A Well-Rounded
JAZZ VOCALIST

Skills to acquire

A well-rounded, accomplished jazz vocalist is a musician, singer, artist and a storyteller. There are many skills to acquire and focus on in your practice. Here are some skills to keep in mind.

1. Play in time, in tune.

2. Practice regularly to develop your repertoire, your instrument, and your skills in improvisation, jazz rhythm and articulation.

3. Have a large repertoire of tunes in all styles. Have charts (lead sheets or arrangements) for the songs you sing, written clearly, in your key. Memorize the keys you like to sing your songs in.

4. Have several ways to express different emotions musically.

5. Have basic keyboard skills.

6. Be aware of performance traditions in jazz, i.e. the form of the song, how to set the correct tempo, how to communicate musical ideas to your fellow musicians.

7. Be aware of the other jazz artists in your community as well as the venues where jazz is played. Be respectful of other artists and musicians.

8. Have knowledge of the history of jazz including the seminal composers, instrumentalist, and vocalists who have created and contributed to this art form.

9. Control destructive tendencies such as being overly critical of yourself and others. Maintain good health.

10. Desire mastery of your instrument. This is a life-long practice for all musicians.

Mastery

Mastery of Your Instrument includes:

1. Tone

2. Range

3. Intonation

4. Flexibility

5. Endurance

Mastery of the Musical Language Includes:

1. Keys

2. Time signatures

3. Scales and modes

4. Grooves

5. Chart writing

6. Transcription

Mastery of the Musical Elements Includes:

1. Tone: producing different sounds

2. Time: what happens when I play "on top" of the beat, when I lay back, when I play on the beat?

3. Melodic line/phrasing

4. Grooves: what is a bossa nova, what is a rhumba, what is a funk groove, a shuffle, swing, straight eight ballad, 16th note feel,12/8 groove?

5. Storytelling and subtext