

**California State University, Sacramento**  
**Handbook addendum for Jazz Voice Majors**  
**Revised Fall 2006**

**Sacramento State Vocal Jazz Program**  
**Overview**

The vocal jazz ensemble program at California State University, Sacramento was started in the early 1990's by Julie Adams, a graduate of Sac State who had studied vocal jazz under the local legend Perla Warren at American River College and earned a master's degree in choral conducting under Don Kendrick at CSUS. The Sac State vocal jazz program, until 2002, consisted of one ensemble, the Vocal Jazz Ensemble, which performed at ACDA and CMEA conventions as well as area jazz festivals such as Reno and Columbia. Under Adams' direction, the Vocal Jazz Ensemble released two CDs, "Local Jazz Ensemble" (2000) and "Ready or Not, Here We Come!" (2001). In Adams' last year as vocal jazz director, she expanded the program to two groups, adding "Vox Too".

Dr. Steve Roach took over the CSUS Jazz Studies program in 2001, and was given the task of building the program and designing a jazz studies bachelor's degree. Roach is a graduate of Indiana (BM), Northern Illinois (MM) and The University of Northern Colorado (Doctorate), and is a highly regarded jazz trumpeter as well as jazz educator.

Kerry Marsh graduated from The University of Kansas with a Bachelor's Degree in Music Education in 2000 and from The University of North Texas with a Master's Degree in Jazz Studies in 2003. Marsh was hired as a part-time faculty member at Sacramento State in Fall 2003, and he took over the direction of the two vocal jazz ensembles, which were then named "Jazz Singers" and "Vox 2". In the fall, the Jazz Singers began recording tracks on-campus using Sac State recording equipment, a practice which has since grown and continued through today. In Spring 2004, a third ensemble "C-Sus" was added to the vocal jazz ensemble offerings.

The three group format has been in place ever since, and the two advanced ensembles, "Jazz Singers" and "C-Sus", have started amassing some notable honors and awards. Both groups received their first-ever Down Beat Magazine Student Music Awards in 2005, and then earned two more in 2006. The 2005 awards were for "Outstanding Performance", sort of a runner-up award, in the college jazz vocal group category. In 2006, our groups were the only recipients in the category of the "Winner" award, distinguishing our groups as the best vocal jazz ensembles in the country. Also, in 2005, the Jazz Singers were one of two University vocal jazz programs in the world to be invited to perform at the prestigious annual conference of the International Association for Jazz Education, in Long Beach, CA. In 2006, C-Sus followed up with their own invitation to IAJE, this time in New York.

Julia Dollison joined the Sac State music faculty in fall 2005 as an adjunct professor of applied jazz voice. Dollison had just moved from New York, where she had been working as a professional jazz singer for five years, and performing with many of the major artists in jazz (Maria Schneider, Ben Monder, Christian McBride, Geoffrey Keezer, Kenny Wheeler, and more). Julia received both a bachelor's and master's degree

in studio music and jazz from The University of Miami, during which time she was a Down Beat award winner for best jazz vocalist. In 2005, Julia released her debut CD, *Observatory*, which received great national critical praise and significant radio air-play. Dollison was hired to add to the strength of the growing jazz studies program at Sac State, and her experience in the music industry will help guide a new generation of artists to find and develop their own voices and make careers of their own.

Through not only our awards and honors, but also through our performances themselves, our vocal jazz ensemble program has earned the respect of our peers in the musical community, and is firmly on the map as a major destination for quality vocal jazz performance. Sac State is known by many as a new pioneer of a contemporary vocal jazz style, borrowing more from today's cutting-edge instrumental jazz than has normally been done in educational vocal jazz. Although we have a respect for earlier styles, and we will continue to learn about and perform in those styles, we also seek to create new sounds that extend the boundaries of vocal jazz, and keep the music alive into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We will constantly strive to keep up our new tradition and continue to build on our past successes to create an environment of excellence in music.

### **Expectations of Sac State vocal jazz majors AKA “How to Succeed as a vocal jazz major”**

The most important person in the academic life of a Sacramento State vocal jazz major is Julia Dollison, your applied teacher. A very close second is me (Kerry), because you will see me far more often, and because I'm coordinating and organizing all the activities for the vocal jazz program, and I make some very important final decisions, like whether or not you're prepared to give your senior recital and graduate! We will both do everything possible to give you many opportunities to succeed, and it will also be our job to tell you when you're falling short and not on the path to success, and to advise you on how to get back on track. You should keep an open line of communication with us at all times about your coursework, your lessons, your ensemble singing, your LPE experience, your gigging, your vocal and physical health, and your emotional wellbeing. It is our job to fill you with as much knowledge as we can and to provide you with an environment in which you can flourish. It is your job to take the lead on your educational direction and musical growth, and to seek out ways of using us as a resource.

Keep these things at the front of your mind:

1. When Julia assigns you something in a private lesson, that assignment becomes your **FIRST** priority in your academic life. Too often, it seems easy to blow off lessons assignments in favor of GE requirements, reading, papers, relaxing, eating, sleeping, etc. However, starting immediately, you will be expected to keep track of each assignment she gives you (like “transcribe Ella's solo on ‘How High the Moon’ for next week” or “learn two new standards for next week” or “make a repertoire list and email it to me” etc, etc, etc). Then, you will follow up on and finish these assignments, with even more dedication than you would for normal classwork. Record your lessons and go over it for concepts that may have

- gone over your head the first time. Practice the exercises she gives you daily, and work on making noticeable progress in all areas; your sound, improvising, learning tunes, accompanying yourself, reharmonizing and arranging tunes for your book, etc.
2. When I assign something in an ensemble rehearsal, you will be expected to take the lead in representing to non-majors how Sac State vocal jazz operates by being overly prepared with that assignment. You should also be among the most eager to improvise on tunes in class when the time comes. In all ways, you will be the models and the leaders of the program...the select few who are lucky and gifted enough to have the opportunity to earn a vocal jazz degree from one of the very elite vocal jazz programs in the world.
  3. Attend every jazz concert you possibly can. Don't miss a single guest artist performance or clinic...those are gold mines. Never miss a Sac State vocal jazz performance on campus if you're not in that group. Show up to the big band concerts and check out your colleagues...you need to know whom to call for gigs, right? Plus, you can learn something about improvisation every time you hear a solo!
  4. Hang with your fellow vocal jazz majors. Support each other. Be tolerant of and understanding of each other. Be friends to each other, always. Include each other as much as possible. Represent the program with class in the way you communicate with other people, both within and outside of our program.
  5. I highly encourage vocal groups that form outside of class, and will always be happy to occasionally listen and offer advice, if asked. You may even be given a spot on a concert. These kinds of groups are great laboratories for your new arrangements.
  6. Listen to jazz recordings...listen to everything, but especially jazz. Actually, I highly recommend that you consider purchasing an external hard drive of at least 250 Gigabites so that I can give you tons and tons of music. They cost as little as \$200 for a good one if you shop around, and I can give you about \$50,000 worth of music from my collection (illegally, of course, but it's slightly justifiable because of the educational intent...slightly). This would be a massively cool investment. Then, once you have the music, make it a habit to check out new stuff, and to listen to great instrumental solos many times, to learn the subtlety and the nuance contained within, so that you can add it to your personal jazz vocabulary. One key to this collection is obtaining the entire Jamey Aebersold play-a-long collection, so you can practice improvising in MANY ways.
  7. You must maintain membership each year in IAJE (International Association for Jazz Education). It usually costs about \$25, and we take care of it as a group in the first couple weeks of classes.

8. Check out live music in town and elsewhere as much as you can. Go to Julia's gigs sometimes, and get familiar with the scene. Sitting in on gigs to gain experience is one of the best learning tools, and the only way to do that is to keep showing up! Also, visit Yoshi's once a year, at least, if you can swing it. Make it out to some gigs at Savanna's here in town. Check out the jam session scene. I expect that it will be growing with our growing program.

## **APPLIED JAZZ VOICE LESSONS**

Freshmen and sophomore jazz voice majors are to enroll in lower-division jazz voice lessons with Julia Dollison (or Kerry Marsh occasionally, on a case-by-case basis), which is MUSC 050. These lessons are for 30 minutes, once a week. You will meet 15 times in the semester, and must make every possible attempt to attend each lesson. Missed lessons are inexcusable, and will result in a lowered grade. In case of illness, you must reschedule the lesson to take place within a week of the missed lesson. During finals week, each semester, you will perform a "jury", for which you will sign-up in advance. The jury performance is your final exam for your applied lessons each semester, and the requirements for passing each level are below.

Juniors and senior jazz voice majors are to enroll in upper-division jazz voice lessons with Julia Dollison, which is MUSC 150. These lessons are for 60 minutes, once a week. You will meet 15 times in the semester, and the same attendance requirements are valid as with MUSC 050, described above.

You will be given assignments and exercises in your lessons, and the expectation is that you will be pro-active in completing these assignments and practicing the exercises daily. Students who show little improvement in applied lessons will be far less likely to advance through the degree program.

Example assignments in applied jazz voice lessons:

- Assemble a list of jazz standards you have memorized, and produce a lead sheet, in your key, for each.
- Put together four copies of a gig-book, containing songs you might perform on a gig
- Learn many or all aspects of at least one song per week (melody, chord changes, guide tones, transcribed solo, play changes at piano, compose a solo, etc).
- Gain competency with a particular vocal exercise
- Learn to sing a jazz idiomatic cliché in all keys, through the cycle of 5ths
- Listen to and discuss an assigned recording
- Practice with a metronome to improve time-feel
- Paraphrase a song lyric, to help understand the meaning
- Accompany yourself on a song
- Arrange/reharmonize a song to make it your own

We will be tracking your progress in several areas (Essential Fundamentals, Artistry, Performance, Musicianship, and Practical Applications) to see that you're developing the skills required to graduate with the vocal jazz studies degree. Below are the specific skills that we'll be looking for, and that you should concentrate on developing through your studies at Sac State:

A. Essential Fundamentals:

1. Proper and healthy vocal technique (range and flexibility)
2. Listening habits/knowledge of singers and instrumentalists
3. Repertoire learning (100 memorized tunes)
4. Jazz sound/timbre
5. Time/swing feel

B. Artistry:

1. Style (rhythmic phrasing/melodic variation)
2. Lyric delivery/expression
3. Improvisation/scat singing
4. Solo transcriptions (jazz vocabulary development)

C. Performance

1. Rapport with accompanist/band
2. Stage presence
3. Knowledge of sound reinforcement/mic technique

D. Musicianship

1. Jazz Theory, song-form, ear-training development
2. Piano self-accompanying skills
3. Notation skills (hand-written and computer)
4. Custom arrangements/lead sheets
5. Sight-reading and ensemble part-singing

E. Practical Applications

1. Understanding the business/networking skills
2. Studio recording preparedness/versatility
3. Pedagogy of jazz voice/teaching skills
4. Arranging for ensembles (vocal and instrumental)

Julia and Kerry have in mind a normal, ideal expected growth rate in these areas, as it relates to the normal four years of college. Clearly, everyone will have his or her own individual pace and areas of strength, but when we, all together, assess your skill levels in these areas, you will be able to see where you fall in terms of the expected progression towards graduation, and where you may need to do extra work, or feel confident that the work you've done has paid off.

## VOCAL JAZZ FORUM

As a part of your lessons, you will be required to attend a weekly meeting of all jazz voice majors in room 303. This is the “Vocal Jazz Forum”, during which many activities may take place, but among them there may be workshops on specific topics in jazz singing, student performances (both short and full length performances), guest lectures, group discussions, music listening, and advising. Participation in the forums is absolutely mandatory, and absences beyond serious illness will effect your lessons grade for the semester.

## ENROLLMENT—SOME QUICK TIPS AND NOTES

1. ENROLL AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE FOR ALL JAZZ CLASSES
2. Improvisation and Theory: I suggest that every vocal jazz student take this class as soon as physically possible in their schedule. It gives you a strong foundation in everything you’ll be doing afterward
3. Classical piano and theory: Get this taken right away, and work hard on it to avoid getting bogged down, especially on piano.
4. Jazz History can be taken at any time, but you may get more out of your experience if you take it earlier rather than later.
5. Take Jazz Piano early in your sequence, as it relates directly to everything else you do.
6. Jazz Arranging, Jazz Styles and Analysis, and Jazz Pedagogy should be taken in your junior or senior year.
7. You will give a senior recital (upon approval of Julia, Kerry, and Steve Roach), including as diverse and interesting a program as you can present. It should have some of your arrangements, maybe some of your own compositions, and should have some straight-ahead jazz, some bebop, some ballad singing, some contemporary, and maybe some pop singing in the program. Julia will guide you through this when the time comes. Begin thinking about this in your junior year, though. You will have to schedule it with Glenn Disney (the events coordinator on our staff), and be sure that Julia, Steve, and Kerry can all attend, and it will surely involve a number of instrumentalists and maybe other vocalists.

Always refer to information on the jazz studies website if you have questions...many are answered there in black and white...

[www.csus.edu/music/jazz](http://www.csus.edu/music/jazz)