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The Power of Space

Phrasing in a creative way naturally lends itself to making creative use of space. Jazz singers often use the blank spaces between phrases as a part of their arsenal of expressive tools; space can have a powerful effect. For example, the intensity of a slightly prolonged blank space after a phrase will create a sense of anticipation, giving much more meaningful importance to the phrase coming after it. Think of open spaces as “pregnant pauses” rather than empty voids in the music. Nancy Wilson and Shirley Horn are both masters of the powerful use of space.

Listen



TIP

Don't let too much time go by in a song without some element of surprise. The surprise can be in the phrasing, note alterations, dynamics, style, or any number of things. Work for a balance between predictability and surprise.

Breathing Matters

The breath taken before the start of any given phrase should reflect the mood of that phrase. In other words, the flavor of a phrase begins with the character of the breath attached to it. A long and relaxed phrase should be preceded by an easy, relaxed breath, and so on. Any mismatch between the character of the breath and the phrase it's attached to may distract the listener and break the mood.

Ideally, taking breaths that match the spirit of their corresponding phrases will happen naturally, though I find that for some singers, it does not. For this reason, using a recorder during practice is highly recommended. Avoid the tendency to end each phrase with an immediate in-take of breath going into the next phrase; the listener needs occasional moments of silence to “rest” and “digest.”



TIP

Take your breaths in any of the same places you would take them when reciting an artful poem. Rule of thumb: if the breath sounds awkward when speaking, it will sound awkward when singing.

Rubato

Rubato simply means, no tempo. (You can't dance to it!) Usually there is only a single accompaniment instrument in rubato: piano or guitar. An entire song can be performed rubato, but it is most often used for either the verse of a song (see *Song Form*, Chapter 8), or the first eight or 16 bars of a tune, before going into tempo.

Rubato is very elastic by nature, with the accompanist speeding up and slowing down to mirror the singer's speech-like style of singing. Think of rubato like *talking on pitch*, with periodic held notes. When the verse of a jazz standard is sung rubato, it's analogous to the recitative in an aria: a speech-like introduction which sets up the story line of the main body of the song.

Then there's the question of who leads during a rubato passage, the *singer* or the *accompanist*? This is a difficult question to answer because in a jazz setting, the two musicians are *interactive*; listening to each other, breathing with each other, making spontaneous pacing and dynamic changes together, and so on. Though the singer must be in more of a leadership role because he or she is the one carrying the melody, it should generally be thought of as an interactive process: a team effort.

Listen



TIP

The term *phrasing* is also used to describe the manner in which the text is delivered, in terms of the conversational quality and use of word stress.

The Mastery

chapter 8 Preparing to Sing a New Tune

Choose a Song

It should not be difficult to find a tune you like and are inspired to sing; there are numerous great tunes available through recordings or *fake books*. (A *fake book* is a compilation of tunes notated with melody and chord symbols only.) Many songs that are not normally considered *jazz standards*, such as pop and Broadway show tunes, can often be adapted to fit well into a jazz setting. (A *jazz standard* is a song that is in the repertoire of most professional jazz musicians because it is so well known and commonly performed. Most of the tunes considered to be jazz standards were written prior to the 1960s.) Almost any song is potentially fair game as long as it can be *interpreted* in a jazz style, though you may have to make adjustments in the chord progression.

Check the tune you are considering for built-in challenges like extremities of range, difficult melodic

passages, or tricky rhythms. Also, look closely at the message of the text to see if it's something you're inspired to sing. Many of the standards have lyrics that are dated, and may even seem a little *corny* by today's standards, but if you can relate to the underlying *sentiment* of the tune, then it may still be a good vehicle for you.

Learn the Original Melody

Be sure to learn the *original* written melody of the song. Since most jazz singers take significant liberties with any song they sing, their recordings are not reliable sources for learning the correct melody. It's important for purposes of musical integrity and respect for the tune's composer to learn the song correctly, not just Mel Tormé's or Diane Reeves's version. This step will probably require you to use the piano.



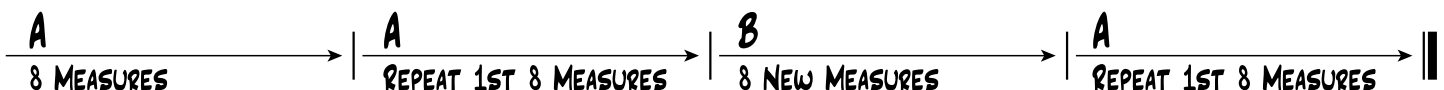
TIP

Learn *style* from listening to other singers and players. Learn the *song* from the written music.

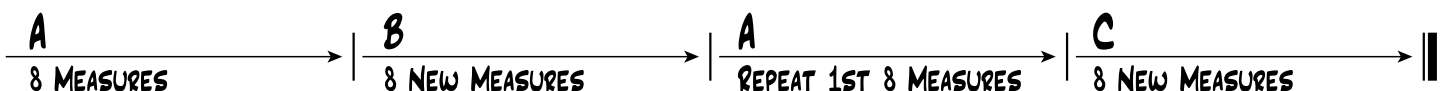
Determine the Song Form

The organizational structure of a song is referred to as its *song form*. Virtually all jazz standard songs are written in 8-, 10- or 12-measure sections, some of which repeat one or more times in the tune. In performance, you need to be aware of the song form to keep track of where you are in the song. Particularly during instrumental solos, it's easy to get lost unless you're following the song form in your mind!

The bulk of the jazz standards are in *AABA* form or *ABAC* (or its close variation, *ABAB*). Each section is normally eight measures long, adding up to a total of 32 bars for the full song. (*Bar* is another term for *measure*.) Common *AABA* tunes include "My Funny Valentine," "Ain't Misbehavin'" and "Night and Day."



Common *ABAC* (or *ABAB*) tunes include "All of Me," "Fly me To the Moon," and "When I Fall in Love."



chapter 9 WRITING A LEAD SHEET

Lead-Sheet Styles

A lead sheet is music that is notated with melody, chord symbols and if applicable, lyrics. With the exception of big bands, jazz musicians rarely (if ever) use scores that are written out note for note; lead sheets are the norm. There are two styles of lead sheets.

Lead Sheet Style 1 is by far the most common, and uses a single-stave format:

Look for the silver lining when e'er a

Rhythm section players are more concerned with the chord changes of a song than the melody and lyrics, and for that reason lead sheets are often written with only chord symbols and *slashes* that represent beats of the measure:

This type of lead sheet is quite common and sufficient for use on most gigs, simple as it may be. The entire gig book of many jazz singers is made up of lead sheets with chord symbols and slashes only.



TIP

With less experienced players, it's a good idea to include the melody on your lead sheets. This may help them play for you in a more musical way because they can visually follow along with your singing, making it easier to complement you. It also allows them the possibility of being able to reference the melody in their intros or other places in the song.

Lead Sheet Style 2 represents the music in a double-stave format, allowing the melody and lyrics to be especially clear and easy to read:

Lead Sheet Style 2 is useful in situations when the pianist needs to closely follow the singer, such as in rubato. It is also commonly used when a written out piano or bass part is required.

Creative Arrangement Ideas

It would be easy to devote an entire book to ideas for making creative arrangements out of jazz standards, but unfortunately that's out of the scope of this publication! However, here are a few ideas to get you started:

1. Rhythmic Kicks

Adding a few specific *rhythmic kicks* can be a quick and easy way to spice up your chart, giving it a more *arranged* quality. (A *rhythmic kick* is simply a particular rhythm played by the drummer and/or all of the rhythm section players. It can be as brief as a single eighth-note, or as long as two measures or more.) Rhythmic kicks are notated with slashes (representing beats) and stems. Kicks are a fairly common feature of written intros and endings.



Notice that the example above ends with a *rhythmic break*. (A *rhythmic break* is when all players stop playing for a measure or two. The break starts with the playing of a strongly accented chord, most often occurring on beat one or the "and" of four.) Kicks can also be very useful in the main body of a song. Here's an example of the kicks that are commonly played for the first half of "Autumn Leaves":

2. Changes in Rhythmic Feel

You could, for example, make the A section of a tune bossa, and the B section swing. Or, do the whole first chorus bossa, going to swing for the solos section. To indicate these changes in rhythmic feel, simply write "Swing" or "Bossa" as appropriate above the measure where you want it.

3. Tempo Changes

A common example of a tempo change is when a ballad starts out rubato, then goes into a slow tempo after the first eight or 16 bars. In this case, you would simply write the word "tempo" or "ballad tempo" above the measure where you'd like it to occur. In other cases, it may be necessary to write a metronome marking (such as ♩ = 152) above the measure where a new tempo begins.

chapter **14** SITTING IN

Sitting in refers to performances where you have been invited to sing a song or two on someone else's gig, or where you are participating in an organized jam session. In these unrehearsed situations, it's particularly important that you're able to communicate certain pertinent musical information to the rhythm section ahead of time. You should also be familiar with *the ropes*: the usual order of events during the performance of the song.

Choose Your Song Wisely

Choose a tune that has a high probability of working well in this situation, something that is probably familiar to the players but has not been overdone. Generally you wouldn't use a chart when sitting in, but it never hurts to discreetly bring along a few lead sheets of your tune just in case they may be needed. Also, it's a good idea to have two or three song choices in various styles up your sleeve so you can go to plan B if necessary in case, for example, the person performing just before you sang your song!

Another factor that may go into the song choice includes what you hear to be the strengths of the players. For example, if the pianist has a great touch and a talent for beautiful voicings, you may want to sing a ballad. The overall goal is to choose a song that everyone has the potential to sound great on.



TIP

Choosing a tune you are comfortable singing in the original key is a plus: the players will likely be more familiar with it in the original key, increasing the chances they will play it well for you.

What to Tell the Players

When you approach the bandstand, be prepared to give the players the following information: name of the tune, key, rhythmic feel, and tempo. Then briefly talk with the piano player about what type of intro you want. With experienced pros, you can simply ask for four bars up front if it's a ballad, or eight bars up front if the song is in a medium or fast tempo. If you prefer to know exactly what you're going to get for an intro, you can specify the chord changes to

be played. For example, you could ask for a I-VI-II-V-I intro, or a vamp on the chords C7-B \flat 7. (See "Intros," Chapter 10) It's also common to ask the rhythm section to play the last four or eight bars of the tune as an intro. Specifying the exact intro you want may help you earn more respect from the players for knowing your P's and Q's. But the disadvantage is that it ties their creative hands; left to their own devices, the rhythm section would probably come up with an intro that's more interesting than a basic I-VI-II-V-I turnaround!

In regard to endings, it's common practice to sing a tag or vamp ending on most songs, and this is what the players will probably expect unless they are told otherwise. You can, however, ask for a specific type of ending if you want to be absolutely sure about what they'll play. (See "Endings," Chapter 10)



TIP

Talk to the players in their language, using terms like "head," "chorus," "A section," "bridge" and "tag." (If in doubt about the meaning of a word, look it up in the index to find its definition.)

The Ropes

Here's a rundown of the typical order of events when sitting in:

1. You call the tune, key, tempo and rhythmic feel. To indicate your tempo, snap or lightly clap quarter notes in rhythm, snapping all four beats for bossa and beats two and four only for swing tunes. (Omit the snaps entirely for ballads.)
Example jargon: "Hi. Let's do 'All of Me' in F, medium swing, about here." (Snap or tap the tempo you have in mind.) "Please play the last eight for an intro."
2. Count off the tune, or invite the pianist to count it off. But, don't be surprised if once you've given the tempo, the players launch right into the intro before you have a chance to count it off for them; each situation is different depending on the players involved. The advantage of you counting off the tune is that it gives players the message