a chance of having a career in the popular or vocal jazz arenas. There’s not a lot of paying choral jobs in the world.”⁵⁵ He hits the nail on the head with this comment and brings it home by basically stating that it’s not so much that we’re looking to have every vocal music student go on to be a teacher. However, if they want to make a career out of music the odds are going to be much better in the fields of popular or vocal jazz than as a choral director.

⁵⁴ Bishop Interview.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER IV – LOOKING FORWARD

THE FUTURE OF VOCAL JAZZ EDUCATION IN NEW JERSEY

On Friday, November 18, 2016, the New Jersey Association of Jazz Educators held their twelfth annual convention at NJ PAC in Newark, NJ. The day is aimed at providing NJ public and private music educators workshop opportunities to enhance their jazz education ‘chops’. As is customary, all participants come together in a brief opening meeting and then split up into two groups – one for instrumental track teachers and the other for vocal track teachers. As is the norm, the instrumental group is much larger. The number of participants in the vocal workshop was approximately fifteen. The workshop was led by Steven Bishop, vocal music director at Burlington Township High School. Steve brought the smaller of his two vocal jazz groups (comprising of twelve students) who performed several pieces in different vocal jazz styles. This provided the participating directors an opportunity to hear a polished, high school vocal jazz ensemble and ask questions about the music they heard. The directors also find out from the

students their take on vocal jazz, coming from the diverse backgrounds of several vocalists with different levels of musicianship/musical experience. After two hours of listening and discussion between the students and directors, the students were dismissed and the participants gathered in a circle to spend the next two hours brainstorming about the situation regarding the declining state of vocal jazz in our New Jersey high schools and how do we go about remediating this situation.

In order for vocal jazz to grow in our public schools, music educators need to have the desire to learn and teach the art form. They can learn this by going to local New Jersey workshops given by clinicians at the annual teacher's convention in November, the NJAJE Jazz conference in November or the music teacher's convention in January. Well-known vocal jazz educators and clinicians such as Michele Weir, Kerry Marsh, Bob Stoloff and Justin Binek have books, articles and sing-along materials available to any educator interested in learning how to teach this genre of music.

They must also have the support of the administration of the school district they are employed with as well as the time in their teaching schedule.

Higher learning institutions that offer degrees in vocal music education must begin to offer courses in vocal jazz pedagogy and make them mandatory required classes in order to graduate. One suggestion would be for high school music teachers having students that are planning on going on to major in music education to ask for some mandatory required courses in jazz as they are shopping for a college to attend. Courses such as jazz history, jazz harmony and/or theory as well as some type of class in improvisation should be on their lists of considerations and they can ask the college

admissions officers these questions. When enough students ask about these classes, hopefully the music schools within the colleges/universities will get the hint.

Also, students need to be exposed to this music – if not in school, then where? They're not going to be exposed at home – either by their parents or on their own. The only music that they are exposed to on their own is what the media is playing either being streamed, by radio (which floods the market with either pop music or rap) or by their parents, which is usually some form of pop or rock and roll.

APPENDICES

INTERVIEWS

A Telephone Interview with Doug Heyburn

(Monday evening, Oct. 3, 2016)

Doug Heyburn has been the Choral Music Director at West Milford High School in West Milford New Jersey for the past twenty years. He received his BM from Jersey City State University and his MA from Central Connecticut State University. In 2000 he was named Teacher of the Year, Passaic County Teacher of the Year and won the Governors Recognition award. At West Milford he conducts the Concert Choir, The Women's Chorus, Men's Chorus and teaches Music Harmony and Theory. In addition,

Mr. Heyburn directs an extracurricular Jazz Vocal Ensemble called Highland Jazz. Highland Jazz has won first place at the Berklee College of Music Jazz Festival, the largest one-day festival in the country and first place and Grand Champions at the Roxbury Choral Invitational. Mr. Heyburn has been guest conductor for the North Jersey Region I Jazz Choir on two separate occasions. He lives in Butler, New Jersey with his wife Maria and their three boys.

I'm here with Doug Heyburn today to discuss your thoughts about vocal jazz education. The reason I'm asking you these questions is to get your personal thoughts and ideas about the state of vocal jazz education in our high schools – specifically why this musical genre seems to be losing interest with our youth, while instrumental jazz seems to be thriving. This is the basis for my master's thesis at Rutgers University and I've chosen you to be one of several music educators as well as professional musicians that will share some feedback and insight as research for my paper. Before we go into the interview, I just want to let people know that you are the vocal music director at West Milford High School in West Milford, New Jersey.

CP - How many years have you been teaching there Doug?

DH – Twenty-one.

CP – Twenty-one long years. OK – do you have any questions for me before we get started?

DH – No, I don't actually.

CP – Can you give me some background on your experience as a student of vocal jazz and maybe share some of your past history? (1:51) (2:31)

DH - When I went to Jersey City State College in 1980, I took advantage of a poster I saw which said “Come join the jazz choir” run by a gentleman by the name of Dan Schwartz who ended up being quite a busy composer in the jazz choir publishing catalogues, and did a lot of work, wrote a lot of tunes and we got a lot of good stuff right off the press before it even went to print. And so that was exciting and he was a very hip guy and taught us a lot – he was a high school teacher. We did some mini tours and it was great. (6:05)

CP – Were you a music ed. major there at JC State?

DH – I was

CP – Did they offer you folks any classes in the jazz genre?

DH – Nope, there was a jazz band and Dan Schwartz came to the school as an adjunct specifically to do the jazz choir. I assume he had one at Waldwick HS where he was a full time HS choral director. (7:10) (8:16) That was all I recall was the jazz band and the jazz choir.

CP – What I’m looking to find out is at Jersey City, was there more than just learning charts, learning voice parts - did you work on inflections, did you -

DH – Yes, Dan ran the group like, um, he ran the group in a very pedagogical way. Yes, we practiced inflections, we practiced scales, he taught us a lot about jazz choir singing along the way, definitely!

CP – Stylistics, those kind of things?

DH – Absolutely! (9:24)

CP – Question number two – to what extent are you involved in vocal jazz education (I know quite a bit, but I'd like to get it down 'on tape' as they say)

DH – Twenty years ago I started a jazz vocal group at my school. I had sung in a jazz vocal group when I was still living in Manhattan before I took the job here in NJ, I had sung in a jazz vocal quintet and we had sung all our own original arrangements that were written by a gentleman by the name of Jack Williams who I had worked with on the road – I was a young 25-year-old doing sound and lights with a show band and this gentleman was a great arranger. He had studied under Vincent Persichetti at U Arts in Philadelphia, PA. He was a real hotshot. So when I started my group in Manhattan, he had written all the charts for us and I took those charts with me into my school job and so for years I almost exclusively sang Jack Williams charts. Now Jack Williams is not a *published* arranger, although he's a prolific arranger who arranged for 50 years on the road. My ensemble sang personally owned, hand-written arrangements by Jack Williams. Then I started getting into things by Paris Rutherford and some of the funkier things by the Real Group. I've been competing in the Roxbury Festival in the jazz category and have been going up to the Berkeley College of Music jazz festival for the past four or five years. Always been a little bit frustrated that there hasn't been more for us to do – but I assume that's a question yet to come. (12:39)

CP – I know that you've directed the Region I vocal jazz concerts a couple of times.

DH – (chuckles) Yes, thank you for jarring my memory, a friend of mine by the name of Charles Postas subbed out to me the Region I directorship for the jazz choir on a couple of occasions. I had a great experience doing that as well. (14:00)

CP – Let's talk about your choirs because I know in singing, it's almost two different worlds between the instrumental versus the vocal. The instrumental kids, they learn scales, they learn music notation, they learn how to sight read, they learn rhythmic patterns... you know, in my experience as a vocal music teacher it's not nearly as extensive because the kids come in and they want to make music right away and they don't have the years of lessons . . . that the instrumental kids do.

DH – the formal training.

CP – Yes. Do you notice a difference between your, let's say your concert choir versus your after school jazz group as far as education, as far as formal training is concerned?

DH – Yeah, here's the thing: I am changing the way I teach over these past few years and I'll tell you why. The learning curve for teaching a young HS student to scat has always been such that you know you get your group sounding so beautifully in tune, the intonation is great, the blend is great and then, you know, the kids start to scat and it detracts from the overall quality of your performance. For years I shied away from extended scat solos by the students. (Paris Rutherford solved that problem – he always had group scatting so that the group scatted quite a bit in the Paris Rutherford arrangements but not necessarily as a soloist improvising. I struggled with that for a long time.)

Over these past years we've been attending these workshops at NJPAC in November and I've collected books and CD's and have started to use more and more as my warm-ups, you know jazz scales, blues scales, dorian scales, umm, scatting exercises, improvisational exercises on blues progressions and such and we are making progress. If nothing else, it's breaking my kids out of the shell of being embarrassed. You know, if

you're not teaching them how to do it in a slow, methodical way, well then it's very, very personally exposed – they feel very personally exposed to all of a sudden just be asked to scat.

So I have taken the advice of many of the great speakers that we have had at our workshops at the NJAJE workshop and I've started to do what I probably should have done twenty years ago

. . . (18:50) (21:15)

I've always worked on blend and style and making sure they're not bringing a formal classical sound into the group (especially the sopranos when they're going up high) and trying to get them into a more spread out sound for jazz . . . more and more, trying to get my kids to *listen* . . . The other thing is, my group has never rehearsed more than one and a half hours a week so all the listening they should've and could've done they didn't do. We didn't sit for thirty minutes and listen to instrumental groups so that we would know – we did it a little bit. You know what it's like – you've got music to teach, you gotta get this show up and running! And it's a shame that it's like that but – these are the busy kids in the school, so you take what you can get. You know, you explain to them that you're trying to emulate an instrumental sound or style and they get *some* of it along the way, but not as much as you would like.

CP – In your teaching, what are the areas of learning do you see as negative to performance?

DH – The amount of time with them certainly is less than any one of us would like – we would like to spend more time, especially if you're doing higher level music, which I think we both do. It takes some time to learn the notes and 'own' the notes. So, certainly

time is one of the factors that I think is a negative . . . The other negative is that there's not a lot of opportunities to sing. You know, my colleague who runs the band, they're out every single week (it seems) in a competition and what not in festivals all over the place and like I said, I go to the Roxbury festival and I go to the Berkeley festival (you have to drive to Boston to go to that one) – there's not a lot. I believe there is a debut festival that one of the NJAJE guys is gonna start at their school this year – even that, that's two hours away. So, opportunities to sing and compete and be in the festivals – there's not a lot. And I know from conducting region and being a presence in the honors jazz program that you know the kids aren't coming out – the choir directors aren't sending them so, you know – it's tough.

CP – That's one of the focuses of this research paper that I'm doing is to see if we can find out reasons why and fix some of this so we can turn it around.

DH – And it's not because of education value because we both know that the challenge of this music that these kids are exposed to on an honors jazz level is every bit as challenging (or more) than the classical choir.

CP – Oh, absolutely! And to be able to memorize this music and learn . . . it's a whole different language than what they've been singing since they're in kindergarten. And in a couple of rehearsals, learn a whole different style and get it memorized. And it's a much smaller group too.

DH – Right – there's no safety in numbers with these groups.

CP – Moving along. So, what do you think are some of the skills that are lacking in HS singers today (try and take yourself out of the equation) which are needed to become a

proficient jazz vocalist. What are the other high school vocal teachers not teaching the kids that you think are important?

DH – The question is, if I were to make a comment on other groups that I see in and around the competitions and festivals . . .

CP – Yeah, what are some of the skills that the kids just don't have, umm that they're not being taught in other schools – from the very few schools that are sending kids.

DH – I would say the intonation. You know, there's a couple of things – often times they don't sound like they've worked on their music until they've got perfect, in tune singing. Another thing is, and I bring this up to my students all the time - I tell them, "when you speed up like that (and I probably should say this) it's very 'high school' to lose the groove like you're losing right now". "You have got to own your music so that you can lock into that groove and never waiver". I think kids are at a very excitable age and they go into auto-pilot and off they go and you know it can be like a runaway train. So that sense of locking in the groove and the tempo. The perfect intonation. And I would say style - I don't know whether it's that they're not choosing good modeling, or the kids, they're not modeling themselves. I don't know.

CP – That's where I was going to work around to style because what I hear a lot is kids coming out and again, you can't do a lot in three or four rehearsals with them (talking about the region jazz choir) but kids coming out and you have them try and learn their music and then come back singing in a style of like Randall Thompson or some of these guys and I think it goes back to what you were saying earlier – you gotta listen! You gotta do a lot of listening to this kind of music if you're gonna lock in the specific style and groove and being able to swing.

DH – Well when you pick music of a group like the New York Voices or the Real Group you've got a great modeling ability – these kids can hear the originators, for one, do these tunes (or maybe not the originators if they're doing arrangements) but great professionals in the field. When you pick something by, let's say, (and no offense) by a Kirby Shaw, then you're going to hear studio singers – and that *could* be OK. But maybe you may not have studio singers that are all that versed in jazz either. And time is money – they're doing the best they can but . . . (35:10)

CP – Why do you think this is the case, (students aren't learning skills) – do you put the onus on the students or on the teachers?

DH – For what? For the lack of . . .

CP – For the lack of proficiency there. The lack of skill proficiency – we just talked about that and you told me there's a lot of pros which we haven't discussed but I'm more interested in the cons right now. So, do we put the onus on the students themselves or the teachers?

DH – No, I don't think you ever put the onus on students. I think if you walk into ten schools the kids are the same. It's, it's the teachers! And I don't think the teachers are versed in vocal jazz – I don't think a lot of them have any interest in it! You know, jazz is tough, I think it takes a certain kind of person to want to sit in a club and listen to a ten-minute saxophone solo – it takes a certain kind of listener. It's a very highly intellectual music. You're a great jazz pianist, Charlie so you know what's going through your mind – and maybe, at this point, it's not even going through your mind anymore 'cause it's so second-nature, but you know when you're soloing the years of scale study and the harmonic structure study that's going into and coming out of your right hand or maybe

both hands . . . I think it's a cycle that there are not a lot of colleges that (inaudible). It's easier to just do pop music – the kids like it and we've all heard pop music on the radio. It's not foreign like the jazz style.

CP – Yeah and you're gonna get a lot more excitement from the kids about it. (39:40)

DH – It doesn't really matter what class we're teaching – you have to inspire! You know, whether you're teaching pop, jazz or your classical – if you're not inspiring them with great ideas, great music selection, great teaching methods – they'll get bored singing pop music . . . It's (jazz) more foreign to students than it used to be twenty-five years ago. There's just so much more music out there for them to listen to. But it's such a high level art form that you know, you look around your group and “these kids are smart kids”. They're not just good at what you're doing – they're smart. Because you gotta be smart to be able to do this I think.

CP – I'm gonna move on to another question and this is one that I had put on the survey but those surveys were anonymous so I got to see the open-ended answers but it didn't tell me who answered how . . . I wanted to know what your answer was to that question so I don't know if you remember it so I'll re-read it to you –

DH – Yeah sure

CP – and this was actually one of your suggestions to put on my survey so

DH – Oh good!

CP – I thank you for this.

DH – I hope I get it right then

CP - (chuckle) There's no right or wrong answers. (banter continues) To the best of your knowledge and in your opinion, please complete the following statement, “There are very

few high school vocal jazz ensembles in New Jersey's public school music programs because . . .”

DH – Because the teachers are not versed in this. First of all, they're coming out of the Westminsters and these other programs highly educated in wonderful choral music and boy, it's really there for the taking. There's so many wonderful choral programs in these colleges and I would love to be a part of every one of them – you can't but I wish I could. But they're not coming out with this kind of experience unless, like me, they answered a poster on the wall (bulletin board) that said “Come audition for the jazz choir”. You know, it certainly wasn't mandatory. And another thing, it's coming to me right now – if I'm a songwriter or composer a one-hundred fifty-person choir makes me a lot more money than a sixteen person jazz group. If I'm selling octavos I'm making a lot more money writing for the big concert choir than I am for the jazz vocal group and, you know, money talks.

CP – So with that statement are you saying that there's not enough literature out there available for this style of music? I'm not sure . . .

DH – OK, so in my personal opinion, whether this is what I meant or not, yes – I do think that there is not enough. Do I think there's not any jazz music to find – no, you can find it. I'm not overly pleased with a lot of it. That's a personal thing.

CP – I guess my question to you is, and I don't mean to interrupt you but, how would that help if there's more music available? Do you think high school choral conductors, if there was a plethora of swing or jazz vocal music, would choose more of that?

DH – Yeah, I do and I'll tell you why. Jazz music (48:00)

CP – My final question for you Doug is, “Where do you think vocal jazz is headed in the future?”

DH – I think people like you and I have our work cut out for us. You and I and Steven (Bishop) and Randy (White) – we’re it! And we have got to get out and beg, plead and borrow to get kids involved in these honors groups and let them know – I don’t think we’re having an easy time getting the lists of choral directors names (you can make of that what you want) and so I don’t think we’re getting to all the choral directors. (54:54)

CP – If we can come up with something, we can use my database . . .

DH – Yeah, gotta do it. It’s like everything else – you contact people and you figure well, they’re not getting back to us, they’re not sending us kids, they must not like it. Nope – they’re busy. They just let it fall by the wayside – it wasn’t personal. It wasn’t ‘cause they hated you. They want to offer their kids opportunities – we all do, we want our kids going away to college feeling like, “Wow, I really had a great four years.” So these teachers want it, it’s just if it’s not in their normal routine, often time it falls by the wayside.

CP – Yeah, you know what Doug – they want to offer their kids opportunities, but on one plane.

DH – That’s right!

CP – We want to open that up to them because there are so many... there are thousands of kids that have never heard this style of music and even if we get five out of those thousands, you know, we’re making headway. (55:40) (57:27)

CP – If you could say “this needs to change” would you have your high school teachers change or would you go to the university level and make it mandatory for them to set

mandatory requirements for their music education majors to take some kind of course in vocal jazz instruction?

DH – I think it always needs to start at the high school level, otherwise nothing's gonna happen – they're not going to walk in the door at the collegiate level – I don't think you can mandate it – it's an elective. You know the problem is – it's our American music. We should be learning it. We should know something about our own music. I would like to see if we can't get it started more on a high school level – you know, it's up to us, we gotta do it.

CP – I totally agree with you, but for me to say, let's say that I were to make a statement, “Just as one semester of choral conducting is needed in order to graduate, you wouldn't think that it would be asking too much to make one semester of teaching vocal jazz styles as a mandatory requirement for graduation.”

DH – I think it's a great idea. I do think it's a great idea – I think the music is worthy of it . . . Listen Charlie, popular music is now part of the university curriculum – people are now majoring in pop music. Like, are you kidding me – does anybody really need to major in popular music? You know, didn't we all learn popular music on our own, in our own basements with our own bands with our own songwriting? Now somebody's gonna teach you? Ridiculous! And why do you think? Because they don't want to lose these kids that don't have the classical chops to get into college anymore. There's more kids being turned away than were being let in. So you've got all these pop music majors in college now – ten years ago you couldn't strum a rock tune on your guitar and get into college. You might be a good rock musician, but there wasn't really a place for you in

college. . . Now you can go to school for that, so if you can do that then yeah, I think you're right – it could be more of the college curriculum.

CP - Yeah. Well, I'm out of questions here and I've taken up a lot of your time. I really appreciate you giving up an hour of your time or however long we've been talking here.

DH – Yeah never a problem.

A Telephone Interview with Kerry Marsh

(Friday evening, October 14, 2016)

Kerry Marsh is a composer and arranger specializing in contemporary music for vocal jazz ensembles. Kerry is very much in demand as a commissioned arranger for many of the nation's top educational vocal and instrumental jazz ensembles, Marsh has a large and varied catalog of music performed regularly around the world. Kerry has published over 180 compositions and arrangements at KerryMarsh.com, and also has published arrangements through UNC Jazz Press and Sound Music Publications.

Kerry is a member of the jazz studies faculty at The University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, where he directs two advanced vocal jazz ensembles and teaches applied jazz voice. In only three years under Kerry's direction, Vocal Lab has won two Down Beat Magazine Student Music Awards in the Large Graduate Level Vocal Jazz Ensemble Category, and in 2016, they performed at the annual Jazz Education Network convention in Louisville, KY. Previously, Kerry served for ten years as the director of vocal jazz ensembles at Sacramento State. In that time, his ensembles and individual students earned thirteen Down Beat Awards, distinguishing Sacramento State as one of the premier vocal jazz programs in the country during that time span.

Along with his wife and musical collaborator Julia Dollison, Kerry released his highly ambitious debut album, *Vertical Voices: The Music of Maria Schneider*, in March 2010. Dollison and Marsh perform regularly with the vocal quartet called Vertical Voices, also featuring Greg Jasperse and Jennifer Barnes. The quartet performs the music of Schneider as well as Pat Metheny, Nando Lauria and more, including original compositions by the group.

Marsh is busy year-round as an adjudicator and clinician for jazz festivals and workshops. Kerry has directed all-state jazz choirs in California, Colorado, Missouri, New Jersey, Arizona, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Wyoming, Illinois, New York, Maine, Iowa, New Hampshire All State Jazz Choirs as well as the Nassau County (NY) Honor Jazz Choir. Kerry graduated in 2000 from the University of Kansas with a B.M.E. in Music Education and in 2003 with a Master of Music in Jazz Studies from the University of North Texas. During our interview, Kerry made it known that he never received his music education certification but went right on after graduate school to teach

at a college level.

CP – During the clinics that you give, do you work with high school singers?

KM – Oh more than anything, yeah, I work with high school students constantly - thousands of them every year.

Traveling all over, adjudications, special clinics, guest appearances with certain groups . . . that's actually a huge part of my job, but I've never been *the* guy at a high school or junior high running the program.

CP – That's good to know because in order for us to continue that I know that you have your finger on the pulse of what high school singers are like and . . .

KM – Oh yeah, very much.

CP – In your opinion, what do you think are some of the skills that are lacking in high school vocalists today which are needed in order to become a proficient jazz vocalist?

KM – The ones that are lacking (the important skills) are most often the ones who don't listen to much jazz, much vocal jazz. Um, it's a really tired answer, it sounds almost political with how much you hear it in my world, but the reason it's pervasive is we're all very sure that that's true. We talk to the students about, you know, they seem to, on average all know who Ella Fitzgerald is, maybe Billie Holiday and Frank Sinatra and then after that, boy, in 2016 Michael Buble is not on their radar. . . The main skills they are missing are the lack of understanding about style. There are so many little nuances in group vocal jazz performance aside from just intonation and vocal technique – there are so many tiny micro-expressions, you know, micro-musical gestures that you have to

absorb from listening and then you might be able to reproduce those with some coaching or if you're a good mimic. And that's the lot of it.

I don't know that in my experience that singers are severely hindered by difficulty with sight-reading at the school (high school) level. We seriously push our college students to get good at it because in a professional world they're going to need to be able to read music really well but, I don't see that part of it, that's often cited, "well the singers don't read as well as the instrumentalists" but I don't think that has much to do with vocal jazz. In fact, one key point I actually have to make here is that vocal jazz is not shrinking at all (laughs) in my experience and I think that it's actually developing and growing and building and there's a lot changing for the positive in the vocal jazz ensemble world. Um, I absolutely get why, if you live in the northeast though, it seems like it is. Because culturally there I've noticed it's not happening much . . . it's very spotty . . . it's historical and the momentum of jazz . . . it's much more about instrumental jazz and more about solo performance . . . those conservatories in New York and the areas . . . they have really strong respected programs are also not geared very much toward vocal jazz ensemble music they're very much geared toward getting soloists move in the direction of being famous artists . . . the next Esperanza Spaulding type . . .

The rest of the interview was about Kerry's thought's about the use of mics and money needed to invest in sound equipment and working with soundboard knowledge as well as working with all of these things. (He called this the "high barrier of entry".) This was in response to my final question about why there are so few vocal jazz ensembles in NJ high schools today.

A Telephone Interview with Roseanna Vitro

(Saturday evening, Oct. 22, 2016)

Roseanna Vitro has toured the world as a performer, clinician, recording artist, vocal instructor and ambassador, having proven herself a reigning member of the jazz community. Her collaborations cover a wide range of music and stylistic directions and have been cited and celebrated worldwide.

Roseanna is a soulful communicator, showcasing a thirst for swinging hard and possessing an ear for melodic invention. Her strengths include rhythmic acuity and free-

spirited spontaneity, often heard in her improvisations, using both scat syllables and lyrics.

Ms. Vitro's signature energy and grace can be heard on a number of recordings, among them *Passion Dance*, which featured Elvin Jones, Christian McBride and longtime musical partner, Kenny Werner.

Also notable is *The Delirium Blues Project: Serve or Suffer* on Half Note Records, 2008. This is a live, blues-based recording of jazz and pop featuring Kenny Werner's arrangements and an all-star band of Kenny Werner, James Carter, Randy Brecker, Ray Anderson, Adam Rogers, John Patitucci as well as others. In 2010, Roseanna formed the Randy Newman Project Group and after many hours of research and rehearsals, *The Music of Randy Newman* was released. The album was nominated in 2011 for best vocal jazz album.

She has worked on stage and in the studio with musicians such as Kenny Werner, George Coleman, David 'Fathead' Newman, Eddie Gomez, Arnett Cobb, Elvin Jones, Kenny Barron, Joe Lovano, Christian McBride, Eddie Daniels, Al Foster, Rufus Reid, Buster Williams, Randy Brecker and John Patitucci.

Having served as an official Jazz Ambassador, sponsored in 2009 by Jazz at Lincoln Center and the U.S. State Department and in 2004 by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the U.S. State Department, she has presented concerts and workshops around the world.

Given her lifelong commitment to the art of jazz singing – exemplified by her myriad of achievements on the bandstand, in the studio, and in classrooms fronting jazz's

next generation – Vitro displays a heart and a soul rare by any standards. She is a consummate artist whose professional outreach improves us all. (8:13)

CP – Having done workshops with high school singers, what do you think are some of the skills that are lacking today which are needed in order to become proficient jazz vocalists?

RV - Well, in my opinion and I don't consider myself an expert in what's going on in high schools, but in my experience and keeping up with what I can with what's going on, my understanding is that the best thing that's going on right now and where the focus is, is in jazz choral groups. That's really where it is, is jazz choral groups . . . In jazz technique, always what was offered in school was theatre singing and classical singing and that's where technique specifically was and what was always lacking in that teaching was the understanding of rhythm, of what to do with rhythm, especially the way it is applied to jazz. When you go la-da-da-da-da-da-da (sings arpeggio), generally there's no metronome.

My teaching at the NJPAC, that's where I work with students twelve years old to eighteen years old, preparing them for college. So, twenty years ago at Jersey City University, I developed a vocal jazz program, analyzing what I felt was missing in the college system because I was drafted into teaching college, I didn't study or get a master's degree to teach – I was a performer and someone that was just a lifelong student. I was asked to become a teacher and so I put together ideas of my knowledge of performing and singing and what's required to lead a band and discovering what was missing, and so really something that should be added to the curriculum in high school is

a firm understanding of rhythm. Having singers sit down like, I would have my class sit down at the drums and play with the brushes, and at least understand two and four . . . start to piece together a real comprehensive program that covers real understanding of voice technique comes first. In the old days . . . Jon Hendricks wasn't real concerned about voice technique . . . you know in the old days, Billie Holiday, as we went through the history of jazz, um, there was no voice technique (laughs). So, certainly voice technique first so that you get your instrument straight.

And then understanding the use of the vibrato – using it and not using it and having control of it, and then practicing your voice exercises with a metronome . . . that you start to understand the different parts of the beat . . . adding a lot of work on rhythm, every singer should be able to understand that they're only as strong as their own sense of rhythm – that they rock the band, the band doesn't rock them!

A solid understanding of rhythm is one of the main things that's missing, in my opinion. For me it's developing and I don't see it as being less prevalent on the scene than before – I think it's more prevalent than ever!

For many years there was no room in high school or colleges for vocal jazz . . . In high school I would start all my singers with a simple blues . . . Always think about what's really swinging, what's really fun to sing lyrically, and then what melodies have inherent swinging phrases in them that start to build vocabulary for improvisation for the singers. What I've noticed with the singers is that there are a lot of wonderful improvisers in high school – that didn't exist ten, fifteen years ago. To me, it's getting better – it's not getting worse. It's just that the whole focus has gone toward choirs. So, it's all about the choral and the competitions, and what's being lost in this, you know, on

one hand, it's fantastic that they're learning the language of jazz, that they're improvising and it's like a game in a sense, what's getting lost sometimes in all the excitement and scatting (ad nauseum) on everything is the value and benefit of singing a beautiful song, really putting heart and soul into it, a lot of meaning and shading and coloring and just really improvising with lyrics. . . I don't hear some of the teachers that are really great improvisers talking about that . . . Where's the conviction – where's the personality? As older singers we can introduce young singers to the history of the music and then as they start to listen to “Why did everybody like Louis Armstrong? Why did they like Billie Holiday”? What are the pros and cons of that? You know, when I first heard Billie Holiday I was a trained singer in high school – I sang in madrigal groups, I sang in all different languages, I sang in all-state choirs and so, when I heard Billie Holiday I was about twenty-two in Houston I said, “Well she's not a very good singer, why does everybody call her the greatest jazz singer, that's nonsense.” (laughs) We just get a different perspective with the listening and the growing in the music.

I explained to Roseanna about the survey and how many teachers were Westminster graduates who focused mainly on the classical choral music and a large portion of participants in the survey answered that they did not take any jazz classes and almost all colleges had no required jazz courses for degrees in music education. I asked her if she had any thoughts on this.

RV – Because my world wasn't the high school teachers - my teaching at NJPAC for thirteen years (teaching the Jazz for Teens for thirteen through eighteen year-olds), I only worked with children who came to me because they had an interest in jazz. In the high schools, I've given some workshops in some high schools in New Jersey, but not that

many and for me it just goes back to the big picture of anything that's in the public market or whatever kids are watching these days (probably a lot of youtube stuff) I don't know where they get their music, I know that there's currently a lot of rap music that's filtered into the program . . . The options in school are you have your theatre groups, classical music there hasn't been a big movement to have jazz and certainly not vocal jazz. . . I did one choral workshop in Newark . . . it was the most disparaging experience I've ever had . . . the kids were absolutely rude, animals . . . I'm generally very enthusiastic about what I'm doing when I'm teaching because I truly love the music and I think it's all exciting and I think it's because the kids haven't been turned on to it – they can't like what they don't know. If they haven't heard it and their parents aren't into it, they can't possibly know . . . Even on the Grammys, one of my close friends is part of a lot of things that happen with the Grammys . . . As far as that level where jazz should have a presence . . . two years ago they were trying to decide whether to get Christian McBride and Chick Corea involved with Gregory Porter (he's really hot) and have him front a big band and get them to split the song and feature that - and the television guys said "No". So as long as jazz is still an unloved stepchild that hasn't shown it can be whatever commercial stuff. . .

My kids at NJPAC for thirteen years . . . I would always ask them at the beginning of the two semesters "what are you listening to? I want to know what you're listening to because I don't understand what you're listening to and I want to be turned on because I'm going to be turning you on to jazz." That was kind of cool because at that time I would be able to, I could listen to who they were listening to in their singing who

they're being influenced by. They're just going to school – they just haven't been turned on – that's all it is. . . (32:00)

CP – Do you think that any college/university should have vocal jazz styles as a mandatory requirement for getting a music education degree?

RV – Well it depends on how they present it. I certainly think knowing the history of vocal jazz is really important you know, because it's part of the history of our country, I mean jazz encompasses everything from the early gospel music through the racism, political issues of the early days - and today. Jazz is more than just having a pretty voice. Jazz means more than that. I think it should be required, I absolutely do. I think knowledge, somehow I think the history of jazz has to be in there absolutely. All my singers in college, I've always inspired them to study classical music, also to study opera. For me, it's just a big palette while you're on your journey to find yourself as an artist and how can you know who you are or what you want to say until you really study all the styles and then you choose what speaks to you – what makes your heart sing. That's what it's all about.

CP – I think as teachers we are here to offer our kids as much as we know and if you don't include jazz into your teaching you're doing your kids a disservice by not allowing them to have that knowledge as part of their decision as a vocalist.

RV – You see the protectionism and the fear about jazz teaching or learning comes from the classical community and I got this even when I was touring for the State Department you now, I taught Russian singers, classical singers, all kinds of interesting (groups) of singers who knew nothing about jazz and there's been a great fear in teaching about jazz because the early jazz singers were not schooled singers – they did not learn technique

and when you listen to once again Billie Holiday or even Louis Armstrong I have to even say to any singer I'm teaching about Louis Armstrong "you may not understand what people love about Louis Armstrong since you're a trained singer". You know, you're not listening to his gravelly voice – you're listening to his spirit and his timing and his phrasing." For trained singers that's really hard to get around. Classical teachers were always afraid, you know, "you're teaching them something unhealthy if you're teaching them jazz." That's just this misinformation that jazz singers are not trained singers. So many of the teachers out right now that are good theatre or classical teachers want nothing to do with jazz – they don't even own a metronome (laughing), they have not a clue – they cannot snap on two and four and it's sad, really sad. And they're afraid of jazz – they're afraid of what they don't know.

A Telephone Interview with Steven Bishop

(Sunday, October 30, 2016)

So, this is Charles Postas and I'm on the phone this evening interviewing Steve Bishop who teaches down in Burlington County and he is a long-time music educator. This interview is for my master's thesis which I'm doing on the state of vocal jazz in NJ high schools today.

Steven is the current vocal music director at Burlington Township high school where he teaches all the vocal music classes, AP Music Theory, a musical theatre workshop, music production as well as the Burlington Township High School jazz singers. Some past experiences are: musical supervisor and computer programmer for national tours of *The Color Purple* and *Spamalot*. He was also conductor for the first national tour of *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, was co-conceiver and orchestrator for the touring revival of *Camelot*. His arrangements and orchestrations have been on TV and theatre which include the Today show, Discovery and TNN's *Nashville Now* as well as the national tour of *Grease* starring Frankie Avalon. He has composed national jingles for *Hallmark*, *Jordache* and *Honda*. Bishop was also conductor for Barry Manilow and his *Musical Copacabana* as well as provided orchestrations for the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. Bishop also studied composition briefly with the great Leonard Bernstein. He also served as special guest artist in musical theatre for the Interlochen Performing Arts Academy.

CP – I'm asking you questions to get thoughts and ideas about vocal jazz in our high schools and specifically why this musical genre seems to be losing interest with our youth, while it seems that instrumental jazz education seems to be thriving. This is the basis for my thesis at Rutgers and I've chosen you as one of my interviewees and to get some feedback and insight for research for my paper. Before I get into my research questions, I have some biographical questions for you. How did you get into singing and specifically, vocal jazz? A lot of people I've spoken to started out as a kid learning an instrument (particularly with vocal teachers – most of them started on piano) and as we

all know when you go into music education in college as a major, if you're a pianist you go the vocal track. Is that how you went?

SB – No, I had several majors in college and one of them was music education. I really went more the performance route – I was a trumpet performance major and a theory/composition major. I also did – then I did my music education stuff.

CP – So when did you make the switch over to the vocal route and when did you decide to get into the jazz thing, or had you already been into the jazz thing when you were doing the instrumental?

SB – You know, I played in jazz band in high school but I actually went in as a legit guy - umm into college as a legit trumpet guy - I never really did jazz so much there. Right out of college I moved down to Nashville and I did a lot of work out of Nashville and I did some TV work and ended up putting together and producing a jazz vocal quartet just as a gig that came up and I said “sure”, so I ended up starting to write a lot of four-part jazz, played for them and wrote it and started to get into it that way - kind of on my own. So it was almost sheer, dumb luck.

CP – Now was it kind of like tossing the baby in the lake, teaching it how to swim?

SB – Yes, that's pretty close.

CP – I mean - did you already know how to write?

SB – I was always one of those guys that, you know, once I had a challenge I'd spend the next week researching the hell out of it and then just diving in and seeing how well I could do. You know, it's kind of almost embarrassing when I sit in a room with all jazz cats because I wouldn't call myself a real 'jazz' guy – like, a real trained 'jazz' guy is. I understand it, I can certainly listen to anything and grasp theoretical concepts, I can

arrange pretty well for vocals, but I am not by any stretch that ‘jazz’ guy. Umm. But I love the vocal part, and it just seemed that I started to fall into a career where I was working with singers, coaching singers, and when I got up to New York I ended up doing a lot of Broadway singers so I fell into that vocal thing.

So the whole teaching thing came to me much later in my career. I personally liked jazz but when I went into a public school system that the vocal program was a little bit stunted so what I tried was a jazz and gospel group thinking I could get more kids in and do an after-school program that way rather than the umm, sort of the traditional approach – you know, the chamber choir, that sort of thing. So I gave it a go and interestingly enough, they all much preferred the jazz stuff than the gospel stuff.

CP – Neat!

SB – So, our program just started to grow so as we grew, I just got deeper and deeper into it, learned a lot more about it in terms of what I wanted to do with the program and how I wanted to do it and I’m just sort of always been a believer in that we’re giving our kids pretty top-flight training – if they can sing pretty terrific in a jazz program (especially since we just happen to do all *a cappella* work), there’s almost nothing they can’t do (I believe), ‘cause the stuff I’m asking these kids to do is on par with anything I think any choir is asking. So we’re lucky – this past year I had sixty-five kids audition.

CP – In your high school jazz group?

SB – Yeah!

CP – Wow! That’s tremendous!

SB – Oh, I ended up doing two groups this year.

CP – That’s amazing!

SB – So we're lucky – kids drank the *Kool Aid* and loved it.

CP – I have a question here for you. You are not the norm as far as high school music teachers I've spoken to around the state as well as ones I've surveyed. I want to ask you, what do you think are some of the skills that are lacking in high school singers today which are needed in order to become proficient jazz vocalists?

SB – First and foremost is the rhythm and just the sight reading skills, the notation skills - really reading music. I'm actually working on a new thing for our district, to try to implement a district-wide change in how we approach vocal music - to make it more consistent with how we may approach instrumental music pedagogically so that students from the very beginning have the same kind of requirement to read the notation that our instrumental counterparts do. I think that's valuable and we're missing it.

CP – I agree with you. Now this requirement, is this something that once you put into action, is it going to be something that's started in the middle school?

SB – I hope to start it in the third grade.

CP – Okay, because that sounds really great but, if you're just going to be starting with say freshman, they're going to be four or five years behind your instrumentalists because they've been playing and reading music since they're in fourth grade.

SB – Oh, I agree. We've got to start it early and that's something we've been missing in vocal music – it's just my opinion.

CP – Oh – absolutely. I think a lot of vocal music teachers would definitely agree with you. I think the problem is going to be um, you know, it's gotta be something that's agreed upon by the administration and it's something that's gotta be implemented within the curriculum at an early age in all school districts.

SB - Oh yeah.

CP – And up to this point the instrumental versus the vocal have been two separate animals and the instrumental have been the more serious musicians and the vocal have been more just for fun, it's more of a 'club', you know. I don't think administration takes it as serious as the band kids.

SB – Yeah I think in many districts that's very true.

CP – I've worked in – this is my fourth school district I've worked in and I think I've seen the same mindset throughout the administrations and I don't know how we can change that, but it's something I think we need to approach and brainstorm.

SB – One of the things is also educating the administrators you know, we have a document, uh a strategic plan for the arts. One of our concerns was we didn't want the arts to be viewed simply as the 'dog and pony show' for the district. You know, "Hey, we've got something important coming up – well, we'll just bring in the kids to sing". We're trying to say, "Well wait a minute guys – nationally and state-wide, 'the arts' is a core standard now". So, if that's the case, we have educational dynamics that have to be enforced! You know, one of the things that I am (we'll see how successful I am at this one) but one of the things I'm going to try to work on for next year is I'm gonna ask for permission to *not* do a winter concert . . .

CP – Huh.

SB – and simply take the entire fall semester to do nothing but catch our vocal music program up musically and to create musicians. Now I have a plan to make sure that that's fun, that there's outlets somehow for the kids because I want them to have that experience.

CP – Performance – wise?

SB – Yeah! – I just don't want the performance to be a referendum on how good the chorus is. Really what I want is a semester to be able to catch up and then that should set us up for the next four years so then every four years we have a system in place. So I've been kind of working on that and we'll see how that works but, I do think we have a lot of catching up to do just simply from a musicianship standpoint. Now there are some schools that are excellent readers and they're certainly the outliers but they're wonderful at what they do – which is terrific. I just think that they're not the general population that we're talking about.

CP – Going back to my question, to become a proficient jazz vocalist . . .

SB – Kerry Marsh and I did a lot of talking about that and he had some pretty interesting insights which completely has changed the way I look at things over the past year and a half in terms of what makes jazz. Certainly from a choral perspective it hasn't changed my mindset at all but from the improvisation concept, which I think we can all agree is a pretty key component in jazz. Umm, he makes a statement that goes like this. "If you were asked to go and give a lecture on the best cheeses of the world, and you were gonna go to Wisconsin, you could do your research and do pretty well. What if you had to do that same talk in Germany, how well would you do"?

CP – Well, first I'd have to learn to speak German.

SB – Exactly – it's all about the language! So what we're doing is we're kind of expecting our kids to go in and speak a foreign language without even knowing what the basic skills in the language are! So what we tell our kids is, "Hey, just let loose – do anything you want, it's all good, it's all safe". And they go, "But wait!" So I've

completely changed my approach to that whole world . . . to make sure that I'm giving kids a vocabulary because I certainly was deficient in that.

CP – Now what type of examples was he talking about?

SB – How about just simply - what is the language? What are the basic syllable combinations to consider?

CP – Are you talking more about scat singing?

SB – Yeah, m-hmm. What are some of the basic combinations? What's the language?

(pause)

And then say simply sing something in the chords. Well, what does that mean?

CP – Especially if a kid doesn't read music. They don't have a theory background.

SB – Right.

CP – That's going to be so foreign to them.

SB – And then you tell a singer, "well, it's a dominant seventh chord – just sing a mixolydian or diminished scale." And they go "Whaaattt?" (pause) The call and response stuff is pretty interesting; to get kids used to little one measure, two measure statements and feeling comfortable managing things in their control (pause) so that they don't feel like they're standing up having to speak German in front of their peers . . .

CP – Absolutely

SB – because kids often hear jazz and I think there's our big problem with the teachers in general – teachers are the same way. As soon as you say jazz, their first mind goes to improvisation – "well, I don't do that". Well, you do – you just do it with words. You're in a classroom – I'm sure you're forced to improvise every single day – not necessarily musically.

CP – Right, how many teachers do we know that read off notecards or a script?

Especially, if you're teaching for any amount of time.

SB – You've got to be able to duck and bob and weave. And, those teachers who feel like they can't improvise are doing it verbally all the time. What we need to be able to do is shift that same skill into the musical world, not so much so they can be great 'jazzers', but that they can feel comfortable enough to be able to talk and expose the kids to it. I mean, something different than them playing Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue* in a music appreciation of jazz recording once a year.

CP – Kind of making this shift to the teachers, I think you probably received the survey that I sent out?

SB – I did.

(There was a brief shift in our discussion regarding the survey as well as the database generated and talk of getting together with other vocal jazz directors at the region and state level for a few moments. Then the interview continues as follows . . .)

CP – One of the questions I had in there (the survey) was – To the best of your knowledge and in your opinion, please complete the following statement, "There are very few high school performing ensembles in New Jersey Public School music programs today because . . ." And then I left it blank for you to answer.

SB – Yeah, I think I put two or three main reasons. I think the biggest one is it boils down to teachers having to make a choice of what to do in their co-curricular time.

Umm, I think it's absolutely a lack of comfort and expertise (perceived expertise, let me put it that way) in the field – so they're not real comfortable with what that is. And I think last and still just as important is there is still a perception that vocal jazz is not vocal

music, that it is somehow not embracing the kind of choral technique we should be teaching.

CP – I agree with you and there were several people that gave that as one of their answers. My next question for you is, do you think that any college or university should have jazz vocal styles as a mandatory requirement for a music education graduate?

SB – Well, there should be a jazz and contemporary music component to all music education programs – whether it's vocal or instrumental. Because quite frankly, if one of our tenets (especially with the new dictums by this particular state of job readiness) – if we're really going to be looking at those in a brutally honest way, more students in vocal music have a chance of having a career in the popular or vocal jazz arenas. There's not a lot of paying choral jobs in the world.

CP – No, and you're not going to be making a living as a section leader in a big church choir.

SB – So I think we're doing our kids a disservice by not including that as a workplace ready tool.

CP – It's funny you said that because that was just going to come out of my mouth – we're doing the kids a disservice if we don't offer them not only the classical background in their vocal music classes but also the popular (the contemporary) as well as the jazz. It's not fair to them and that's not what we're about – we have to give them . . . I mean, we all signed on as teachers knowing that we're not gonna be making six figures and we're not gonna be driving around in Mercedes' – we did it because we love to teach kids and if you don't offer them as many opportunities as you can, then shame on us, you know!

SB – Well that’s absolutely true because you never know that you’re missing those one or two kids in your (indistinguishable) that just all of a sudden land and go “this is the coolest thing I’ve ever done in my life”. And that’s changed a lot of our lives. So, I don’t know, I do tend to think we’re a little stiff in vocal music. I think, quite frankly Charlie, the piano playing component is a challenge for a lot of teachers in vocal music because, unless they were a piano player to begin with, umm if were a singer and you go to Westminster and you take your two semesters of piano, you ain’t doin’ no swingin’ – ever. So, now you have to do what with an accompaniment – play changes? Walk a bass line? Well, but the bass line’s not written – O-kayyy? You know, so I think there’s that component that can be challenging for uh, for many, many teachers. How do I accompany them? How do I with my limited piano skills, get through and I’m looking at even the vocal chording, having to play parts to get them through and its harmonics that they know are challenging.

CP – That’s where people like Rosanna Vitro and Michele Weir and some others have that play along stuff and I’m talking about people that we’ve had at our workshops before (annual NJAJE conventions at NJPAC in Newark) where you can get like similar to the Aebersold books for vocalists where you can put the MP3’s on or use CD’s or whatever and you don’t have to be a great accompanist.

SB – Right.

CP – And you can give them those tools and you know, that would be helpful. But I’m sure a lot of these teachers don’t even know about that stuff.

SB – Right, they don’t know that there’s folks like Kerry Marsh that are putting out things on tracks and stuff like that. They also aren’t aware that folks like the Kerry

Marshes of the world and folks like um, even Paris Rutherford, some of his better stuff from North Texas, guys like Roger Treese, their stuff is very choral group friendly and you could actually introduce it to your choir and all it does is it speaks a slightly different harmonic language. If we're really in praise of Eric Whitacre ('cause that's what every choral teacher feels he's the person that we should be in praise of), what's interesting about Eric Whitacre to me is two things: number one is that he's using a harmonic language that's not jazz but it's got the same dissonance base like a lot of our jazz is and two, his choir they sing virtually straight tone. So are you gonna tell me that singing straight tone is harmful when the poster child for choral music right now has one of the best choral groups in the world and they're pretty straight tone too. I also don't feel like we necessarily do our own best PR in terms of promoting styles of music. We get some of these silly pop/jazz arrangements on Pepper (JW Pepper) and we do one of those in a concert and I'm not sure we're doing our own best PR because the kids think they're cute but they're not fun in the same way, so I think we could do a little better PR. It's about time – right? Like who's – between running your own program, doing stuff for the state and everything else, we have to carve out time to really beat the drum.

(The conversation turned toward colleges and universities with strong vocal jazz departments like UNC and North Texas and also colleges and universities closer to New Jersey like Berkeley in Boston and William Paterson University and we discussed how the latter two had strong jazz departments however, their strengths were not in vocal jazz.)

SB – We used to have James Madison University in Virginia – they used to have a really strong vocal jazz program – not so much anymore. That's really not even in the

northeast. So, there's not really any models right now on the collegiate level either on the east coast, to speak of.

What the universities with strong vocal jazz programs have done is sponsor jazz festivals and summer vocal jazz camps and it's really spawned teachers that are really into that world. You know, it explodes the area. There's contests out there, there's performance opportunities, there's all kinds of adjudicated things to go to if you are a high school vocal jazz group out there. There's not that many opportunities on the east coast right now.

CP – Well we've got to change that, Steve.

SB – Well we have a state contest this year.

CP – Right, I saw that.

SB – So we have one – and Berkeley. But what we need to do is we need be able to have enough choirs interested that can dedicate themselves to that as a thing. Then we get into the challenge – well, what is the percentage of Westminster grads teaching vocal music in the state of New Jersey? And so we're left with a conundrum. They've just hired a guy down there to do pop and jazz music and he's contacted me and he seems real excited about getting involved with us on the state level. That may be just the inroad we're looking for – you know, at least it's a starting place.

CP – Now, did you invite him to the conference?

SB – Yes, I believe he's going to be there. His name just escapes me right now.

CP – I'm going to wrap this up in a minute for both of our sake. My last question for you Steve is "Where do you think vocal jazz is headed in the future for New Jersey schools?"

SB – Well I'm kind of looking at it as we're at the birth stage of it. Even though those of us who have been involved with it have been doing it for a lot of years, my hope is that we're just at the birth of it. You know, we're looking to try some very unique things whether they work or not is another deal but we're looking at trying some different things at the region level to encourage participation. I think we're going to try video audition submissions for the regions now, I'm going to try to put that out like in the next couple of weeks so that we don't run into scheduling conflicts when it comes to an audition like we have had in the past. We're going to try a bunch of different approaches and see what happens. Right now, North Jersey is heads and shoulders above South Jersey.

CP – As far as what?

SB – Vocal jazz. There's nothing – I'm the furthest south vocal jazz program right now, unless there's someone that's doing it that I don't know about.

CP – I was just thinking about the responses that we had last year that were so few up here – I think we ended up with, after kids dropped out, like five and that's why I decided not to do it last year.

SB – Agreed. And we had to cancel it down south because they decided to put the region down in Atlantic City and we had a lot of transportation issues for kids and then the timing hit two of our biggest schools – it hit their show (spring musical) and kids simply weren't available.

CP – Now, do you have dates for the spring yet?

SB – Yes, there are dates for the spring.

CP – Well listen my friend, thank you so much for your time – I really appreciate your going out of your way talking to me about this and when we meet at the conference next month we can meet with the others and develop these ideas further.

A Live Interview with Holli Ross

(Tuesday afternoon, July 31, 2012)

Holli Ross invited me to her home in Maplewood, NJ during the summer, 2012. She was kind enough to clear a generous amount of time out of her precious schedule and share some of her story as well as her thoughts and insights on several topics with me. We began with some questions about her early years as a musician and then covered such topics as changes in jazz vocal groups, differences between instrumentalists and

vocalists, scat singing and vocalese, as well as several others. We concluded with a couple of other open-ended personal questions.

CP - I've read that you grew up in a musical family. Your mom was a classical guitarist; your dad was a bassoonist which, I assume was the influence for your getting your undergrad in bassoon?

HR - I don't think there was ever any doubt that I was gonna go into music – and they were very encouraging and supportive . . . I have three siblings and everyone is musical. I'm the only one who pursued it. My sister was a very good flute player, but my brothers – not so gifted -(chuckles) gifted in other ways, I should rephrase.

CP - What was it like growing up in a musical household?

HR - Every holiday we had to perform – I hated it, HATED IT! But you did it. I played duets with my father, occasionally we would play duets with each other, but of course my kid brother was such a crack- up he'd burp the melody and then you couldn't play. It was kind of like a comical/musical family.

CP - Was it strictly classical music or was there popular music going on as well?

HR - Well, the kids brought the popular music into the house. My parents were straight ahead classical musicians. Loved musical theatre – my dad also played in pit orchestras for a number of years, so as a youngster I'm seeing *Fiddler*, *Shenandoah*, *1776*, *Man of La Mancha* (my father did the entire run of *La Mancha*). So my parents encouraged me to go into opera (we're talking thirty or forty years ago) nobody gave jazz voice lessons – it wasn't done. (Maybe it was but it certainly wasn't advertised). So, you want voice

lessons – you go to the closest temple or church and you speak to the choir director or you hear about voice teachers.

So, all my early studies when I started just about when I turned sixteen – classical. You know the 24 Italian Arias and some German Leider, um, I loved it – I went to the opera, but I wasn't drawn to pursue it. I did it because that's all that was available . . . At Mannes College of Music there was a jazz improv class and the guy let me take it, he didn't know what to do with me, he said, "Well look, I'm just teaching bebop heads and you have to improvise" and I said, "okay, okay" . . . I hooked up with a band at the ripe old age of eighteen and we played for two years once or twice a week for no money, cab fare maybe and that was the most amazing learning grounds. I found that instrumentalists were willing to teach singers about jazz – they were the only ones doing it. So Jack Riley at Mannes College of Music allowed me to take his course and was like, "Oh, I guess a singer *can* do this." I mean he was as surprised as anybody and I just said, "Look, I already read music, I understand changes, I'm a functional guitar player so I understand chords and theory, so what was the problem"? . . . Then I studied with Warren Marsh for a couple of years and again – (he) treated me like a sax player. That's all I needed. So that was my introduction to how I found jazz on my own.

CP - One of your mentors was Jon Hendricks. What was that experience like?

HR - He's fabulous! First of all, we're happy that he's 90 and he's still doing it. I was really lucky. I must have been in my early twenties where I met him because he needed a new singer.

The short story is that I auditioned, did a gig. I learned all this freakin' material for him and I learned it in lightning speed and I was in California for a couple of weeks

with friends and he called and said, “Can you do the gig tonight?” I said, “I’m in California, can’t be there tonight.” And he said, “Oh, OK, I understand baby. Call me when you get back.” Now Stephanie Nicosium was also up for the gig, she got the gig, she was with Jon for 2 or 3 years.

Jon never hesitated to invite me on stage, let me sing with him. He was very sweet. He endorsed my SOP recordings as well as my solo recording – he’s been very, very supportive. Did I enjoy the years of his tutelage? No, I didn’t get that opportunity and that will be a major regret in my life but we are dear friends and I’m lucky to have that. He’s a great storyteller – boy you want to hear stories – you sit at his knee.

CP - Do you have a formal education in jazz arranging or is this something you learned along the way?

HR - The majority of my work is transcriptions of original arrangements because my first group is a female vocal trio where we were capturing the sounds of the sister’s groups. But you can get bored pretty quickly if you’re just doing arrangements of sister’s acts, so we were branching out into Lambert, Hendricks & Ross, and the Mills Brothers and that’s sometimes four voices . . . What was so wonderful was that if you can transcribe, if you can hear what the music is and you write it down – that’s when you can really get inside the chart and say, “Oh, that’s how they got that effect.” If you go back enough hundreds of years, the way Mozart learned was he copied note for note Haydn’s scores, that’s how he learned; Haydn, Bach . . . Today we have the benefit of recordings, so I don’t have to go see the score because nine times out of ten what I’m transcribing has never been written down. The Andrews Sisters didn’t have vocal charts – they winged it.

After String of Pearls did their first couple recordings in the early 90's, people were coming up to me saying, "Can we see your arrangements, would you lend your arrangements, would you publish your arrangements?" And I remember talking to Warner Brothers saying sure, if you want to submit them; they'll be your transcriptions – adaptations by – but I didn't get around to it and frankly my group SOP had the market cornered until other people said, "You know what, we can write them too." Did I answer your question right?

CP - It wasn't really a question, I just had the assumption that you did all these arrangements off the cuff.

HR - Nope, they are painstakingly handwritten and now I get to put them on Sibelius.

CP - Did the development of new styles of instrumental jazz affect changes in what vocal jazz groups were doing?

HR - Yes, the first time you really heard bass singers imitating bass lines – their spitting out something on two and four, they're getting the high hat and the bass note, you have these guys like Take 6, New York Voices does a good job at it . . . that changed vocal jazz forever. Every year my vocal group at Montclair State does an *a cappella* piece where there's a vocal bass part, there's a vocal drums part . . . the students love it, they respond to it.

CP - It seems that although singing groups perform what we would call vocal jazz, the approach taken in learning and performing the music is much different than what we would call instrumental jazz. Can you expound on this idea?

HR - First of all, and I'm sorry to say this, but singers as a whole are not readers. This is awful. I've heard so many talented singers (certainly Ella being one of them), can't read a note.

It's rare that you give out parts and vocalists can just read them down. Now, my big band partner at Montclair, he does six to eight charts; I'm happy if I can eke out four – it takes my group twelve weeks to learn four tunes. It's up to me as the teacher to read the group and make sure that I keep motivation high. Singers that are fabulous and can't read a note – boy you just have to give it to them on a silver spoon. I'm not a pianist so I play the line on guitar or I will sing it if it's in my range. They get it and we layer. I usually work four to eight bars at a time (or whatever the phrase is) and it takes forever with that caliber student. Every now and then you get a singer that doesn't read a note but she will learn everything you taught her.

Those are special too – those are the people that get away with murder and they would be monsters if they learned how to read. If that's answering your question, that's the disadvantage to teaching singers vocal jazz as opposed to handing out parts for a big band.

CP - How do you feel about the statement that “all jazz vocalists should have a minimal or basic understanding of music theory and basic piano skills”; in other words, they should be musically educated?

HR - Without a doubt. I don't care if they play vibes or guitar, just a chordal instrument where they can see it laid out.

CP - These days a lot of vocalists are being marketed as ‘jazz musicians’ and are bringing a lot of ‘pop’ music to the table as well as not being able to ‘swing’ or improvise. What are your thoughts about this?

HR - If they can’t swing or improvise then they’re not jazz vocalists. By the way, I’m not a firm believer that you have to be an improvisationalist to be a jazz singer; because we know that Nancy Wilson did not scat; Billy (Holiday) and Dinah Washington didn’t . . . there were enough amazingly swinging singers that did not improvise. Shirley Horne, she didn’t have to improvise – she was amazing. Everything out of her mouth oozed jazz at its most developed, cerebral - and swingin’ . . . If the singer wants to bring in a pop tune and sing it in a pop vain – to me, it sounds like a cover tune. I want to hear you do something else with it. It depends what the chords are and it depends on how well you arrange it to make it sound other worldly or if you give it a jazz treatment.

CP - How does Holli Ross define the term ‘jazz vocalist’?

HR - Well, I think first and foremost, the swingability – you know the swing factor. We’re talking dotted rhythms - we’re talking not square quarter-notes. It’s also a vocal application of the note. What makes a trumpet player or the guys in Basie’s band sound different? It’s also how you attack a note and how you end a note. I hear some really good vocal instruments that sing in tune with good diction and they do not move me ‘cause I don’t hear that trumpet cry. I don’t hear that swell and blossoming on a note that I might hear on a saxophone or that great little bend you’d hear on a trumpet. My goal, as a singer, is to sound like an instrument. I want to sound like an instrument, but I have words to tell, I have a verbal story to tell – how lucky am I? That’s my approach to

what makes a jazz singer – it's not the improv, it's the swing factor, it's the attack of the note but also how you sing your whole phrase as well.

CP - I've read that some jazz critics are of the mindset that jazz vocalists need to perform more original material and stop trying to come up with new arrangements and performances from the great American songbook and other jazz standards. What are your thoughts about this?

HR - I think it's important that we keep the *Great American Songbook* alive and happy and well so I would never say "don't teach that" they have to. I will assign my singers to research five different versions of a song and listen to each just once and don't listen to them ever again until they've solidified their own arrangement. Because if you hear a song, a singer's inclination is to play it a million times until they can sing every nuance and breathe every breath with them and then it's not you anymore. Anyway that's how I teach the *Great American Songbook* – you cannot abandon it, it's like the Bible.

New stuff, I absolutely agree. I'm not a composer – I am a lyricist. I always feel like there is always something fresh that you should bring to the bandstand. I'm not saying that every singer should be a writer. I agree that originality is really important . . . I want to hear something new even if it's a different way of swinging or a different application of a groove. We all do it. I make my kids do every tune as a bossa nova just for fun and teach them why it worked or didn't work. I'll take a bossa nova and say "OK, let's swing it". That's part of teaching them to think 'outside the box'. So, yes I promote originality without a doubt but, not at the expense of abandoning and not teaching every song you can from our . . . *Songbook*.

CP - How do you define the term vocalese and does it involve any improvisation?

HR - Vocalese is the writing of lyrics to an instrumental solo – that’s all it is. Vocalese to me is an established recorded solo that you have learned or transcribed and you have added lyrics – either you have written them or you are singing an established one – like “Moody’s Mood” or “Twisted”, that’s what “Twisted” is. Does it involve improvisation? It depends on your school – are you a perfectionist and you want to do it exactly the way Annie Ross did it or do you want to put your own spin on it? I usually don’t want to sing everything note for note, breath for breath like the original. But if it’s a really fast passage there’s only one way to sing it . . . I don’t really think it’s improv, but I do think it’s interpretation and your own phrasing – you’ve got to get the crux of what it all means . . . “Moody’s Mood For Love”, King Pleasure’s version of “All of Me”, Eddie Jefferson’s “Billie’s Bounce” – you know I teach these tunes to my students; then I have them take a solo that they’ve fallen in love with and transcribe their own Miles solo – I always go to Miles first ‘cause Miles wasn’t as flashy a player.

CP - When you’re improvising are you thinking about changes?

HR - I wish that I could say that I do – but I don’t. I’m hearing the color of the chord progression and where it’s going. I even have to work out those difficult modulatory progressions like “Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most”.

CP - I’ve read that you have your master’s in speech pathology, specializing in voice disorders. Could you tell me a little bit about that?

HR - I’ve been a voice teacher now for twenty years; and every now and then I would get a voice student that I could tell had an inherent voice problem (didn’t know what to do about it) . . . so I sent them to the doctor and sure enough this singer had vocal nodules or a polyp. And then after the student had surgery to remove the nodules, I didn’t know

what to do. I didn't know how to teach an injured voice – I was afraid. So I made an appointment for the student to go to a colleague of mine who already was a singer/speech pathologist and I asked if I could sit in on these sessions. So I sat in on these sessions and I said, “this is cool stuff – I could enjoy doing this”. Basically, I just became a better voice teacher. My first year of school I was able to use so much information.

CP - What does the future hold for Holli Ross?

HR - I've got a lot more to do – I have more music to write, I have more musicians I want to work with and play with - and I find that as a performer I perform differently depending on my bandmates. I sing differently with a funkier player than I might with a more 'Bill Evansy' player. I like 'em both – they both really make me think outside the box. So what's in store for me? I want to keep recording. I already have half my tunes lined up for the next recording. I have ideas and I write out my sketches and then I work with someone that's got, you know, more skills than me. I work with Ted Rosenthal, Rufus Reid and I just did a duo (Rufus is the man).

Jean O'Connor and I (Jean is in SOP with me), the two of us jointly wrote a lyric to one of his tunes and it got recorded and performed by the “Airmen of Note” in D.C. Rufus is the ultimate teacher and nurturer without even trying, it's amazing - he had things to say to me as a singer, but from an instrumentalist's point of view. And it made all the sense in the world because his communication and his sincerity and honesty of exactly what is to be addressed - and there's no mincing of words and what I like is – less is more. You don't have to give me any instructions. He said, “Holli, what do you think about this for that – I said, “Oh, OK let's try it”.

CP - What's more important to you – words or music?

HR - That's such an unfair question. As a singer we're communicators because we have that gift of the word, we get to tell the story. The fact that we get to tell the story on preconceived notes that make up the most beautiful, gorgeous melody that captures you. We already know what music does for the soul – its healing properties – the fact that you can tell a story is something else . . . My goal is to touch and move. I will say that the music is what will prompt me, by all means. I hear a beautiful tune first – that is the attraction. If it's a lame lyric, I won't sing the tune. So does that mean that the lyric is more important? It's a hard call for me. But I am attracted to the melody at first, hands down! I mean I am not a poet – I don't read poetry. I need the music to add to the poetry . . . I do not write the lyric first, I write the lyric to the composition that has moved me.

CP - Is it ok if I get back to you in the future?

HR - Absolutely!

A Live Interview with Jacques Rizzo

(Thursday morning, August 9, 2012)

Jacques Rizzo invited me to his home in Pompton Plains, NJ. He was kind enough to share some of his story as well as his thoughts and insights on several topics with me. We began with some questions about his early years as a jazz musician/arranger and then covered such topics as changes in jazz vocalists/vocal groups, differences between instrumentalists and vocalists, scat singing, as well as several others. We concluded with a couple of other open-ended personal questions.

CP - How did you get into music?

JR - My family is musical. My grandfather came over from Italy to Boston and then to Paterson; and he and his wife were both organists. They called him the professor – he was a teacher. If you know the Paterson Local, the guys that were a generation ahead of us – he started them. My father had a club date band. You know, they played weddings, parties and all the standard stuff and my uncle played classical music – violin and organ. He started the first program in the Paterson Schools for music which was a private program – he did that for many years. Then, when they started the public school music program in Paterson (because he didn't have the teaching certification), he started an accordion studio which was a big thing in the 40's.

When I was young, my father started me with a piano teacher who was a classical piano teacher and I studied with him maybe a year or two. We really didn't hit it off so he got me another teacher, Johnny Ferrancelli, who was perhaps the best pianist in the Paterson Local at the time. He studied with Teddy Wilson and I studied with him for about seven or eight years. It was all jazz – you know chord changes. But at the time

jazz wasn't codified the way it is now. I was picking up a lot of the things he did. You know it gave me an excellent foundation in chords and harmony and that kind of thing.

CP - So you were pretty young when you started learning jazz?

JR - Oh yeah. In fact, I was writing when I was in high school. My father wanted me to play with his band and he played piano . . . so he bought me a tenor and I took a couple of lessons from the band director up in Butler (we were living in Pompton Lakes at the time); and I quit after a couple of lessons and started playing with my father . . . I gigged with him through high school into my first year of college at Montclair . . . Eventually I got to the place where I was playing piano trios at Holiday Inns and places like that you know, that kind of work and I could play a lot of jazz.

When I was a junior in college, (getting to vocal jazz) I was down in a bar in Newark and a guy came up to me and said, "Jack, you write?" (And I did, but I wrote for instrumental.) He says, "I have a recording studio in Linden and every Monday night I bring in this group of four guys and four girls and we do station breaks and jingles and things like that; and that takes like an hour or so. But they want to keep singing during the night, so I have to write arrangements for them. He said, "To tell you the truth, I need more guys to write arrangements." I had never written for voices but I said yeah, I was interested in writing anything I could because I love to write . . . I got a book with the vocal ranges (you know the classical ranges where the soprano goes up to C).

I remember the chart I wrote (hums "I Remember April") where the soprano goes up to C. So I brought in the chart and these people sang it and they were very gracious. After they tried it a couple of times, the guy who ran the group (his name was Jack Callahan), came up to me and clued me in about ranges and things like that. So I started

writing an arrangement every Monday night and they'd sing it and I got to write a lot that way.

Once I became supervisor over in Wayne (Public Schools) I had nights were I had art exhibits and everybody's music concerts – it was just too much; so I just dropped the group and didn't start writing again until I retired, which was seventeen years ago. I went into the city and found a couple of groups and wrote some charts. But it wasn't what I wanted, so I started my own thing and we're now in our thirteenth year. It's a once a month jazz choir reading session. Most of the people are pros, although we have some talented amateurs.

We do difficult stuff with close harmonies like Take 6, New York Voices – that kind of stuff. We meet for two and a half hours each session. I do my charts the first half of the session. The second half of the session is open to other people and other arrangers come in. The pros like it because they're reading stuff they've never seen before and they're keeping their reading chops together; and the arrangers like it 'cause they're getting their things heard, so it's a win-win thing and that's been going on . . .

I did almost all of Chappell's choral writing for ten or twelve years. Their copyrights went to Presser and I wrote for them for a couple of years. Then it went out to Hal Leonard and they had in-house writers and I was frozen out of it. In the meantime, I had made connections with other people. I wrote for Columbia Screen Gems for many years – they're a Florida company, but they handled all the copy-write movie stuff – and they had a lot of rock stuff and things like that. Through them I met a fellow named Russ Hastings who ran the Warner Brothers thing and I started the first jazz choir series they did at Warner Brothers. (This was straight jazz choir stuff. I mean – it was like rhythm

section accompaniment.) That was back in the late 70's into the 80's and I did maybe twelve, sixteen charts for them and they were well received.

At the time I was a middle school band director. I wrote for middle school band, 'cause I wanted to play my stuff with the kids. I must have close to three hundred charts published, which is a good number. I worked for the NJ Council for the arts. I worked as a critique person for them. I did reading sessions for MENC conventions. I did the first Region I 'Stage Choir' - that's what they called them in those days. . . So I've been writing for a long time and I guess now that I'm retired, I write more.

CP - Do you have a formal education in jazz arranging?

JR - No, but I've read a lot of books. I had the theory training from that piano teacher I told you about; and you know, voicing chords on piano isn't a hell of a lot different than voicing chords for vocalists.

CP - How do you go about choosing the music you arrange?

JR - It's changed over the years. At one point I was assigned tunes from the publishers and they would send me stuff to do . . . I used to choose tunes that I liked 'cause they were jazz tunes and favorites of mine . . . Over the years I've decided that the lyrics are more important than anything else and I choose tunes, for the most part, based on lyrics . . . To a great extent, lyrics are more important to me now than ever.

CP - Do you write/arrange original music?

JR - Yes, of the published charts, there's not a lot of original because they were assigning me stuff; but I did an original thing for Jensen which was a teaching aid for rhythms. (At this point Jack ran down to the basement to dig out this chart and we went through the chart together. It was a vocal quodlibet for 5-part vocals – of which he gave me a copy.)

Most of the originals I did were for band things because there were no lyrics involved; but I must have thirty or forty of the several hundred were originals.

CP - In your opinion, what are some major advances/strides in the development of vocal jazz since the beginning of the 20th century?

JR - I divide group singing from solo singing. Louis started the whole thing as far as I'm concerned. There were maybe people before him, maybe blues shouters and Bessie Smith and Delta blues people, so he didn't invent anything but his talent was so large. I mean he's like a Charlie Parker in my mind or like a John Coltrane. He was, I think, the first guy when you talk about solo singing and scat singing, made it jazz . . . As far as solo singing – he was the man . . . Because of the wide distribution of his music – there were race records. When you think back up until maybe . . . I guess you could buy Louis Armstrong records - were maybe the first records I would guess (I'm not a historian, I don't know this for fact or anything) but I would guess are probably like some of the first records you could buy of a black jazz singer on a white label like Decca or whatever labels they were. Billie Holiday was great! I mean, Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald you know when you talk about scat . . .

I can still remember the first time I heard Ella Fitzgerald. I was just a kid. I couldn't have been more than maybe in junior high; and I heard this record called *Smooth Sailing* and it was like all scat; and I can't remember what the tune was (JR starts scatting the tune) and I said, "Wow!" It just blew my mind.

I can remember the first time I heard a vocal group that blew my mind. It was "Sunny Side of the Street" – the Sy Oliver arrangement with Tommy Dorsey (the Pied Pipers maybe) –one of the wonder groups of the 40's.

“The other group that blew my mind in those days was Mel Torme’s group, the Mel-Tones. Up until then it seemed to me there were no real arrangements that featured a vocal group that there was some kind of structure to the arrangement and his arrangements there was like an intro. and an interlude, and the head. They were different than the band playing the chart and the vocal group coming up (four or five guys or girls) and they sing the chorus and they go back to the band – you know what I’m trying to say? This was like the vocal group all the way through . . . and the band plays more of an interlude for the vocal group rather than the band; and then the vocal group comes up front, you know what I mean? So that really blew my mind too.

I dug the Freshmen, of course, and the Hi-Los absolutely blew my mind. The group they had after that was even better yet – the Singers Unlimited. Contemporary groups – New York Voices - I loved it when they had five voices and they did the things at the beginning. Now, it’s very commercial, I think. They’re trying to make a living and I don’t blame them for it. It is a jazz vocal group; but I think because they have four voices, only four parts, it’s limited compared with that first record they did that absolutely was – remember that *Round Midnight* - wow! Some of those things were absolutely out of sight.

CP - These days a lot of vocalists are being marketed as ‘jazz musicians’ and are bringing a lot of ‘pop’ music to the table, as well as not being able to ‘swing’ or improvise. What are your thoughts about this?

JR - They’re making a living – some of it’s very good. I mean look at Tony Bennet, Frank Sinatra. I mean there are so many good singers who just sang jazz-influenced pop

that were so good and had no intention of doing scatting. (I mean, okay, Tony Bennett tries something; but it doesn't make it – to be frank with you.)

CP - How does Jacques Rizzo define the term 'jazz vocalist'? What ingredients are needed in your mix to be coined as a jazz vocalist?

JR - They have the phrasing. They have the swing feeling with the right accents and articulation. That they bend the lyric to make it swing, in other words, they'll take words that some other singer might sing long and they'll sing it short. You go back to Lady Day, she never scatted (not that I can recall) but my gosh, what an emotional feeling. Frank Sinatra – all those singers who came up during the swing age – even some of the very corny ones – a good number of them could swing and that's part of it.

But a jazz singer isn't the same as a jazz instrumentalist. A jazz instrumentalist is someone who (if they are decent) has conquered all the intricacies of blowing through changes and everything like that – there aren't a hell of a lot of singers that can go through changes. I mean really, I keep going back to Ella and Mel Tormé, but they could sing through "Giant Steps" if you wanted them to do that.

CP - So going back to that original question, for you it's got to be the phrasing and the ability to swing; but not necessarily being able to improvise?

JR - (Chuckling) OK, let me give you a quote. I think it was Louis who said when somebody asked him what is jazz he says, "You'll know it when you hear it." (He continues laughing).

CP - How do you feel about the statement that "all jazz vocalists should have a minimal or basic understanding of music theory and basic piano skills"; in other words, they should be musically educated?

JR - Absolutely, they should be able to comp behind themselves. I mean even if they're just playing a third and seventh with the root in the left hand . . . Traditionally, I think jazz singers didn't read too much, but nowadays they should. They should also have basic piano skills enough to comp – to play a tune, not only to play the third and sevenths; but also to add the ninth, eleventh or whatever it is . . . Then if they could sing through those things (chord changes) like the instrumentalists do, I mean then you're talking about training people to improvise because they would develop those skills that instrumentalists have.

I think few, if any, teach that. In fact, I've had in my vocal group through the years, people like Nancy Marano who teaches at William Paterson, a girl at NYU, another girl who teaches at the New School, Patty Dunham who has been with my group from the beginning who teaches vocal jazz at the Manhattan School. But (the school shall remain nameless), when I first retired I was looking for groups to write for and I went to one of the jazz schools in New York City that was like one of the best in the country with a reputation par excellence; and the girl over there who was running the jazz vocal program was very competent.

It really is a crime because I'm thinking of a second school which is a major jazz school in New York. In both cases the kids couldn't read – *they didn't want to read*, and there was pressure on the teacher to keep the kids because of the tuition they paid and that would keep the course open. So there's a financial thing there where the teachers didn't have the strength of purpose and these were both teachers who were excellent singers, read, played piano, did everything you would wish of a jazz singer, and were

teaching this because they had to keep the program open and these kids were being cheated – they are running them through the school with a degree in vocal jazz.

CP - I've read that some jazz critics are of mindset that jazz vocalists need to perform more original material and stop trying to come up with new arrangements and performances from the *Great American Songbook* and other jazz standards. What are your thoughts about this?

JR - If they're songwriters, fine. And if they're not, I mean how many jazz players don't write originals? I mean they play Dizzy tunes, they play Monk tunes, they play Miles tunes, they play the *Great American Songbook*. I have no problem with them doing the *Great American Songbook*, but if they can write tunes – great. Write tunes and do your thing.

CP - You are an accomplished arranger and jazz educator. Beyond the scope of the music field, is there anything else that you might be interested in trying?

JR - I like to write. As far as another vocation – I enjoy teaching very much. I love teaching and I love writing.

CP - Do you have any advice for young jazz vocalists who are just starting out?

JR - Take piano lessons – I like piano better than guitar because it's very much a visual thing. And on guitar you're limited in the voicings that you can do compared to piano.

One thing I didn't tell you is I wrote a book for my dissertation at NYU called *Reading Jazz* . . . What it is, is when kids are coming in from a traditional program into a jazz band (it's an instrumental book) they have no idea about the phrasing, so this is a set of thirty duets, two horns and rhythm section (Belwin published it) . . . It goes through every possible syncopation you could have before sixteenth notes . . . and every possible

way that it's written because different arrangers write rhythm figures differently. It was published in the late 70's and is still selling, which is unusual for lesson books. It's like a Rubank, because there's nothing like that and classical musicians who want to phrase jazz go to that and it's written in a way that . . . it covers all the instances that you would meet if you're coming into like to a jazz band for the first time, like a middle school or like a high school kid would.

I'm writing a book now called *Beginning Improvisation*. Kids when they get to the point when they can use Jamie Aebersold – this is the pre-Aebersold book. It takes kids from like a middle school kid (studied two or three years you know) and starts from nothing and brings him to blues and rhythm changes.

CP - Is it ok if I get back to you in the future?

JR - Absolutely.

1. Were you a member of your high school or college jazz choir?

(60 responses)

Yes – 23 (38.3%)

No – 24 (40%)

N/A – 13 (21.7%)

2. How many years have you been teaching high school vocal music?

(60 responses)

I am a new teacher - 0 (0%)

1-5 years – 10 (16.7%)

6-10 years – 12 (20%)

Over 10 years – 38 (63.3%)

3. How comfortable are you/would you be directing a jazz choir? (1 being not comfortable at all and 3 being very comfortable)

(60 responses)

1 – 6 (10%)

2 – 36 (60%)

3 – 18 (30%)

4. Do you currently direct a jazz or swing choir?

(60 responses)

Yes – 11 (18.3%)

No – 49 (81.7%)

5. Did you receive any jazz teaching experience in college while studying for your music education degree? If so, can you give some further details/explanation. (These could be specific classes teaching jazz styles, improvisation, jazz harmony, etc., or perhaps private jazz lessons on your main instrument.)

(60 responses)

There were twenty-three *no* responses. Other responses are as follows:

- No training
- I did not receive any specific teaching experience with Jazz.
- I was classically trained and unfortunately, didn't receive any jazz training because there were NO jazz classes offered in my conservatory. However, I've always been passionate about jazz and find it easy to teach jazz music, even though we don't offer any specific jazz-related courses in our high school.
- Yes
- Classes in jazz history and styles, jazz lessons (piano)
- I was a trumpet major with voice minor. I played in the jazz ensemble at school and was also in the jazz choir. We learned styles, improv. and jazz harmonies.
- I believe I received a bit of improvisation and jazz harmony training, but basically none of jazz vocal stylings (as I recall).
- Improv as a trained jazz pianist.
- No I didn't receive any jazz education at the college level

- No. I was in jazz band and sax quartet in high school.
- Music Theory class at Juilliard, I was hired by Chuck Mangione to be his Concertmaster-experienced that; I was asked to play old jazz standards for a couple jobs when I was 20, and decided to study it myself and have fun playing Jazz! I have been improvising ever since-taught myself
- very brief. two class meetings dedicated to teaching a jazz band
- As a student teacher I helped with the extra-curricular boys' swing choir.
- Yes. We had a bit of training for Jazz. Professionally, in Wisconsin, there were classes you could take through WMEA in the summer for Jazz.
- No, I did however grow up listening to Jazz and am very comfortable with the style.
- I did not receive any formal instruction in Jazz. I am the Minister of Music at a large African American Church, so I play gospel music all the time, which is largely based on jazz harmonies. Therefore, I am able to FAKE my way through the Jazz pieces I do. Needless to say, a true Jazz musician would recognize that I am not really a jazz musician.
- improve, classes. Main instrument is voice.
- I was in the select jazz ensemble (trombone) all 4 years. I ask took a jazz improvisation elective course. I started a jazz combo quintet.
- no, all classical
- Jazz Piano Lessons - private
- Studied jazz piano and play professionally. no education degree (alternate route to gain certification)

- None at all.
- Yes, jazz improvisation
- No, however I was fortunate to grow up with jazz musicians in my home.
- Yes; jazz improv, piano improv, jazz piano
- Yes, Jersey City State College in 1980 had a wonderful jazz choir director by the name of Dan Schwartz. Dan was a very busy jazz choir composer in addition to his and Ensemble directing.
- No I did not receive any jazz training in college. However, I've grown up around jazz and gospel music my whole life, so I understand it fairly well.
- Jazz pedagogy and Theory - Jazz Vocal Performance major
- Yes, but it was not required. I took Jazz Choir as an option because it interested me. We learned some jazz theory and a little scat.
- no my focus was classical.
- I took Jazz Piano
- Two classes - improvisation and jazz pedagogy
- Not really, mostly we studied classical music and counterpoint. We did sing other genre's including jazz standards in our choral ensemble and jazz was imbedded in theory classes amongst other genre's. We did not have a specific jazz ensemble or theory class.
- No, mostly classical composition study/theory/ear training
- I did not receive any Jazz teaching experience.
- My TA as a graduate student was directing an ensemble, but other than that all of my experience has come through being a member of the ensembles offered to me

in high school and college. I've never had jazz specific courses of study.

- We did some vocal jazz repertoire as a part of our chamber choir and concert choir on occasion, but no formalized training in the education of jazz harmony. I also participated in jazz band, so got exposure there.

6. If you answered yes to the previous question, was this instruction/class mandatory for you to take in order for you to receive your music education degree? (If you answered no, just answer N/A)

(60 responses)

Yes – 4 (6.7%)

No – 16 (26.7%)

N/A – 40 (67.3%)

7. To the best of your knowledge and in your opinion, please complete the following statement: There are very few high school vocal jazz ensembles in New Jersey's public school music programs because . . .

(55 responses)

- Lack of time or experience
- Conflicts. I believe students will get involved in many things, and I see no reason why a jazz ensemble could not be successful. The fact is, there are many conflicts with scheduling during the school day, after school ensembles conflicting with sports and other activities, and I believe kids these days are pressured to take on an amazing school work load. I had a student last year have 5 AP classes. To me,

if you are taking five AP classes, you may as well be in college.

- institutions are not teaching and educating college students about the benefit of jazz choirs as much as they should be. There are also so many requirements in your specific study as a music student. You don't necessarily have time to learn more about jazz and how to teach it.
- The music is too difficult for the average high school singer
- not many teachers are comfortable teaching jazz.
- I imagine many vocal teachers are not confident in their preparation and training for the study of vocal jazz. Since most all collegiate music education degrees are focused mainly (entirely?) on Classical performance and repertoire it doesn't surprise me that this would be the case. The few vocal teachers who were blessed to have been involved in vocal jazz or even just show choir/swing choir in high school probably enjoyed it immensely and have opted to start groups of their own in their school programs that they teach now. Factor in that some districts may not have a measurable exposure of vocal jazz to students early on and thus students don't necessarily have a reason to look forward to vocal jazz in high school. Other notes to consider: - Lack of time in school schedules to include vocal jazz as a course of study - Lack of time as it conflicts with existing traditional ensembles (Women's Choir, Men's Choir, Chamber Singers, Madrigals, etc.)
- educators are not comfortable with the subject matter and repertoire
- for me it is very difficult to have advanced singers placed together because of scheduling issues.
- perhaps jazz is seen as mainly a non-vocal discipline, OR, perhaps jazz vocal

music is studied in ensembles that are not necessarily solely devoted to jazz (like the choir I teach; we call it Show Choir, but it is mainly a pop/rock/jazz *a cappella* ensemble, with some basic choreographical elements).

- The arts are struggling to keep a foothold in some districts and this is a very specific niche that might not gain funding or interest.
- of scheduling constraints and the number of other different groups that already exist.
- Possibly the lack of a jazz elective in the music education program at colleges, and primarily classical choral experiences. Usually the jazz choirs or *a cappella* groups are student-run.
- *A cappella* is the new show choir. Jazz choir seems inauthentic.
- the school curriculum does not offer it! And scheduling classes is a night mare and there are not enough teachers teach everything!
- programs lack the capacity to fund, staff, or schedule them.
- Time & skill of the students. Standard choral music should be taught first as the basis for all other choral music. Occasionally we do jazz songs in Concert Choir. But performing jazz in class is tricky because you need skilled musicians to sing the tricky chords and rhythms. As for an after school Jazz Choir, finding a time when students don't have multiple other activities is difficult. They're involved in the musical, All South Jersey Choir, All State Choir, and every sport imaginable. We even have many students who have jobs to save money for college.
- music education does not regularly include learning how to teach jazz
- scheduling doesn't permit specialty music classes

- There is not enough time. Music teachers are stretched as thin as possible throughout the state and districts to not want to spend the money to hire more music staff so that students may receive a full music education.
- Jazz instruction does not seem to be a focus of many collegiate music education programs.
- Without a strong background in jazz harmony, it is a daunting task.
- Teachers are busy meeting the basic requirements of choral ensembles in the curriculum while dealing with block scheduling which minimizes the opportunity to have multiple ensembles. I personally do vocal jazz with my groups but it is only one genre of many that we perform.
- We don't have time for our concert choir so to even fathom time and money for a jazz ensemble isn't possible. I don't think it has to do with people shying away as we are just being pushed out of public schools and are over worked already.
- There are many different genres of vocal music, jazz being one of them, and kids deserve the opportunity to explore, sing, and learn as many different genres as possible.
- Instructors are uncomfortable with the genre.
- There isn't time in the day to allow for so many different vocal ensembles and a jazz ensemble is not a priority for most music teachers.
- there aren't enough class hours or different periods to run style specific ensembles, vocal jazz isn't as popular right now as *a cappella* choir is, and most teachers don't have the training and experience to teach vocal jazz.
- It is hard to find well-composed jazz vocal charts, and not that many people have

the jazz choir experience or jazz experience. I had to go out of my way in order to learn more about Duke Ellington or Dizzy Gillespie – wasn't really exposed to any of it, not even Cole Porter/Gershwin while I was in high school.

- In my humble opinion, there are few vocal jazz ensembles in New Jersey public schools because most choral directors are not comfortable in the jazz genre. You will not be effective teaching that which you are not comfortable with yourself. Additionally, many classically trained musicians lack a full appreciation for jazz. It is a most unfortunate reality, in my opinion.
- too much curriculum to cover and you simply cannot focus on this specific aspect of performance.
- It's not as appealing to the 'youth' as *a cappella* groups. If you're going to start an elite vocal ensemble -with talented students who can sing challenging note clusters, and complex *a cappella* harmonies - you may opt for an *a cappella* group (or show choir) vs. a vocal jazz ensemble.
- I would agree with that
- I can only speak to my limited knowledge specific to my own school: ". . . because the pressures on students to load up on academic courses has reduced time available for multiple choral options; therefore, the curricular focus is on the widest possible spectrum of musical styles and not one specific genre."
- many vocal music educators have negative opinions of this style of singing; there are misconceptions about sound production; intimidated by lack of knowledge regarding jazz vocal and instrumental ensembles
- There is not much repertoire. There is not much history of choral jazz besides

groups I consider modern barbershop groups: Manhattan Transfer, etc.

- I don't feel like it is appropriate for students to only sing jazz repertoire. Many teachers say that they teach healthy technique, but I've never heard healthy technique from a jazz choir.
- If you do not specifically study jazz, it is not a priority for the teacher to bring into the school, and is, therefore not introduced to the school. Personally, my choirs will perform jazz inspired pieces, but our school did not have a vocal jazz ensemble when I started teaching and I have not yet looked into student interest in starting one. Then comes the question of time and resources.
- this would be an "add-on" and many students would rather take part in student-run *a cappella* groups than add another teacher-based choir to their plate.
- For vocal jazz (which I run) . . . because of a few factors: Interest/knowledge of the medium of the instructor. Students are generally not exposed to this genre or, sadly, are aware of it. It's also intimidating as it requires a certain aural vocabulary and inner ear skill set. It also requires balance of both men and women. Finally, anything seemingly similar to popular singing, it requires a special technique. Knowing how to interpret jazz requires a huge investment in listening to a variety of performers of the same chart in order to get an idea of how to individually interpret that piece.
- the style can/is intimidating and needs to have more professional development.
- Of college music educator training and lack of middle school programs.
- 2 reasons: 1) Vocal teachers are simply extended with other vocal organizations

and have no more room for this activity. 2) MANY vocal teachers feel completely overwhelmed by the idea of teaching jazz, due to their own limited jazz knowledge prejudice regarding vocal jazz as a viable vocal performance medium.

- it's expensive. It cannot include all singers in a program. It is not scheduled as a Concert Choir is scheduled.
- Instrumental teachers often went to high school and certainly college at institutions that had jazz and Ensembles. I don't believe this is true for choral directors. My belief is that most choral directors are strictly classically trained and do extra work in churches.
- Teachers aren't trained in it. Also there is not a very significant outcry for it from the public or from other music educators.
- teaching the skills needed to sing Jazz music is difficult, and rehearsal time is limited to tune and blend those intricate chords.
- few teachers are comfortable / experienced in this genre.
- The style is not taught to music education students, so they are not at ease with it. This is compounded by the students' lack of familiarity with it.
- Music isn't supported in many schools. Therefore, programs are few.
- teachers are not trained in Jazz vocal studies.
- not many of us receive jazz vocal instruction in high school. Therefore, when we go to college, not many of us are comfortable joining a jazz vocal group or pursuing further jazz education. Therefore, not many of us are comfortable teaching vocal jazz. Therefore, not many of the next generation of teachers have jazz vocal instruction in high school. And the cycle continues.

- I would say it depends on a combination of several factors: the music director, the level of instruction and experience students get K-8, and then the district's focus (or lack thereof) on the arts. I try to present a variety throughout the year. We only have one choral ensemble, so we sing classical and ethnic/world music in the winter and then jazz, pop and Broadway in the spring. I'd love to see more jazz in NJ schools, but I'm mostly concerned about districts that reduce music education to karaoke once a week with an untrained educator. Remember, it all starts with a good foundation. It's very difficult to get a high school student to develop their ear, or sing with good technique, or follow a director in a rehearsal if their first exposure to these basic skills are the high school level. You have to do your best and work with what you get. FYI: You did not ask if my high school offered a jazz ensemble when you asked if we participated in one in our early years. I was a member of several ensembles in my high school (mid 70's). As a freshman I was in the Concert Chorus (largest general ensemble), second year I was in a female ensemble (audition only), and in my last two years I was accepted in the advanced, audition-only chorus called the Chorale. We toured internationally (spring break), competed, performed on television, and even recorded an album in the city.
- We sang many genre's and in many languages (German, French, Latin, Hebrew, Spanish). We did not have ensembles based on specific genre's but rather on musical skill. For example, I, like others, were exempt from the freshman (Vocal Workshop) ensemble because of prior musical training. We auditioned and were placed.

- So yes, I sang many jazz standards (5-8 part harmony), but as part of a skill-based ensemble.
- Best Wishes
- not sure.
- I have not seen a great interest in the field.
- Jazz does not seem to be a popular genre for students to listen to, even casually. I feel this comes from most jazz forms being much more sophisticated than the music being produced and consumed by the average listener. I also think the large majority of Jazz standards, due to the scarcity of competent singers, is usually instrumental and doesn't really appeal to a generation of listeners who also need lyrics to understand the purpose of a song. However, if/when I play Jazz for my students, they love it and the contrast it presents to other music they know. I feel this response is not typical for all teenagers, 14-18 years old, unless they have extensive experience in the music program in school.

8. At what college/university did you receive your music education degree?

(55 responses)

- Westminster Choir College – nine respondents
- William Paterson University – five respondents
- West Chester University – two respondents
- Trenton State College – two respondents
- Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University – two respondents
- Indiana University

- Mason Gross School of the Arts Rutgers University
- Moscow State Conservatory in Russia.
- Drew University
- Jersey City State College (now NJCU) 1982
- Lebanon Valley College; Annville, PA
- The College of NJ
- BM at Moravian/Muhlenberg Colleges, MFA at NYU Tisch
- Hartwick College in Oneonta, NY
- MGSA, WCC
- Juilliard School of Music
- Messiah College (Undergrad) Temple University (Grad)
- The College of New Jersey
- Undergrad: Iowa State University Grad: University of Wisconsin-Platteville. (“I don't know if you wanted both . . . but there you go!”)
- The University of Connecticut
- Syracuse University
- Rutgers (New Brunswick)
- Manhattan School of Music
- University of Kansas
- Grove City College
- Pfeiffer College
- James Madison University
- Undergrad - Shenandoah University; Masters - UNC - Greensboro

- No Ed degree. MA orchestral conducting from Queens College
- Montclair State University
- CUNY - Hunter College
- Philadelphia Musical Academy
- Jersey City State College for undergraduate from 1980 to 1984 and Central Connecticut State University for my master's degree
- Rutgers University, Mason Gross School of the Arts
- Both Performance Major and Music Ed Major at Moravian College
- Rowan University
- Hunter CUNY
- Moravian College
- Kean University, BA Music Education K-12

MELODIC AND HARMONIC ANALYSIS OF "A QUIET PLACE"

This piece was performed and recorded by the vocal group, Take 6. The song is from their first album *Take 6*, which was recorded on Warner Records by the group in 1988. The score follows this analysis beginning on page 123 of my thesis. This is written for a *cappella* choir and is extremely difficult for even the most talented groups to take on due to its close harmonies as well as key changes. I have performed it in the past and because of the difficulty level it was a challenge to sing as well as a challenge to analyze.

If one were to listen to this piece after reading the several definitions for vocal jazz in the narrative above and then were asked if this piece was considered vocal jazz, I think most would answer no. There is absolutely no improvisation here and it definitely does not swing which are the two most common criteria given for something to be considered vocal jazz. It does however, contain other aspects like jazz phrasing and most importantly – rich harmonies filled with extensions and chord substitutions, voicings (close and open) and just an aesthetically pleasing sound that one wouldn't find in popular or classic repertoire.

The form of the piece is fairly strophic - there are four sections to the form of this piece. The first A section which is sixteen measures, the second (which I'll call A') is fourteen measures, the third section which I'm calling B because there is no lyrical melody (although the melodic line is a derivative of the opening melody) is eight measures and finally the recapitulation which is eight measures. (The recap is also melodically similar to the second half of A' however, it is up a half step - harmonically, it is not similar at all.)

There are several reasons I chose this piece - the first as mentioned above, simply because of the analytical challenge. Second, because I think it's a beautiful piece to sing and listen to. And finally, to learn more about how it was written and the way the voicings work from beginning to end. There is so much harmonically going on here and even though it was difficult to do the analysis (having gone through three possible ways to see tonal centers and key changes etc.) I find it very rewarding to come to solutions and figure out the 'puzzle' which is the song. As I worked on the piece – approaching it from several different angles, I could see how one result was better than another and I could discard certain solutions.

The first thing I looked for was a motif. The rhythmic motif used was the dotted quarter note to the 8th note. This was presented in measure 2 and used thirteen times in the melodic line throughout the piece. (page one, measures 2 and 4; page two, measures 10, 12, 17 and 18; page three, measures 20 and 26; page four, measures 28, 32 and 34; page five, measures 40 and 42.)

Next is a discussion of the form which includes each section and important details for each. The opening section (A) begins in the key of D major. The melodic line utilizes the dotted quarter note to 8th note rhythm as mentioned above in measures 2, 4, 10 and 12. In measure 5 there is an ascending interval of a perfect 5th from note D up to B. That note B becomes the target note and is used to begin the next 4 bars. In measures 9 – 10 the same rhythmic/melodic motive is used, hovering around the 6th scale degree. Then in measures 10 – 11 the motive is sung again only drops stepwise.

The second section (A') begins at measure 17 and the first two bars are a melodic variation of the opening motive in the piece. In measures 20 – 21 we see the same

melodic ascending major 6th interval as in the first section. In the second half of the phrase, we see the melodic line ascending until it reaches the tonic of the original key (D). Beginning at measure 25, the original motif is stated, then repeated up to the 6th scale degree and a variation (down a perfect 5th) for 2 bars. In the final 2 bars the melody descends another perfect 5th from the original tonic and does a turn around the tonic. Harmonically, the final measure here interestingly ends in a deceptive cadence bringing us to the next section in the key of Bb.

The third section (which I call B) is a pseudo-vocalese section that lasts for 8 bars. The melodic line here is very interesting because it uses a variation of the first 4 bars of the A section except for the fact that now it's in the key of Bb. It has an ascending major 6th interval on the last 2 beats, then reconstitutes the second 4 measures of A' (measures 21 – 24).

The final section (recapitulation) begins at measure 39 and is almost identical to measures 25 – 30 in the A' section (except down a half-step). Harmonically, we see descending chromatic harmony in measure 42 and also the use of chromatic movement in measures 44 – 45.

The composer makes full use of non-harmonic tones within the inner voices with the addition of suspensions in the inner voices which adds for beautiful tension throughout the piece. He also makes use of escape tones and appoggiaturas in the voice leading as well as passing tones in thirds and sixths in the inner voices to add to the motion of the piece.

One other thing I think is unique to this piece and lends some harmonic 'hipness' here is the use of tritone substitutions throughout the piece. We see its use in measure 4

at the beginning as well as the end of the measure. We also see it being used in the following measures at the end of each leading into the next measure: mm 10, 20, 23, 24 and m34.

Recorded By "Take Six"
A QUIET PLACE

SATB Divisi, A Capella

Words and Music by RALPH CARMICHAEL
 Arranged by JERRY RUBINO

Smoothly (♩ = ca. 88)

S/A

There is A Qui - et Place _____ far from the

T/B

There is A Qui - et Place _____ far from the

rap - id pace where God can soothe my

rap - id pace God can soothe my

trou - bled mind. Shel - tered by

trou - bled mind. Shel - tered by

Handwritten notes and markings include: *mp*, *rap*, *ET.*, *AN.*, *APROGG.*, *PT*, *E9 (No 7)*, *E9*, *A13 No 9*, *A13 No 11*, *A7 9*, *A7 13*, *F#9*, *F#13*, *Bm7*, *Bm7*, *Bm7*, *Bm*, *G4/3*, *G4/3*, *F#m7*, *Bm*, *9*, *Am7 9*, *Am13*.

D¹³ sus4 D⁹ sus4 Ab⁺9 G⁺9 G⁺9 - Em¹¹ Em⁷ C⁺9 ✓

tree and flow'r there in my quiet hour with

tree and flow'r there in my quiet hour with

Bm⁹ - Bm⁹ G¹¹ C¹¹ F⁹ F⁺ F⁺7

Him my cares are left be

Him my cares are left be

(Opt. Solo) 17 mf

A¹³ A⁺11 Am⁷ add11 A⁹ C¹¹ add11 F⁹ sus4 F⁹

Whe-ther a gar-den small, hind. Oo, oo,

hind. Oo, oo,

4

End Solo

or on a moun - tain tall, new strength.

Oo New strength and

Oo New strength and

Handwritten notes: *Bm9*, *Am11 13*, *Ab+11*, *mf*, *GA9*

cour - age there I find

cour - age there I find

Handwritten notes: *F#11*, *F#11*, *E.T.*, *Bm9*, *Bb9*, *Am11*, *Ab+11 13*, *mf*, *f*, *pt*

then from this qui - et place I go pre -

then from this qui - et place I go pre -

Handwritten notes: *GA13*, *GA9*, *GA9*, *E9sus4*, *Gm9*, *E9*, *F#11*, *F#m9*, *mp*

Handwritten musical score with lyrics and guitar chords.

System 1:

Chords: B^{13}_{sus4} , $B7-9$, Em^9 , Em^7

Lyrics: pared to face a new day with

System 2:

Chords: A^9_{sus4} , A^9 , A^9_{sus4} , $A-9$, B^b (boxed), $B^b A^9$, $A^b 9$, $A-5$

Lyrics: love from all man - kind Oo,

System 3:

Chords: Dm^{11} (cresc.), Cm^{13} , $B^b 9$, $B^b 9$ (Wah), $E^b 9$

Lyrics: oo, Wah

System 4:

Chords: $A^b 11$, A^9_{sus4} , $A-9$, $A^b B$, A^b , G^9_{sus4} , $G^+ 11$ (rit.)

Lyrics: Ah, Ah,

Handwritten notes: 31 , $rit.$, f , mf , $cresc.$

6 ✓

39 (Opt. Solo) *mf*

from this qui - et place go pre -

mp

Then oo ———— U.N. PT

Then oo ————

rit.

pared to face new day

rit.

oo ———— with love for all man -

oo ———— with love for all man - *

kind. *molto rit.*

kind for all man - kind.

kind for all man - kind.

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