



Course Number and Title: MTAL 521/Coaching the Popular Music Vocalist

Units: 2

Term—Day—Time: Wednesdays 6-7:50pm

Location: TMC 202

Instructor: Professor Lyndia “MzLyndia” Johnson

Office: G115

Office Hours: Wednesdays 3-5pm

Contact Info: lyndiajo@usc.edu

Course Description: Conceptual and practical framework for future popular music instructors to coach vocalists in a wide range of environments.

Learning Objectives:

Understand Vocal Anatomy and Physiology:

- Gain comprehensive knowledge of the vocal mechanism, including the vocal cords, respiratory system, and articulators.
- Differentiate between the anatomical focuses in popular and classical vocal techniques.

Master Vocal Techniques:

- Teach various vocal techniques such as belting, mixed voice, and falsetto.
- Develop skills to demonstrate and correct techniques effectively.

Promote Vocal Health:

- Educate on the importance of vocal health and strategies for maintaining it.
- Identify signs of vocal strain and implement preventative measures.

Develop Performance Skills:

- Guide students in enhancing their stage presence and emotional delivery.
- Offer techniques for effective audience engagement and performance confidence.

Analyze Different Vocal Styles:

- Study and teach various popular music genres such as rock, pop, R&B, and gospel.
- Understand the unique vocal requirements and stylistic nuances of each genre.

Utilize Amplification and Technology:

- Instruct on effective microphone techniques and the use of amplification.
- Explore the impact of vocal technologies like Auto-Tune and effects on vocal performance.

Extend Vocal Techniques:

- Teach extended vocal techniques like growling and belting in a healthy manner.

- Ensure the safe use of untraditional vocal sounds.

Provide Stylistic and Artistic Guidance:

- Assist students in developing their unique vocal style and artistic identity.
- Guide in selecting appropriate repertoire that highlights strengths and aligns with artistic goals.

Prepare for Studio Recording:

- Offer tips and techniques for effective studio recording.
- Teach microphone techniques and stress management in a recording environment.

Deliver Career Development Support:

- Provide insights on navigating the music industry and building a professional network.
- Support long-term career planning and growth for aspiring vocal coaches and artists.

Evaluate and Adapt Teaching Methods:

- Continuously assess and improve teaching methods to meet the needs of diverse learners.
- Stay updated with current trends and advancements in vocal pedagogy.

Prerequisite(s):

Course(s) that MUST be taken prior to this course, if any, and are decided by the department/program.
MTAL 516

Attendance: Grade is impacted at 3 absences; grade is impacted at 3 late arrivals.

Syllabus:

Week 1/Jan 15: Introduction to Popular Voice Pedagogy

- **Course Overview**
 - Review syllabus and course expectations.
 - Discuss the role of a vocal coach in popular music.
- **Listening Samples**
 - Analyze vocal performances across different genres
- **Reading Assignment**
 - CCM Pedagogy/Handout – The Pioneering Generation by Matthew Hoch

Week 2/Jan 22: Vocal Anatomy and Physiology

- **Understanding the Vocal Mechanism**
 - Anatomy of the vocal cords, respiratory system, and articulators.
- **Contrast with Bel Canto Technique**
 - Comparison of anatomical focuses in popular and operatic singing. (*Video on using false folds etc*)
- **Listening Samples**
 - Identify differences in vocal production.
- **Reading Assignment**
 - Texts on vocal anatomy and health.
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Week 3/Jan 29: Voice Science and Technique

- **Basic Voice Science**
 - The physics of sound production.
- **Vocal Health**
 - Techniques for maintaining vocal health.
- **Listening Samples**
 - Examples of healthy vs. unhealthy vocal techniques.
- **Reading Assignment**
 - Articles on vocal science.

Week 4/Feb 5: Bel Canto vs. Popular Voice Pedagogy

- **Historical Context**
 - Overview of Bel Canto pedagogy.
- **Contrast with Popular Techniques**
 - Differences in technique and approach.
- **Listening Samples**
 - Opera vs. popular music performances.
- **Reading/Listening Assignment**
 - Comparative studies on vocal pedagogy.

Week 5/Feb 12: Popular Vocal Styles and Techniques

- **Exploring Different Styles**
 - Techniques in rock, pop, R&B, gospel, etc.
- **Listening Samples**
 - Iconic performances in various genres.
- **Reading Assignment**
 - Case studies on popular vocalists.

Week 6/Feb 19: Amplified Singing Techniques

- **Microphone Techniques**
 - Effective use of amplification.
- **Differences from Operatic Techniques**
 - Adjusting techniques for amplified sound.
- **Listening Samples**
 - Examples of amplified performances.
- **Reading Assignment**
 - Articles on amplification in popular music.

Week 7/Feb 26: Using Untraditional Sounds Healthfully

- **Extended Vocal Techniques**
 - Growling, belting, and other untraditional sounds.
- **Vocal Safety**
 - Ensuring techniques are used healthfully.
- **Listening Samples**
 - Performances utilizing untraditional sounds.
- **Reading Assignment**
 - Research on extended vocal techniques.

Week 8/March 5: Technologies Influencing Popular Singing

- **Vocal Technology**
 - Auto-Tune, effects, and other technologies.
- **Impact on Performance**
 - How technology changes vocal approaches.
- **Listening Samples**
 - Tracks featuring vocal technologies.
- **Reading Assignment**
 - Studies on the impact of technology on vocals.

Week 9/March 12: Communication Skills for Vocal Coaches (*Mid-Term*)

- **Effective Communication**
 - Techniques for clear and effective instruction.
- **Listening Samples**
 - Interviews with successful vocal coaches.
- **Reading Assignment**
 - Books/articles on communication skills in coaching.

Week 10/March 26: Informal and Formal Coaching Strategies

- **Teaching Demonstration – Student #1**
- **Coaching in Different Settings**
 - Techniques for small band, recording studio, singer-songwriter, and background vocalist coaching.
- **Listening Samples**
 - Sessions in various coaching settings.
- **Reading Assignment**
 - Texts on informal and formal coaching strategies.

Week 11/April 2: Technologies and Tools for Popular Vocal Coaching

- **Utilizing Technologies**
 - Monitoring, microphones, and other tools.
- **Adapting to Environments**
 - Tailoring tools to different popular music environments.
- **Listening Samples**
 - Examples of technology use in popular music.
- **Reading Assignment**
 - Articles on vocal technologies.

Week 12/April 9: Coaching in Varied Environments

- **Teaching Demonstration – Student #2**
- **Varied Settings**
 - Studios, rehearsals, churches, and classrooms.
- **Adapting Techniques**
 - Adjusting coaching styles to fit the environment.
- **Listening Samples**
 - Examples of coaching in varied settings.
- **Reading Assignment**
 - Case studies of coaching in different environments.

Week 13/April 16: Ethical Responsibilities in Vocal Coaching

- **Teaching Demonstration – Student #3**
- **Understanding Ethics**
 - Ethical considerations in vocal coaching.
- **Vocal Health Responsibility**
 - Ensuring students' vocal health and safety.
- **Listening Samples**
 - Discussions on ethics in coaching.
- **Reading Assignment**
 - Articles on ethics in music education.

Week 14/April 23: Assessing Vocal Performance

- **Teaching Demonstration – Student #4**
- **Evaluation Techniques**
 - Methods for assessing and providing feedback.
- **Listening Samples**
 - Performances with critical analysis.
- **Reading Assignment**
 - Texts on performance assessment.

Week 15/April 30: *Final Exam*

Course Notes:

Importance of Voice Coaching

Voice coaching is a powerful tool for personal and professional growth. Whether you're an aspiring artist, a public speaker, or a business leader, working with a voice coach can help you unlock your full potential and achieve your goals. In this section, we'll explore the various aspects of voice coaching and its significance in today's world.

Key Qualities of Leading Voice Coaches in 2025 and Beyond:

- **Holistic Approach:** The most successful coaches understand the voice is not isolated. They integrate physical health (posture, breathing), mental well-being (stress management, confidence building), and emotional expression into their training. This holistic perspective is crucial for sustainable vocal health and impactful communication.
- **Specialization & Niche Expertise:** While some coaches offer general vocal training, many are carving out niches. This might include specific vocal styles (opera, rock, musical theatre), public speaking, voice acting, or addressing specific vocal challenges (vocal cord nodules, breath support issues).
- **Technological Integration:** Forward-thinking coaches leverage technology for personalized feedback and remote coaching. This includes using recording software for analysis, virtual platforms for lessons, and apps for vocal exercises.
- **Data-Driven Insights:** Some coaches are incorporating scientific research and data analysis into their methods. This includes using acoustic analysis to track vocal progress and tailoring exercises based on individual vocal characteristics.
- **Strong Online Presence & Community Building:** A significant aspect of a coach's success in 2025 will be their ability to build a strong online presence through websites, social media, and online courses. Engaging with their community and fostering a supportive learning environment is crucial.

Examples of Influential Approaches and Coaches (Note: This is not an exhaustive list and does not constitute an endorsement):

While naming specific individuals as "top" for 2025 is premature, we can highlight examples of approaches and established coaches who are likely to continue influencing the field:

- **Coaches specializing in the Alexander Technique:** This body-awareness method is increasingly integrated into vocal training for its focus on posture and tension release, leading to improved vocal health and projection. Many Alexander Technique teachers also offer vocal coaching.
- **Coaches focused on vocal health and injury prevention:** With increasing awareness of vocal strain and its long-term consequences, coaches specialized in vocal health and rehabilitation will be in high demand. These professionals often work in collaboration with medical professionals.
- **Coaches incorporating mindfulness and somatic practices:** Techniques like meditation and body awareness are being increasingly integrated into vocal training to improve breath control, reduce anxiety, and enhance vocal expression.

- **Coaches using cutting-edge technology:** Those who integrate sophisticated vocal analysis software and virtual reality tools for personalized training will likely be at the forefront of innovation.

There are several excellent books on popular voice pedagogy that you might find useful. Here are some notable ones:

1. **"The Vocal Athlete" by Marci Daniels Rosenberg and William Vennard** - This book focuses on the physical training, anatomy, and biomechanics of singing.
2. **"Complete Vocal Technique" by Cathrine Sadolin and Thomas Appell** - A comprehensive guide to various vocal techniques and exercises.
3. **"The Contemporary Singer" by Anne Peckham** - This book covers elements of vocal technique specifically tailored for contemporary singers.
4. **"Vocal Workouts for the Contemporary Singer" by Anne Peckham** - A practical guide to vocal exercises and techniques for modern singers.
5. **"Singing and Imagination: A Human Approach to a Great Musical Tradition" by Thomas Hemsley** - This book emphasizes a holistic approach to singing, integrating physical, mental, and emotional aspects.
6. **"The Science of Singing" by Ingo Titze** - A detailed exploration of the science behind vocal production and health.
7. **"The Diagnosis and Correction of Vocal Faults" by James C. McKinney** - A manual for identifying and correcting common vocal issues.
8. **"Anatomy of the Voice" by Theodore Dimon Jr.** - An illustrated guide for singers, vocal coaches, and speech therapists.

Popular vocal coaches are increasingly leveraging advanced technology to enhance their coaching methods. Here are some of the most commonly used technologies:

1. **Recording Software:** Tools like Pro Tools, Logic Pro, and Audacity are used to record and analyze vocal performances, allowing coaches to provide detailed feedback on pitch, tone, and technique.
2. **Real-Time Pitch Trainers:** Apps and software such as **Vocaloid** and **Yousician** provide real-time pitch correction and feedback, helping singers improve their pitch accuracy.
3. **Acoustic Analysis Tools:** Software like **SpectralLayers** and **WaveEditor** allow coaches to visualize vocal frequencies and harmonics, making it easier to identify areas for improvement.
4. **Online Platforms:** Platforms like **VocalBrain** offer personalized coaching plans, real-time feedback, and progress tracking through AI-driven tools.
5. **Video Conferencing Tools:** Zoom, Skype, and Google Meet are used for remote coaching sessions, making it possible for coaches and students to connect from anywhere in the world.
6. **Vocal Health Apps:** Apps like **VocalHealth** and **VocalEase** provide exercises and tips for maintaining vocal health and preventing strain or injury.
7. **Digital Sheet Music:** Tools like **Noteflight** and **MuseScore** allow coaches to share sheet music and annotations digitally, making it easier for students to follow along and practice.
8. **Social Media and Content Sharing:** Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok are used by coaches to share tutorials, tips, and motivational content, as well as to engage with their audience and build a community.

VoceVista is a powerful software application designed for the interactive recording and exploration of sounds, especially the human voice. Here are some key features and benefits:

1. **Visual Displays:** VoceVista provides visual displays of different sound properties, such as the fundamental melody, timbre (sound color), and overtones. This helps users quickly recognize and analyze these elements².
2. **Real-Time Pitch Display:** The software offers real-time pitch display, which is particularly useful for singers and vocal coaches to monitor pitch accuracy during practice.
3. **High-Quality Spectrogram & Spectrum:** VoceVista includes high-quality spectrogram and spectrum analysis, allowing for detailed examination of vocal recordings.
4. **Audio Editing:** Users can edit recordings with an audio editor, apply overtone sliders, frequency filters, and compare recordings side-by-side.
5. **Vowel Chart:** The software features a vowel chart to help users visualize and analyze vowel sounds.
6. **Image Export:** VoceVista allows for exporting images of sound analyses, which can be useful for documentation and educational purposes.
7. **Custom Profiles:** Users can create custom profiles to tailor the software to their specific needs.
8. **Bookmarks and Markers:** The software includes bookmarks and markers for easy navigation and reference during analysis.
9. **Long-Term Average Spectrum:** VoceVista provides long-term average spectrum analysis for detailed and precise vocal analysis.

VoceVista is suitable for singers, singing teachers, speech-language pathologists, and anyone interested in sound analysis. It is available for both Apple and Windows operating systems².

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, comprises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

[Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes

it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

[Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment](#) - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[USC Emergency](#) - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[USC Department of Public Safety](#) - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.