

## **THREE JAZZ TECHNIQUE EXERCISES BY INEKE VAN DOORN**

As demonstrated in the lecture /concert

**From the inside out: Singing technique for jazz singers**

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When jazz singers practice technical skills, it is really helpful to do this in the proper stylistic context.

- Jazz singers usually vary the way they sing their songs, and because of that they never know beforehand exactly how they are going to sing a song. So to be artistically free a jazz singer must have a technical toolbox available with a set of skills that is ready to be used instantly. In other words, their singing technique should be at a level where technique follows artistic intention on the spot.
- This automatically means that, ideally during practice, a singer practices a song in different ways and in the proper stylistic context: using jazz harmonies and jazz scales, different timings, tempos, sounds and embellishments, and improvisation. In this way a natural connection between interpretation and singing technique can be established.
- Another subject where singing technique and interpretation meet each other is in deciding the key for a certain song. Singing a song in a higher key leads to a different sound and interpretation and leads to different technical challenges than when you sing the same song in a lower key. This should also be explored during practice.

Below you will find three examples of how you can practice singing technique in a jazz context.

## EXAMPLE 1 LONG TONE

1A

Gmaj7 F13 Gmaj7 Abmaj7(#11) Bb7 Ebmaj7 Ab7(#11)

mm mü mm moo mm mü oo

ah

- Depending on the needs of the singer this exercise can also be done accompanied by simpler chord changes like G -D- G.
- The chord changes written above will require a more refined intonation because the function of the note that is being sung changes with every chord.
- The sounds *mm-mü-mm-moo-mm-mü-oo* are good for giving you the feeling of resonance, especially if you purse your lips a little, and especially in the middle or low range of your voice. Most singers enjoy this feeling. This is why it's good to warm up with humming and in general with exercises that use 'm' or 'n' sounds. Remember, though, that while humming is a good way to experience resonance/placement, it doesn't produce really optimal resonance, because your mouth is closed!
- It's also possible to use this exercise to train the vibrato. In that case you sing the exercise on a long *aaaah*. Start to sing the whole exercise non-vibrato. After this you continue singing the exercise with vibrato. If you can do both you can try to start singing the exercise with vibrato, but try to stop the vibrato halfway through it. Start the exercise on a low note and gradually go higher.

## EXAMPLE 2 VOWELS AND #11

2A

Cmaj7 D<sup>9</sup>(#11)

ee oo wee ah wee ay wee ah wee ah oo wee ah wee oo wee ah dot dwee yah

dooweeyah dooweeyah etc

- If you sing this exercise slowly on vowels (*ee -ay-ah*) you can use it for vowel modification. Start the exercise on a low note and gradually go higher.
- Sing the same exercise legato in swing feel using the syllables *oo-wee-ah-wee*. Try different tempos and sing the exercise both in your low and high register.
- In order to turn the exercise into an articulation exercise you sing the exercise in swing feel, singing on each note *dooweeyah* (except for the last three notes).
- Make your own melodic variations and alternate legato singing with staccato singing.
- Improvise on the chord changes.

### EXAMPLE 3 PRACTICING FOURTHS

3A

ah  
 mah may mee moh mah may mee moh mah may mee moh mah may mee  
 doo yah doo yah doo yah doo yah doo yah doo yah doo yah doo yah doo yah dah

ah  
 mah may mee moh mah may mee moh mah may mee moh mah may mee  
 doo yah doo yah doo yah doo yah doo yah doo yah doo yah doo yah doo yah dah

Same ideas as above: Practice this exercise both singing legato and staccato, try different vowels, also practice in swing, change the tempo and rhythms and make up your own rhythms, practice in all keys and improvise!