

## The Art of Jazz Singing

*A Study Guide Designed to Increase the Enjoyment and Understanding of Vocal Jazz*

### **SINGING JAZZ**

Jazz singing is about discovering the fun and freedom in the unknown and the unexpected. Jazz singers are as different as their individual personalities. They may be rooted in the blues of Bessie Smith, the emotion of Billie Holiday, the swing of Frank Sinatra or the free for all scatting of Ella Fitzgerald, Anita O'Day and Jon Hendricks. Jazz vocalists today have also been influenced by pop, R&B, fusion and ethnic music from many world cultures. It is hard to define specifically what a jazz singer is, but it is someone who uses their voice like an artist's palette. Vocal color, sighs, moans, lyrics, scat syllables, instrumental sounds and agility are all things a listener might hear, but at the center of the singing is a vocalist who has learned from the great blues and jazz stylists of the past and created a style and sound that is all their own. What unites jazz singers is their ability to convey emotion and connect with an audience immediately and spontaneously. Creating in the moment with fellow musicians, also called improvising is essential and is what creates the fun, freedom and suspense for the ensemble and the audience. Jazz vocalists are always exploring new ways to use their instruments to sing with heart, soul and individuality.

## JAZZ LINGO: VOCABULARY AND DEFINITIONS

1. **Bread:** Money \$\$\$\$
2. **Gig:** The engagement or event
3. "What time is the hit?" means "When do we play?" A "hit" also describes a rhythmic accent played by musicians.
4. **Form:** the configuration of the measures of a song. i.e.: 12 Bar Blues, AABA, ABAC
5. **Bar:** a measure of music
6. **Scat:** syllables and vocal sounds often used by vocalists to improvise (doo-n-doo-dot-doo-dah)
7. **Taking a solo:** An individual musician's opportunity to improvise usually while other member's of the ensemble accompany the soloist.
8. **Comp:** Accompany
9. **Trading:** Exchanging improvised phrases between 2 or more musicians; commonly trading 2's, 4's or 8's, (2, 4 or 8 measures).
10. **Open:** just keep soloing or playing until you are finished
11. **Head:** the melody of a song or the beginning of the song
12. **Improvise:** To make up music or "solo" spontaneously at that moment.

*Lisa Thorson is a jazz vocalist, educator, composer, lyricist and recording artist. Over the course of her career her quintet has performed throughout the U.S., Italy and Canada in concerts, jazz festivals and many special events. She has received many awards and accolades for her performances and recordings. Lisa is a Professor at Berklee College of Music specializing in jazz styles, performance skills and vocal technique. She is an experienced clinician and dedicated to jazz education.*

*"Our mission is to entertain, educate and inspire by playing spirited improvisational music that has heart, soul, originality and a sense of adventure." - Lisa Thorson*