

emotional state.

If we agree that compelling singing is emotional communication through song, then capturing one's unique sound as a singer starts with capturing the natural sound and texture of the person's emotive range and tendencies. The goal for training the instrument's unique sound would be to condition the singer's ability to freely release and sustain those natural, emotive sounds and textures on specific pitches, and in the context of emotional expression.

Importance of Story

The function of a story is to communicate an idea, a feeling, a sentiment and to charge the listener to action. The beauty of jazz lies in the artist's freedom to continually shape and interpret the story according to their own experiences and intentions in the context of the conversation.

Similar to the variations in one's approach to retelling a story as when shifting from one friend group to the next, so do the subtle variations occur in retelling the story in a performance context from one night to the next. The same story can take multiple shapes depending on the context the story is told. Ability, comfortability and motivation to elaborate on the subject content; energy for animation; the egging on of the co-conspirators both musically and verbally; and the receptiveness and interactions of the listeners all impact how the story is told.

As artists, we need to take the time to ensure the music we select has stories that are meaningful to our life experiences and contain sentiments we are motivated to share. Often developing singers will pick songs to sing based on how *they* felt when they heard someone else singing the song. And because of the way that the singer made them feel, the developing singer will aim to imitate every vocal texture, phrasing and nuance that the singer used to retell the story exactly as the singer did.

The problem with this method of storytelling is often these singers don't stop to listen to the words and relate the story to their own experiences and emotional response. As a result, they can't retell the story from their own perspective. They copy the sentence with disregard for the sentiment. They imitate the emotional storytelling of the person they're imitating, without the emotional connection themselves to what the person was emoting in the first place. This is equivalent to hearing someone cry and then trying to imitate and approximate their same cry in an effort of making someone else cry. The result is often perceived as forced and disingenuous. So, too, is the retelling of a musical story without personal context.

When developing your story as an artist, start with the text. Begin with the story and ask yourself the following questions: What is the context you would retell the story? How would you feel at the beginning of the conversation, and how would you describe the sound of your voice in that moment? What would be the texture and volume of your voice? Would the dynamic level of your voice remain consistent from beginning to the end of the conversation, or would there be moments where you get louder or softer, and why?

Find the words within the phrase that are not just weighted with emphasis, but also loaded with experiences. Explore the cadence of your natural speech when you are restating the words in real-time within a real emotional context. Does your voice naturally go up in pitch? Does your voice naturally drop at the end of a phrase? Do you hesitate as you're trying to figure out what it is you *really* want to say to the person? Find ways to articulate those nuances and utterances in the music.

Importance of Style & Culture

Need ideas? This is where style and cultural exposure come into play. Style is merely sentiment articulated within the context of a cultural vocabulary of expression. When you're immersed in a culture, you absorb and rearticulate the mannerisms in communication and expression of those around you. Whether it be a family culture, a regional culture or a music culture, various expressions and sounds exist within an established social construct.

Most often, and without active consciousness, the result of the immersion and ultimate inclusion is the assimilation of sounds and mannerisms. This could be in the form of dialect, colloquial phrases and manner of speech. Sometimes even the actual sound and texture of your voice can be so similar to the people you are around the most that it can be almost indistinguishable. For example, on the phone, I sound like my mother. We have the same texture and weight in our voices, so much so that it can even confuse our relatives. My sisters and I sound different in terms of vocal texture, but our mannerisms are so similar that our relation is undeniable, even to strangers.

This is what happens when you listen and are immersed in the culture of a style of music. The mannerisms and nuances appear into your everyday conversation without an intentional effort or awareness. When immersed within a culture, similarities start to appear, yet distinctions of personalities are clearly apparent.

From the standpoint of a vocalist, jazz represents a particular mannerism and tendency in storytelling that is different from other styles of music. When learning to sing the music and being introduced to the sounds



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