

## ***The Importance of Rhythm in Jazz Phrasing and Improvisation***

Timing and good sense of rhythm are the crucial elements of a package that completes an evolved and well-rounded jazz vocalist. The ability of weaving spontaneous melody in an unpretentious, free manner, changing timing to different grooves and 'feels' is an art in itself and it is believed to be a gift of nature, something unobtainable by practising.

The rhythm aspects have not been emphasised enough in educating vocalists. Many of them put lots of stress on 'singing the right notes', and not the fact if they feel comfortable and grounded in certain groove, or on how the notes are distributed rhythmically throughout the improvisation. It happens simply because they do not realise it, but also because they have difficulty perceiving the rhythm on different levels. The educative sources in the subject of rhythm for vocalists are scarce and methodology in the curricula of the music institutions is non-existent.

Observing behaviour of my students of various levels, I started noticing that all those, who are used to play music in irregular metres, or listening to broader range of styles, which often means variety of rhythms and grooves, have much more freedom in phrasing melody line and creating interesting rhythmical patterns in their improvisation in 4/4 time signature.

Gradually I started developing a method of teaching timing and 'jazz feel' through using irregular time signatures and engaging the body to feel the pulse and subdivisions on different levels. That led to a research on how playing odd meters influenced me and my sense of rhythm, but also in developing a clear methodology on practising and improving timing. In my research, I look at my own path in improving sense of timing, the significance of the odd against the even within the time signature and subdivisions, but also the concept of pearls, diamonds and 'pearlmonds' – a system of dividing musicians by their sense of timing. In the presentation, I would elaborate on the subjects mentioned above.

### **How can the output of artistic research be used as input in teaching activities?**

My artistic choices have been always determined by the music I listened and various projects I chose to perform in. That's how I gained freedom in phrasing and rhythm and it grossly improved my timing. It happened somewhat subconsciously but I realised it while teaching. As an educator, I have an urge to explain the 'how', not only the 'what'. And to explain something clearly, we have to understand the subject on the best possible level. Writing the research on timing helped me to organise, not only mentally, but practically, all the information and systemise it to be more concrete and effective in my teaching. That will hopefully result in publishing a method book for students on how to practise timing to improve it. It would not be possible without the research, and the other way around: there would be no research, without the need for methodology in that particular subject.



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Anka Koziel is a versatile vocalist and educator based in the Netherlands. In her singing she combines jazz improvisation, world music, extensive vocal techniques and any sound that she can produce with her voice to create interesting soundscapes. She teaches jazz voice at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague (NL) and specialises in Complete Vocal Technique (CVT).

Her main interest lies in writing her own compositions, rearranging and re-interpreting songs from all over the world, and looking for inspiration in everything that surrounds her. She treats her voice very instrumentally, and loves to explore all its possibilities and challenges. She completed Bachelor and Master degree at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague.

Through her career, she collaborated with many great jazz musicians (e.g. Kenny Wheeler or Norma Winstone), and has been singing in stylistically diverse projects from contemporary music, through gospel, blues, country, salsa or fusion of world music and jazz.