

Vocal Jazz Singing

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By

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1. Sing full voice – do not cover sound. The sound should be full as in a concert choir and supported.
2. Blend is achieved by matching vocal sound. Some will have to brighten, other will have to do the opposite.
3. Never leave microphones on stands when singing. The reason is that any head movement will decrease volume of sound.
4. Have an ‘attitude’ on the notes. Sing with enthusiasm
5. Don’t forget this is a visual world. If you have a solo, use the stage and communicate with your audience by looking directly at individuals. Move, relax and have fun.
6. Dynamic contrast
7. Choir needs to move...not statues please. Everyone has natural moves that enhance the song. Not choreography please...well, maybe a little!
8. Microphones should be in tight...no more than 1” from the lips. Use mike technique to balance if you have a really strong or weak voice.
9. Use mics to help with dynamic contrast.
10. If you have scat syllables, note that you will probably have to change them.
11. Unison lines should be lighter.
12. The faster the tune, the lighter the sound.
13. Releases need to be addresses in vocal jazz the same as they do in instrumental jazz.
14. Yes, vocal jazz singers need pencils!

15. In an a cappella ballad, focus on the text, NOT the meter.
16. When you sing, certain words in a phrase must be emphasized to bring out the meaning.
17. Held notes must go somewhere
18. Soloists MUST prepare their solos the same as an instrumentalist. Get recordings and lift. Nothing in means nothing out!
19. Do something musical with repeated figures or sequences.
20. Careful that the language is in the vernacular!
21. Darken bright vowels.
22. One may have to change the rhythm of the song to reflect the meaning of the text. Music is a guide only...adapt for your particular group.
23. If one has a solo directly after another solo, give space and time before beginning the second solo. Let the other person receive applause before you barrel in.
24. Don't look at the director when singing. The director, except for the ballad, should be over in front of the rhythm section so his/her body does not block the sound nor the visual.
25. Come out on stage to music. Walking on stage then waiting for the director enter is a thing of the past. Come out with energy...you'll get it back 10 fold.
26. Set your group up in SATB or SATBB sections based on voice quality. Heavy quality singers will be in the center of the group. The lighter voices on the sides. Do not group the choir by sopranos, altos, tenors and basses.
27. Note that in complex chords such as altered dominants, the altered notes must be lighter in sound than the 3rd and 7th.
28. The lower the part, the more it has to be rhythmically right on the money.
29. Don't hunch when singing...destroy breath support.
30. Vibrato is used in vocal jazz. Some notes will go by rather quickly...don't use vibrato on these notes. Hold a chord with straight tone first, then add vibrato. This is linear concept of tension and release.
31. Singers should be able to sing TIME without the rhythm section.

32. Rehearse without rhythm section until notes are learned. Then add mikes. And then add rhythm section.
33. When adding rhythm section, add only piano and bass at first. Bring in the drums several days later.
34. The best rehearsal accompanist for the vocal jazz group before adding the rhythm section is a good classical pianist who can read open score.
35. Make sure the solo is in the style of the piece being sung.
36. Individual sound needs to be FORWARD. Not in the back of the throat.
37. When there is a fall, be sure the chord is held, then begin the fall. Note when the fall is to begin (beat) and when the fall is completed (beat).
38. Don't always rehearse music from the beginning of the chart. Start at the end and work forward.
39. Choose a vocal jazz program the same way you would choose an instrumental jazz program. Singing a song because you like it is okay as long as it will fit your total concert program. Choose your program wisely.
40. Feature your strong soloists!
41. Sing musically!

There are a lot more issues to address, but hopefully this will give you a good start.