

Get Off the Bandstand!

(The Rules of Behavior for the Aspiring Jazz Singer)

Introduction:

This guidebook is designed specifically for those singers who wish to pursue, or are already pursuing a career as a Jazz Singer. Although, it doesn't apply to other vocal genres, it CAN serve as *quasi* guide for singers of any style to learn the best ways to show respect for their musicians AND their own talent as well.

Let me first explain why the Jazz genre is a little different than other styles of singing, and therefore when one performs a Jazz tune, one needs to follow some unique unspoken, but clearly understood "rules".

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It is widely understood in the world of Tennis, that in order to be considered a complete player, one who is rated among the very best in the world, year after year after year, the player must be able to perform on a variety of surfaces.

In other words, the player should be as comfortable on a grass court as he or she is on a clay court, a hard court, or an indoor carpeted court.

Each court demands a completely separate set of skills from the player because each surface creates different challenges. For example, the ball will tend to bounce differently, lower, or end up in an unexpected position on grass where there are dips and even holes on the surface, than on a hard concrete court where there are none. Or, while one needs to be able to run to the ball on a grass court, he will have to perfect a sliding technique on clay to be a consistent winner.

The thing is that to be a truly consistent and top rated player, one must be able to negotiate all surfaces accurately and play according to the protocols inherent in each surface.

And it's the same for singers. Every singing opportunity presents a set of performance challenges that are different from one another.

And it's important to understand right here that when we speak of unique "rules" for the singing of Jazz, we are not talking about vocal technique! We are talking about **PERFORMANCE, PRESENTATION!!**

A singer cannot perform at a cabaret gig the same way he/she does at a wedding. And let me tell you ladies that if you try, you'll probably never work a wedding again. Why? Because "stealing" the spotlight from the bride is a big "no no" in the wedding reception business. The guests are not at all interested in the singer's little self-aggrandizing anecdotes. They just wanna dance!

And while you may be sitting there reading this and thinking, "Who cares about that? I will never work a wedding gig anyway. Those are lame. I'm too good for that", let me tell you that playing weddings can pay your rent for a year or more while you're perfecting your scatting, building your book, or practicing your instrument.

Every Gig is Different!

If you get a call to sing back-up at a recording session, this is NOT an opportunity to try out your audition piece for American Idol. You see that, don't you? Singing backup requires something different, something subdued, without too much vibrato that might make you stick out, because that's the job you've been called to do.

How about a restaurant looking for dinner music? Is this the appropriate venue for a loud, bombastic "Come to the Cabaret"-type number, or maybe your stories of childhood and how you learned the song you're about to sing?

When a restaurant owner says he wants dinner music, he means SOFT...elevator-style, the kind of music that people can converse over in levels no louder than a whisper.

The distinguishing factors to bear in mind are the differences inherent in singing events, and are:

- **the VENUE – (the place)**
- **the GENRE – (the style)**
- **the EVENT – (the occasion, ex: happy hour?, dinner?, concert?, dance?, etc.**

There are experienced, competent singers, who work consistently, who pay their bills on their earnings from singing, who never become a famous celebrity, but who make a living AND a life doing what they love.

They are as comfortable in a high class private country club with plush, elegant furnishings as they are in a bar with sawdust on the floor. They can sing in a variety of styles and requests put forth by the customers, be it a 40's big band tune, or a country or pop song, or a bossa nova, or even a show tune, or a jazz standard.

These artists, and called **Journeyman**, (that is any experienced, competent but routine, mostly unknown and uncelebrated performers).

There are thousands of journeymen in the music business, including guitar and keyboard players, saxophone and trumpet players, bassists, flutists, harpists, violinists, cellists, drummers, and yes, singers, all doing what they love for a living, and loving what they do every day.

These are the working professionals of the music business, and while they...[we] understand that every gig is different, and while it remains the dream of every one of them [us] to just **DO OUR ACT**, stand up there and express our deepest feelings, with our favorite songs, the ones that perfectly express our essence and which are arranged exquisitely, the way we want them; and our warm and witty stories that hold the audience's attention in an utter delightful magnetic clasp that only releases them when we are through, and the perfect venue where the plates and glasses make no noise when we are on the stage, and where the lighting is perfect and the sound system is set to the most attractive equalization for our voice, and one where every eye in the house is on US...Aaah YES! While we dream all of that, we also know the reality!

So just as the Tennis player who wears the moniker of Journeyman, if we each wish to work as professionals, we can almost assuredly count on being called upon to play, (sing) on different "surfaces" (venues), using a variety of strokes, (sing in a variety of genres, like Country, Jazz, Pop, Rock etc.), and need to be competent in every single one!

Here is a sample of a working singer's schedule for just 2 days:

Monday

- 10AM – back-up singing gig at ABC Recording Studio, (no rehearsal – need to read it)
- 2PM – Ladies Auxiliary Luncheon and Fashion Show
- 7PM – Happy Hour at the XYZ Bar and Grill

Tuesday

- 11AM – Art Gallery Opening – (may need to emcee)
- 5PM – Cocktail Party at the GHI Hotel – Ballroom A
- 9PM – Dance at the VFW, (may go overtime)

Naturally, every single journeyman aspires to greatness, fortune, and celebrity. The point here is that although that may be true, one has to play by the rules of the game that are being played in the present moment!

Good, all around tennis players, just like good all-around singers can make a living doing what they love, and what could be better than that! Not everyone's gonna end up at the top of the game or in the record books, and that should NOT be the goal anyway. The goal is to do what we LOVE more than anything.

This book is geared toward Jazz Singers and Performing, which is a specific genre and has with it very specific set of rules that the singer should follow to be considered a true pro!

And, by the way, when I talk about singing Jazz, I am not referring to what they call "Smooth Jazz", or "New Jazz".

I don't even know what **that is**, but the songs and styles I hear, either of which are referred to with that moniker are NOT Jazz in this author's humble opinion. Elevator renditions of a Jazz standard, played by John Tesh is NOT Jazz!

When I talk about Jazz, I am speaking with reverence about an art form created, in the cotton fields down south by singing slaves; nurtured by the melodic stylings of Louis Armstrong and the chaotic expression of Ornette Coleman, and continuously expanded in its rhythms and harmonic patterns by people from Scott Joplin at the start of the 20th century, to Miles Davis, Ella Fitzgerald, John Coltrane in the mid-20th century, and Chick Corea, and Wynton Marsalis into the 21st century! And does not include anything played by Kenny G or Yanni!

Jazz is one of America's greatest exports.

It is the first truly American musical genre, and was recognized by Congress in 1987 as a national treasure.

Thanks to countless performers and innovators over the course of centuries, jazz has risen to become one of the most respected musical genres in the world.

And if you wish to sing jazz and be called a singer of jazz, don't just learn how to scat...study the history of jazz and connect with its soul.

It's more than technique, it's so much more than dexterity, It's a pure and unadulterated American Art form to be respected and to be proud of!

And there are rules that don't exist in other musical forms...rules of behavior on the bandstand, rules of understanding the particular language of jazz, and well....that's what this book is about!

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I've been a voice teacher for 35+ years. There are literally thousands of us in the world, and, as in any educational field, some of us are better at it than others.

I don't claim to be the best voice teacher out there. There are better technicians than I for certain; many classically-trained vocalists who understand the anatomical aspects of singing far better than I do, and whose methods, I think, should definitely all be attempted by the aspirant to see which works best for him or her as a student of voice. Trying on singing methods is much like trying on songs to sing, or trying on coats for that matter. You try different ones on until you find the one that FITS!!

Learning from a teacher is totally subjective. The bottom line is, if you "click" with your teacher, you are able to learn from that person. If you don't "click", then it doesn't matter how accomplished he or she is, how many famous clients he or she has taught, or how expensive or inexpensive the fees are.

The fact remains that you cannot learn and get better as a singer with a teacher or coach with whom you just don't connect.

And the reason for that is that singing is so very personal an experience that one must feel comfortable enough, and trust the coach enough, to dig down inside oneself for the true and raw expression through his/her singing.

Personally, I spend just about 6 weeks training voices to sing, the reason being that 6 weeks is the maximum amount of time it takes to put certain principles of singing on auto-pilot, such as; the breathing, the sound creation, (diaphragm control), the body's resonation centers, and the Seven Deadly Sins of Singing which are to be avoided.

That's pretty much all of what I teach to beginning students. I leave it up to the individual singer to practice the drills I design for each specific concern he or she may have about his/her voice. If the student is dedicated and seriously committed to his/her singing, the 10-20 minutes a day of drilling is not much to ask, and the results are amazing!

But, almost any decent voice teacher can do that for a student.

Where my joy and fulfillment lies is in the performance aspect of singing...and in helping a singer to discover his own voice, his sense of musicality, purpose, and ultimately, his total power through his vocal performance to alter Energy, and subsequently, Matter!

And while I am no scientist, everything I teach, write about, or talk about with my students is based on empirical knowledge, that is knowledge which has been informed by my own personal experience.

So when I say that a performance can move energy, I say it because I've seen it happen...and often!

This principle is widely known and accepted in the world of sports, where a particular athlete's performance can so move the observers' that they in turn will literally send him or her the positive energy required to accomplish the goal at hand.

This is true in almost all sporting events, but most easily understood when a single athlete is performing a feat, like playing tennis, golf, diving, or standing at the plate with a bat. The crowd becomes a "partner" in the process of achievement and each member of the observing crowd will literally feel the joy or agony of the result...as deeply as the athlete himself.

In tennis, for example, when a player is an audience favorite, the opponent will want to start the match with a flair of winning points, specifically to "*take the crowd out of it*", meaning to quiet their cheers and leave the favored player with no energy with which to fight except his/ her own.

Baseball fans are celebrated as the "10th man on the field".

And for a singer, there is nothing more meaningful and deeply felt than the audience's applause, that symbol of love and devotion that all artists crave. For many, once they have experienced the feeling of a standing ovation, they can never be satisfied with anything less ever again.

There is, however, a price to be paid for that kind of love!

Or perhaps a more appropriate way to put it is...there needs to be a certain reverence shown to the art form itself for its ability to produce joy, and sadness, exhilaration, and despair, hope, and love that nothing else can produce.

We as singers of song, should be profoundly and utterly grateful for this gift we have been blessed with by the creator of all that is.

We didn't invent it. We didn't manufacture it, and we can never take it for granted or treat it with egotistical arrogance or stupidity!

And I have written this book to demonstrate what I believe is the appropriate way to carry this gift and cherish it, treasure it, and guard it, lest it be taken away in a flash!

So we'll talk about how to work with musicians, writers, producers and promoters in a way that honors your talent...but also respects theirs!

And we'll discuss your ability and willingness to adhere to the rules of the road on a bandstand...in other words the things you need to know...which are so much more than just the song you're singing.

So off we go...into the world of the professional singer/musician!

CHAPTER ONE

Who Do You Think You Are, Anyway?

If you wish to be viewed as a serious artist, or even at the very least, a singer who obviously loves the music you are freely sharing in the world, it becomes necessary to put away your **ego** and realize what it is you really have here. What exactly is it, this talent of yours??

Did you invent it? When? How old were you? What was the original idea for this brilliance of yours? Is there a blueprint around we can examine?

Hardly, right? Obviously, if you look closely, you can see that you DID NOT create your talent. It's a gift, pure and simple.

It's a talent that was given to you, most likely at birth, for which, in a perfect world, you in turn, say "thanks" to your Creator by offering it to others with the same intensity and profound love with which it was given to you.

Do You Get That?? Does it make sense to you?

It's a talent that was GIVEN to you, most likely at birth, for which you are more or less ENCOURAGED by your Creator to SHARE it with others with the same intensity and profound love with which it was given to you.

You do NOT use it to glorify yourself in arrogance, and self-promotion, although it's certainly not a giant leap for the EGO to deduce that you must be special indeed to have been given a gift of this magnitude! And of course...you ARE...as are all of God's children, including your audiences, your fellow musicians, your housekeeper, your mechanic, your enemies...(see where I'm going with this?)

Now, I can hear you, singers! I hear you yelling back at me, "But , what are you saying, Chrys? That the only way to demonstrate how grateful we are for our talent is to humble ourselves when we perform? Shouldn't we be strutting our stuff instead? What's with all this humility...we're not monks!!"

Well, yes...and no! It would depend on what your definition of strutting is. If you mean showing off in a manner that suggests a message of "Look at me, you losers! I'm special, and you are NOT!". Then, I would think that THAT was an ungrateful demonstration of your talent.

But if you mean by strutting that you sing with zeal and passion, and celebrate your talent AND your ability to use it to turn people on with the joy you feel in your heart, then, okay! Strut away!!

I sorta prefer the term "gravitas" to more clearly describe the quality I am talking about. It's more of a dignity than a swagger. There is a certain substance or weightiness, or even a lordliness in the kind of person who walks in a glow of self-confidence and gratitude for what he has.

In a performer, it's magical, and majestic! It's the power to look into your eyes and go all the way to your soul..."Killing You Softly with His Song".

You can't strut that kind of a gift. You really cannot!! It is this humble author's view that this gift has to constantly be treated with honor, adoration and reverence. Come on! You DID NOT CREATE IT! It was GIVEN, and you DISCOVERED it inside of you! Bravo for THAT! Wow!! And THAT is why you share it, right? It truly IS! Look!

It's like when you were a kid and you happened upon a shiny marble on the sidewalk. You couldn't wait to find your friends and say, "Look at this! Look what I found! Isn't it fabulous? Let's play with this for a while!" That's not swaggering or bragging, it sharing what you found with people that matter to you. And when you perform from this perspective, you are sending vibrations of love all over the place, and you are showered with the stuff in return.

Performing from this space in consciousness cannot be faked, singers! You have to mean it. That's what I'm talking about when I tell you singers to establish a relationship with your audience, and to find something special about them and to love them.

And you also have to love your musicians.

The feelings that travel among each of you on stage becomes PART of the songs you are singing so you HAVE to love and respect and admire your musicians.

Let me tell you a little story to more correctly make my point on this particular issue about loving your musicians.

I was traveling around the country several years ago with a big band, and when I say "big band", I am talking about a particular genre of music

called "Big Band". It refers to the 18-piece bands of the 40's and 50's like Glenn Miller, Woody Herman, the Dorsey Brothers and people like that.

I traveled with the Les and Larry Elgart big band back in the early 60's and also with Si Zentner's Band, and The Tommy Dorsey Orchestra under the direction of Sam Donahue for several years.

There were occasions when the band was backing up a big name singer in Vegas or Reno, or somewhere, and on those occasions I would get the night off. I never stopped being totally star struck by some of the big stars that were backed up by the bands I was on...singers I grew up adoring, like Mel Torme, Johnny Ray, Nancy Wilson, Connie Francis, and people like that.

So, even if I had the night off, there was no way I wasn't going to stand in the wings and watch these people I loved perform, and dream about reaching the heights that they already had attained.

99% of the time, my "idols" did not disappoint...except for this one time...

Our Band Bus had pulled into Harrah's Club in Reno at about 8 AM after traveling all night from Anaheim, CA where we'd done several shows at Disneyland, as part their "Big Band Festival" that they always had every August.

As soon as we exited the bus, a guy who met us, approached the leader and asked if the band could play back up for the headliner, whose band guys were stuck somewhere in Idaho and were not going to make it to the club in time for her opening night. It was only for one night, and at least her music HAD made the trip, so, after the price was negotiated, our leader agreed to it

Everyone had been looking forward to sleeping between some clean sheets for several hours before the show. When you're on the road for several months a year, this becomes special, to sleep in a hotel because it only happens 3 nights out of the week, the rest of time we sleep on the bus, (but that's another story, heck, it's another book).

Well, the star of the show called a rehearsal for 1PM, so we went to our rooms, unpacked and did manage grab a few winks anyway.

As it turned out, her charts were not exactly clear with regard to repeats, intro's and tags, so the band had to play several times and attempt to

figure out how they went. Normally, it's customary in situations like this to ask the singer herself, what some of the symbols on the charts mean. Oh, the notes were there all right, but there were other strange symbols on the music that none of my band mates had seen before.

The singer, never having read any of her own charts before, was not helpful at all, and in fact became quite frustrated with the band, saying things like,

"What the Hell's wrong with you people? Can't you F***ing Read?"

Or there were exchanges like, "Where's my starting note? My band always give me my starting note"

"It's not on the sheet, but we'll be glad to add it". (So the band would play the intro and include the song's starting note in the last bar, which would be played by the piano).

"That's not the way they do it. I need to hear it better. Can't the trumpet play it? You guys are F***ing LAME!"

I swear, I was in total shock!

Do you remember the 1979 movie with Dustin Hoffman and Meryl Streep, where a woman walks out on her husband and 4-year old child, and the young inexperienced dad is left to figure out how to parent his son?

There's a scene where Dustin Hoffman's character is making breakfast, and his son is observing. As the waffle is being placed into the toaster, the boy announces, "That's not right. That's not the way Mommy makes waffles. I want waffles that way MOMMY makes them", and he runs out of the room.

Well, that's the best way I can explain how this lady, a humungous star was acting during this rehearsal. She was having a spoiled, bratty temper tantrum...period! Unbelievable!

So the rehearsal, which should have taken about an hour, ended up taking 3 ½ hours, which included several instances of undeserved, foul-mouthed verbal abuse by this so-called "sweetheart" of song to guys who had agreed to back her up and literally save her opening night. They were not happy.

And if the afternoon was not difficult enough, that night, she abused them even further by insulting them in front of the audience, saying things like,

"I know this band sucks, but stay with me okay? These A**holes can't do anything right, but my real band will be here by tomorrow, so be sure to come back, okay?"

I was mortified and could not believe what I was witnessing. A big star like this who couldn't read a note of music, could not answer simple questions from the musicians when they asked her, "What does this sign mean at Letter D?", or "Are you coming at after 4 bars or 8"?

She would just yell and use some epithet to deflect the fact that she knew nothing about the music she was singing.

And I must admit that as a singer myself, I felt embarrassed for her, yet, at the time, I have to admit, with guilty pleasure, I was young myself and I'm ashamed to say that I thoroughly enjoyed her total humiliation when the band deliberately played several sour notes that threw her off and made her leave the stage in a rage, while the audience laughed their heads off.

She swore that the band would never work again, but as it turned out, it was she who was on her way to all kinds of trouble and pain, and while she HAS managed to hang on to her fan base, even today, I wonder how much tragedy in her life she could have avoided with a little more gratitude and less arrogance!

And as a 19 year-old watching this drama unfold, you can bet I took it all in with great interest, and counted my blessings that I knew how to read a chart and I silently vowed to always treat my band mates well.

I feel the need to mention here that since this incident, it has come out that this singer had a serious disorder and was also unfortunately addicted to pills, so maybe I can let her out of the box on this one. After all, she was young, (only 2 years older than I at the time), and not all that stable to begin with.

Oh and by the way, while I can't mention this singer's name, lest I be sued from here to Timbuktu, if you want her name, drop me a private email and I'll tell ya who it was.

My point is this.

Treat your musicians with civility and respect if you want to be treated that way yourself. And for Heaven's sake, do NOT hide your inadequacies by making your band look bad. The band, the audience, and certainly the promoters can all see past that ploy, so you only demean yourself!

Let's get really real here, singers! It's easy to fall into a trap of self-importance when you're being showered with the acceptance and accolades of applause...and all the "oohs" and "aahs" of your fans. Yes, I know!

But you cannot imagine how much higher you can go when you use your talent to bring people together...in joyous celebration of friendship that makes them feel love for one another, not just for you. That's the real prize and it produces highs you will never forget.

In my Book on [Promotion](#), I have a chapter on discovering who you are as a person as well as an artist BEFORE venturing out into the harsh realities of the music business. Part of that knowing is:

- the GRATITUDE for the gifts you possess
- HONORING your musicians, and other industry professionals.
- the APPRECIATION for your audiences
- the CONSTANT THIRST for the continuation of your musical education
- GIVING BACK to your source of power through your music.

Sounds like lofty nonsense to many of you, I know...but hey! We're just getting started!

CHAPTER TWO
Honoring The Musician

More than in any other style of music, a Jazz singer must know what it means to honor her fellow musicians. Why? Because Jazz is a collaborative process where each and every member of the band, including the singer, are integral parts of a total expression, a story where each individual instrument represents a chapter, without which the story would be incomplete.

So first and foremost, understand your PART!

- Don't walk up onto a bandstand without knowing the song you're going to sing, the key it's in and its tempo...and how to count it off.
- Know the sign language to indicate, Back to the Beginning, (Top) or Extended Ending (Tag), etc.
- Don't talk, just sing! Talking is for a your Showcase or Cabaret Act.
- At the end of the first chorus, (a chorus of a song is the complete song, sung or played ONE time through), step to the side and allow the other musicians who wish to participate, play their instruments.
- Listen to what they are playing, and applaud with the audience when each instrumentalist finishes his solo.
- Learn and understand "Trading Fours".
- Have Fun!

Okay, let's take these one by one, shall we?

Knowing your song, the key, the tempo.

Absolutely, the most crucial and telling aspect of your performance as a Jazz Vocalist is your musical knowledge when you approach the bandstand.

**If you do not know the keys you sing in, you truthfully have
NO BUSINESS UP THERE...PERIOD!**

In addition to knowing the key your song is in, you must of course know

- ALL of the words by heart, (no lyric sheets please, this isn't Karaoke),
- and if the keyboard player doesn't know your chosen song, you should have a lead sheet available. (A Lead Sheet contains the

melody line and the Chord Progressions, and sometimes the lyrics, but not necessarily).

- The lead sheet must be IN YOUR KEY, and not be just a piece of sheet music you purchased at the local music store.

Look, if you sing the song in Bb and you hand the keyboardist a piece of sheet music that's in the key of G, you are forcing him to instantly transpose each chord, which I can tell you, most players HATE to do that on the bandstand 'cause it acts as a distraction to their expression. More likely than not, you'll be asked to sing it in G so his life can be a little easier...Point being that if you don't want to be singing in uncomfortable keys, bring music in YOUR keys.

- And Always bring a copy for the bass player as well.

Knowing the Signs

On a Jazz bandstand the talking is done through the music, so there is a minimum of talking. Therefore Jazz musicians have developed a sort of "sign language" to indicate things to each other. Often the leader will call a song and hold up 3 fingers with which he points down to the floor, This means the song is in 3 flats or the key of Eb. That tells all the players on the stage where the song is likely to begin and end. It's called setting the "tonality".

Jazz singers, indeed ALL SINGERS who perform with "live" accompaniments, should make it their business to learn keys and be able to communicate to their musicians the key the tune is to be played in without having to yell it all over the stage.

It is also very helpful to signal the musicians when you're preparing to sing the song out, (that is, sing the last chorus), whether you'll be coming back in at the beginning, or the middle.

Usually, with a ballad, you can be more effective by coming back at the Bridge, so as not to draw the slower song out too much and possibly lose your listeners. Oh, and by the way, know what the "Bridge" of the song IS. And for that matter, "the First 8", "Last 8", "Tag", "Intro", "Bail Out", etc.

Here are just a very few signs, (there are many more found in jazz theory books and websites):

- Index finger on nose = back to bridge
- Hand on top of head = back to the beginning
- Outline circle with index finger = Tag or Turnaround

- Key of song = number of flats, using fingers pointed down. Ex: Key of F, one finger pointed down, (1 flat), or Key of D, 2 fingers pointed up, (2 sharps).
- Index finger across the throat = Take it out...NOW!

Don't Talk, Just Sing

A Jazz gig is a collaboration where all of the players are involved. It is NOT a showcase for the singer. In other words, it is NOT a Cabaret Act. The people gathered to listen are Jazz enthusiasts, and are interested in the music and how the musicians on the stage, including the vocalist, interact with one another, rather than anecdotal accounts of the singer's experience.

That's not to say, you can't thank the crowd for the applause, or even announce the next tune, or acknowledge a soloist's improvisation. It just means that you should keep the talking to a minimum. There is a place for patter, but a jazz gig is NOT that place.

Musicians with whom you are sharing the stage can become incensed when you start telling stories up there. It takes away from the music, breaks the flow that has been created, and steals the spotlight from the band as a whole to the singer alone.

And this leads us to the next item.

Moving to the Side

In the world of Jazz, it's considered rude to stand in the center of the stage, hogging audience attention that should be on the band. It shows a lack of regard for the musicians, and for their participation in the music itself. It also shows a lack of professionalism on the part of the singer. Instrumentalists refer to singers like that as "clueless".

I was on a job once where the singer stood smack in the middle of the stage after the first time through the song and actually hummed along with the instrumentalists' solos. Another time, that same singer talked OVER the solos, telling stories to the audience. As you can imagine, that singer was NOT asked to sit in with that band ever again.

The correct and respectful move is to stand on the side, either left or right, and allow the band to play...as long as they want to.

In college I was privileged to sing with a great band called "The Jazz Explorers", and we worked all over the college town of Ithaca, New York. One night we were in an exclusive jazz club, where elite jazz fans only were admitted!

I sang "Night in Tunisia", by Dizzy Gillespie, moved to the edge of the bandstand and let the saxophone take it. He was in rare form that night and having recognized that he had the audience with him, he kept playing...and playing...and playing. He must've played 10 choruses or more. The crowd was in a frenzy of delight listening to him. Can you even imagine, what would've happened if I had interrupted that?

When they were ready to give it back to me, they let me know with a nod.

Jazz musicians **depend on intercommunication** to achieve and maintain a sense of spontaneity. They encourage each other vocally or through their instruments to attain higher levels of performance. The connection with an audience is also vocal and visceral.

"Because an original function of jazz was to accompany social dancers, a jazz audience's physical responses signaled the musicians to continue or heighten their level of intensity.

Among musicians themselves, the jam session exists as the central agency for communicating in a common musical language, in an atmosphere of collective spontaneity.

Parallels between the sense of community in a jam session and an open forum of discussants are clear --a successful session, like group conversation, depends on courtesy, decorum, and mutual respect as well as open-mindedness and willingness to listen. Thus, the connection between music and language manifests itself in the jazz context."

[from "What Is Hip?" And Other Inquiries In Jazz Slang Lexicography by Rick McRae]

Listening, Appreciating, and Learning

Please remember, singers, it's a collaboration, not a showcase! So what do you do as the vocalist when you're over there on the edge of

bandstand while the sax, and the trombone, and the piano and the bass and drum are taking solos?

You listen and applaud right along with the audience.

Because they ARE watching you! The audience I mean! They are watching...you, and the all of the artists on the stage. They want to see if the music is as appreciated by each of you who are creating it as it is by them, the listeners.

Does the sax player like the way the pianist takes his solo? Does the trombone player smile when the bass player is taking his?

It's an secret language of sorts that give jazz it's ethereal mysterious, quality that allows an audience to imagine and picture scenarios of its own.

If you, or any other musician on stage were to look disinterested while someone is soloing, that would interrupt the mood and take much of the magic out of the overall performance.

Learn and Understand "Trading Fours"

There's a particular feature of jazz playing that does not exist in any other genre of music, and it's called "trading fours".

This particular musical device is a technique in which the musicians alternate brief solos of four bars each, usually occurring after each musician has had a chance to play a solo, and often involves alternating four-bar segments with the drummer.

Most tunes played in a jazz setting are written in a 32 bar format. For example, take the tune "Teach Me Tonight". This song has 32 measures or bars. The **first section, ("A")** contains 8 measures, which is then repeated, (**2nd 8**) with different words, followed by a **"bridge"** of 8 more bars with a different melody line and different words, and then what is called the **"last 8"** with the same melody as the 2nd 8, but with different words.

This format is called AABA, or a "Standard" format.

When the musicians decide to trade 4's to this tune, it could look like this, (I am using the words to demonstrate this technique)

Starting at the beginning of the song:

Saxophone improvises on melody: "Did you say I go a lot to learn. Well Don't think I'm trying not to learn". (That's 4 measures or bars of music.)

Drummer plays: "Since this is the perfect spot to learn. Teach me tonight". (4 bars)

Piano improvises on melody: "Starting with the abc of it, right down to the xyz of it" (4 bars)

Drummer plays: "help me solve the mystery of it. Teach me Tonight" (4 bars)

Trombone improvises on bridge: "the sky's a blackboard high above you. If a shooting star goes by" (4 bars)

Drummer: "I'll use that star to write I love you, 1000 times across the sky".(4 bars)

Bass: "One thing isn't very clear my love. Should the teacher stand so near my love" (4 bars)

Drummer: "graduation's almost here my love, teach me tonight." (4 bars)

Now understand singers, I've written the words so that you can understand the way the song is divided up when trading 4's. Naturally these musicians are NOT singing the words, they are improvising on the melody.

The example above goes through the entire song with different instruments playing for 4 measures each, with the drummer separating each instrument's solo.

Furthermore, the song can be played over and over again in this trading 4's arrangement so that it builds to a great dramatic cadence! Audiences absolutely adore this device cause it's joyful and celebratory! And it gets everyone involved at once, and is just plain FUN!!

And let me say...If, as a singer you are ever invited to trade fours (4's) during a piece, consider it the highest honor you will ever have bestowed upon you as a jazz singer. But learn to SCAT first! The best Scatting ever done was by Ella Fitzgerald on a song called "Lady be Good". Go to YouTube and pull it up, (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sx5jVLOKNJA>), and listen to it about a thousand times and you'll be scratching the surface of your ability to scat.

Continuing Your Musical Education

Singers! If you should ever get to that place and time in your life where you feel you have learned all there is to know about the music you sing, do yourself a favor and everyone else as well...and QUIT!

And actually, this step is meant for all singers of every genre, style, and level.

In recent years, the majority of my students have been ladies over 50, who have not stopped learning, desiring, and expressing. In fact, these women enthusiastically drink in everything they can about singing and performing music.

When the market gurus tell you to find a niche you can love, I DO understand that, because, it is these women, with the energy of a child, and the wide-eyed thrill of discovering their voices, that keeps me young and vital every day.

Can you just imagine saving all your pennies to go see a Broadway show? And because the performance you are viewing happens to be the 300th time the performers have sung this music, and they are bored to tears with it....can you just imagine what it would sound like to you, the listener? You would leave that theater, feeling empty inside but not really understanding why. You might comment that you were disappointed and felt that it lacked a certain energy that you were expecting, and you might think it was the failure of the voices, or the acoustics in the theater, or the band was too loud, or the dancing was amateurish, but what really was the root of your displeasure was the simple fact that the players on the stage were bored...and so...you were too.

A Broadway Show, especially a Broadway show, has to be played and sung with the exact same vitality on the last day of the run, that it had on Opening Night!

No, it's not that easy, which is why many extremely successful and long-running musicals change cast members halfway through...to keep it fresh and exciting for the audience.

That being the case, can you just imagine what it can be like to have a singing gig in a supper club several nights a week and have regular customers who come in for a drink just to hear you sing their favorite song? How would it be for that customer if your singing was lazy and

unenthused? Think he'd want to give you that \$5. tip you were expecting? Think he'd continue to show up night after night?

I know these things singers, because as they say, "been there, done that".

My point is this: As long as you are still growing musically, and still finding new and wonderful ways to express the music you are singing, it will always be fresh and exciting...always!

Remember when you were a small child and your Mom bought you your first box of crayons? There were 8 crayons in the box, right? And the colors were red, blue, green, yellow, orange, brown, white and black.

You drew pictures and colored in coloring books and spend countless hours of enjoyment with your colors...until those crayons were broken and in teeny pieces all over the floor, and then one day....your Mom came home with a big surprise for you.

A new box of crayons with twice the number of colors of your old box. Wow!!!

You opened the new box and saw all these NEW colors inside. You reached into the box to grab one and which one did you choose first?

I would wager that you chose a color that was in your first box...a color you knew. The familiar colors had a certain warmth and safety about them, and I'll bet it took a little while to "get to know" those new colors in the box, so you were careful at first, using only the colors you knew. If your Mom was smart, she let you decide which colors to use and didn't force any new ones on you, knowing that when you ready, you'd explore this new horizon on your own.

And that you did! One day you grabbed the purple crayon and drew a line.

WOWEEWOW!! How great that looked!! Such a cool color! That was the beginning of your willingness to try all the rest of the colors in the box.

When I am teaching a student of mine how to put his or her own stamp on a song, it's very similar to a kid with a box of crayons. The singer will sing what he knows and feels comfortable with until there comes a time when he feels an urge to stretch himself and try something new.

Many...many students of jazz singing will suppress that urge for sometimes...well...years. Why?

The simple answer is FEAR! Fear of making a mistake, fear of sounding off key or cracking, fear of the unknown...plain and simple!

But here's the thing! Once the student overcomes that fear and allows himself to try something new and pushes himself to keep trying in spite of what he may hear as unpleasant, he is growing and learning and getting better and better with each attempt.

The Purple Crayon

It starts with a single note. Instead of singing that line exactly the way you did the first time, change just ONE single note....just one. The first time my students do this, there appears a smile that begins at the corners of each mouth, like they just did something really great, and it grows and grows with each move they make in the song.

RULE! You never let the music get old, boring, or flat. You look for and find anything at all, even just a single note that will change a line or change a mood, and change YOUR OWN ATTITUDE about the song.

And remember please, it's not about impressing others, it's always about Expressing YOU!

In the 70's I was fortunate enough to have a steady singing gig in NYC. My partner Lenny and I worked in some of New York's classiest clubs and we did so, 6 nights a week with Sundays off.

We had a loyal clientele, including some of New York's most famous, or shall I say INFAMOUS mobsters. They loved us...mainly 'cause we sang a lot of Sinatra, but they were extremely generous when it came to showing their appreciation.

One guy, Louie, known as BIG LOUIE, loved the song, "Help Me Make it Through the Night", so whenever he came in to the club, I'd sing it for him.

Now, I'm not a big fan of Country, but let's face it, when Louie, who was a hit-man for one of the illustrious Italian families of New York, requests a song, you sing and you sing it with lots of feeling! And the more gusto, (emotion, feeling, drama) you sing it with, the bigger the appreciation.

So an attitude change for Country music was definitely in order for me. And I actually learned to love that song, the more I sang it and changed it, here and there, differently every time. And I made a ton of money with it as well.

RULE: If you're a jazz singer, you cannot sing a song the same way twice. If you do, there is no spontaneity and without that...well, it ain't Jazz, see?

And as a Jazz singer, singing other genres for the jobs you go on becomes a fun experience for you because you find little ways to alter the songs so that you never tire of them or get bored with them.

Keep learning...keep growing...always...always, singers!

Last Chapter – Is Jazz just about the Music?

I watch a lot of Ovation TV. It's a wonderful TV station that celebrates a large variety of artistic endeavor. Art, including all of its forms like painting, sculpture, photography, etc., Literature, which features episodes on novelists, playwrights, poets and essayists, etc., and Music, including opera, ballet, Broadway musical theater, contemporary musical artists, and of course a lot of Jazz.

I was enthralled when upon moving out of Los Angeles to a small town in Texas, I found that I could still get access to Ovation TV, and have spent countless hours watching and listening all it has to offer.

Of course, it's impossible for me to watch shows on Miles Davis, or Maria Callas, or Pablo Picasso, or Martha Graham, or any artist really without looking for that subtle but clearly recognizable element of the artist's work that brought them to notoriety and celebrity.

Something about each artist's art has touched the soul of the observer in some way...and when I say "*observer*", I mean, the watcher, the listener, the taster, the feeler, the one who experiences the art through one or more of his senses.

What is it? That element? What is the connection? Is the person making the connection or simply the art form. And if it's simply the art form, like the painting for instance, can IT be separated from the one who made it? When we connect with a sculpture, are we feeling something ONLY about the lines and curves and flow of the art, or can we also be experiencing a connection with the sculptor?

I read something just earlier this week that said, "Art is not about the artist, it's about Life!"

Okay! I can go with that for a moment. I understand it. The "story-teller" cannot be overly flamboyant to the point of distraction if the listener, (observer) is to be pulled into the story.

If one is to weave a spell over one's audience, he/she must **disappear** temporarily so that the message can come forth, and if the "story-teller" is tattooed from head to toe, or pierced in places that were never intended for that purpose, isn't it possible that the audience might be counting inked images or holes in the skin rather than listening to the "story"?

I understand too that my particular take on ART may fly in the face of what we call POP CULTURE in the 21st century, so let me say this.

Visual Art IS all about life rather than the artist, and is why art by painters and sculptors who have died a long time ago can still resonate in the present moment.

This is also true for music, and is why recordings of Bach and Beethoven, and by Chet Baker and Chet Atkins, and by Ella Fitzgerald and Diana Krall can be enjoyed in the on-going eternal moment of NOW.

Let me speak now about the particular art form of creating something **IN FRONT of an audience.**

Mozart and Beethoven did not have people hovering WHILE they were writing their music. Van Gogh did not have an audience watching him paint. These art forms were presented to the receiver/observer AFTER they were completed.

There exists, however, a peculiar quality of "**LIVE MUSIC**", of all genres, jazz just being one, but the same is true for Country, Pop, Rock, Broadway Show Tunes, whatever, where the creative process is directly observed by an audience, and in those times, **PERFORMANCE IS EVERYTHING!!**

And what I see as the main ingredient is the artist's ability to allow him or herself **to disappear as an ego-self and become a vehicle for the music.**

And as the connection with the audience is made stronger, the artist himself is revealed...but not as an ego, not as a personality, but as a creator, a story-weaver, a messenger of Life!

I leave you with the words of some of the greatest musical artists ever, the classical masters of music, the jazzers, the rockers, all of them. Listen to what they say about what they do. The true artists understand that they are not in charge of what is being created. They are simply allowing it to come through our them. They are the vehicles of expression. And when YOU get that, you see who you really and truly are...not only as an artist, but as a spiritual child of the Universe!

"I don't choose what I compose. It chooses me." **Gustav Mahler**

"Musical ideas pursue me to the point of torture. I cannot get rid of them. They stand before me like a wall. I cannot sleep. My imagination plays upon me as if I were a keyboard." **Joseph Haydn**

"The best way to kill your music is to sit down every day and try to work at it. You got to sneak up on it and catch it when it's not looking." **Iggy Pop**

"I did not choose my profession. It chose me. Since childhood, it has grown between me and people into one big love letter...Music lasts by itself and cares not who composed it." **Ned Rorem**

"When I'm singing, I'm inside of it...I feel, oh, like when you're first in love...when you're first touching someone...chills slipping all over me."
Janis Joplin

"Music is the electrical soil in which the spirit lives, thinks, and invents."
Ludwig van Beethoven

"I did not discover music. Music discovered me. During the dark years in Germany, as a child, I played Mozart on the piano, and allowed the music to tune me like an instrument. Music nourished me and protected me...Now, 80 years old, music is still interconnecting me with the flow of cosmic energy that is infinite and far beyond all things material. And we are all in the dance."
Ruth-Inge Heinze – (author, educator, and healer)

"Music is the purest form of art... therefore true poets, they who are seers, seek to express the universe in terms of music... The singer has everything within him. The notes come out from his very life. They are not materials gathered from outside." **Rabindranath Tagore**, (poet, philosopher, lyricist)

"Whatever else has been said about me personally is unimportant. When I sing, I believe. I'm honest." **Frank Sinatra**

"You can be the most artistically perfect performer in the world, but an audience is like a broad - if you're indifferent, Endsville." **Frank Sinatra**

"Throughout my career, if I have done anything, I have paid attention to every note and every word I sing - if I respect the song. If I cannot project this to a listener, I fail." **Frank Sinatra**

"The audience is the best judge of anything. They cannot be lied to. Truth brings them closer. A moment that lags - they're gonna cough."
Barbra Streisand

"I don't sing because I'm happy; I'm happy because I sing"
William James

"If I cannot fly, Let me sing." **Stephen Sondheim**

"So she poured out the liquid music of her voice to quench the thirst of his spirit." **Nathaniel Hawthorne**

"The only thing better than singing is more singing." **Ella Fitzgerald**

"When a singer truly feels and experiences what the music is all about, the words will automatically ring true." **Montserrat Caballé**

"By that point, I had started taking singing lessons. And after the first session, I mean, I was surprised that the windows didn't shatter. And after the third session, I really didn't know where this voice had come from." **Gerard Butler**

"Sing like no one's listening, love like you've never been hurt, dance like nobody's watching, and live like its heaven on earth." **Mark Twain**

THE END