

Jazz in the Choral Journal:

An Historical Narrative of Vocal Jazz Representation in the ACDA's Flagship Publication

In the history of vocal music education in the United States, vocal jazz is a relative newcomer. Following the founding of the first collegiate vocal jazz ensemble in 1967,¹ the field of vocal jazz education has developed within both instrumental jazz and traditional choral organizations. Since its establishment in 1959, the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) has come to play a leading role in vocal music education in the US and abroad;² the organization's flagship publication, the *Choral Journal*, is currently circulated to 20,000 subscribers in 44 countries.³ Through the *Choral Journal*, the ACDA has helped shape the modern landscape of vocal music education, including vocal jazz.

In June 1975, the ACDA established a standing committee on Jazz and Show Choirs as a branch of its Standards and Repertoire Committee.⁴ Since then, ten individuals have served as the national chair of the committee and its subsequent iterations, each, in their turn, representing vocal jazz within ACDA and influencing vocal jazz education across the country. This paper seeks to reconstruct the dynamic historical narrative of vocal jazz in the *Choral Journal* through this lineage of leadership and through the articles on vocal jazz published in the journal during

¹ Gregory Amerind, "The Collegiate Vocal Jazz Ensemble: A Foundational History," *Choral Journal* 55, no. 11 (June/July 2015): 19.

² "History," About ACDA, American Choral Directors Association, accessed December 11, 2020, <https://acda.org/about-us/history/>.

³ "About the Choral Journal," *Choral Journal*, Publications, American Choral Directors Association, accessed December 11, 2020, <https://acda.org/publications/choral-journal/about-the-choral-journal/>.

⁴ Gene Grier, "Get Down! Jazz and Show Choir Corner," *Choral Journal* 17, no. 2 (October 1976): 24.

each chair's tenure. Identification of these articles has been facilitated by two indices of the *Choral Journal*, both available to ACDA members through the organization's website.⁵

Founders and Pioneers

The first article on vocal jazz in the *Choral Journal* predates the national committee by nearly five years; a feature article entitled "The Jazz Choir" was published in the September 1970 issue.⁶ The article was written by Anthony Cappadonia of Alfred State College and was originally published in the October 1969 issue of the New York State School Music Association's *School Music News*. Cappadonia's article is as notable for its early appearance as for the comprehensiveness with which it addresses the topic, providing ample practical and pedagogical advice to directors seeking to establish a vocal jazz ensemble. Cappadonia discusses everything from member selection criteria, the audition process, aesthetic models, and repertoire, to the myriad stylistic features that help distinguish vocal jazz from the traditional choral paradigm.

It was not until the April 1976 issue that a subsequent article on vocal jazz would appear in the *Choral Journal*, with the efforts of the newly-formed Jazz and Show Choir Committee. The first chair of the committee, John A. Smith, served for only one year and did not directly author the sole article published during his tenure.⁷ Smith was the founding director of the University of Michigan's jazz and show choir, "The Amaizin' Blues," formed during the 1974-75 academic year.⁸ The April 1976 article primarily consists of a list of suggested jazz and show

⁵ Gordon Paine, *The Choral Journal: An Index to Volumes 1-18* (Lawton, Oklahoma: American Choral Directors Association, 1978); Scott W. Dorsey, *The Choral Journal: An Index to Volumes 19-58* (Lawton, Oklahoma: American Choral Directors Association, 2018).

⁶ Anthony Cappadonia, "The Jazz Choir," *Choral Journal* 11, no. 1 (September 1970): 9-10.

⁷ Gene Grier, "Recommended Music for the Jazz and Show Choir," *Choral Journal* 16, no. 8 (April 1976): 20-21.

⁸ "aMaizin' Blues...A Success Story," *Music at Michigan* 8, no. 10 (April 1975): 12.

choir repertoire,⁹ establishing one of the key ways in which vocal jazz has been represented in the journal.

Brave New World

Smith's successor, Gene Grier, was a member of the original committee, assuming its leadership during the summer of 1976.¹⁰ Grier oversaw a period of tremendous productivity—three dozen articles on vocal jazz and show choirs appeared in the *Choral Journal* between October 1976 and May 1980. The first of these echoes Cappadonia's article, covering a full range of pedagogical and practical topics. Written by fellow founding committee member Doug Anderson of McMinnville, Oregon, the article seeks to define vocal jazz ensembles as much as promote them. Anderson directly addresses resistance to the inclusion of popular vocal idioms, asserting that vocal jazz will bring much-needed vitality and creativity to school choral programs.¹¹

The October 1976 issue also included the first entry in "Get Down!," a new regular column and the primary channel through which vocal jazz was represented in the *Choral Journal* over the next three years. "Get Down!" appeared in nearly every issue during that period, and provided Grier and the rest of committee a consistent platform for vocal jazz and show choir content. Here, as in subsequent issues, Grier's tone bespeaks excitement and self-assurance: "The ACDA Standing Committee on Jazz and Show Choirs looks to the future with great

⁹ Gene Grier, "Recommended Music for the Jazz and Show Choir," *Choral Journal* 16, no. 8 (April 1976): 20-21.

¹⁰ Gene Grier, "Get Down! Jazz and Show Choir Corner," *Choral Journal* 17, no. 2 (October 1976): 24.

¹¹ Doug Anderson, "Vocal Jazz for Your Choir: Here's How," *Choral Journal* 17, no. 2 (October 1976): 12-14.

enthusiasm.”¹² Through “Get Down!,” Grier presented articles on the history of ensemble jazz singing,¹³ jazz and show choir adjudication,¹⁴ choreography,¹⁵ public relations through vocal jazz,¹⁶ festivals,¹⁷ clinicians,¹⁸ listening,¹⁹ microphone technique,²⁰ auditions and rehearsals,²¹ and a three-part series on vocal jazz improvisation pedagogy.²² “Get Down!” featured interviews with celebrated professional choral directors Norman Luboff²³ and Fred Waring,²⁴ as well as profiles of collegiate vocal jazz pioneers Dr. Frank Pooler of California State University,²⁵ Long Beach, and Dr. Lee Kjelson of the University of Miami.²⁶ Though a majority of these articles were authored in part or in whole by Grier, many featured input from vocal jazz educators both within and beyond the Standards and Repertoire committee. The most notable of these regular contributors was fellow committee member Dan Schwartz of Waldwick, New Jersey, who frequently curated lists of vocal jazz ensemble repertoire, ensemble vocal jazz discographies, and educational resources for vocal jazz directors.

The “Get Down!” article in September 1978 is particularly emblematic of the Gene Grier era. In it, Grier explores three related-yet-distinct paradigms of the emergent popular choral field:

¹² Gene Grier, “Get Down! Jazz and Show Choir Corner,” *Choral Journal* 17, no. 2 (October 1976): 24.

¹³ Gene Grier, “Get Down! Jazz and Show Choir Corner,” *Choral Journal* 17, no. 5 (January 1977).

¹⁴ Gene Grier, “Get Down! Jazz and Show Choir Corner,” *Choral Journal* 17, no. 7 (March 1977).

¹⁵ Gene Grier, “Get Down! Jazz and Show Choir Corner,” *Choral Journal* 17, no. 8 (April 1977).

¹⁶ Gene Grier, “Get Down! Jazz and Show Choir Corner,” *Choral Journal* 18, no. 2 (October 1977).

¹⁷ Gene Grier, “Get Down! Jazz and Show Choir Corner,” *Choral Journal* 18, no. 1 (September 1977).

¹⁸ Gene Grier, “Get Down! Jazz and Show Choir Corner,” *Choral Journal* 18, no. 6 (February 1978).

¹⁹ Gene Grier, “Get Down! Jazz and Show Choir Corner,” *Choral Journal* 18, no. 7 (March 1978).

²⁰ Gene Grier, “Get Down! Jazz and Show Choir Corner,” *Choral Journal* 19, no. 3 (November 1978).

²¹ Gene Grier, “Get Down! Jazz and Show Choir Corner,” *Choral Journal* 19, no. 6 (February 1979).

²² Gene Grier, “Get Down! Jazz and Show Choir Corner,” *Choral Journal* 18, no. 3 (November 1977); Gene Grier, “Get Down! Jazz and Show Choir Corner,” *Choral Journal* 18, no. 4 (December 1977); Gene Grier, “Get Down! Jazz and Show Choir Corner,” *Choral Journal* 18, no. 5 (January 1978).

²³ Gene Grier, “Get Down! Jazz and Show Choir Corner,” *Choral Journal* 17, no. 9 (May 1977).

²⁴ Gene Grier, “Get Down! Jazz and Show Choir Corner,” *Choral Journal* 19, no. 7 (March 1979).

²⁵ Gene Grier, “Get Down! Jazz and Show Choir Corner,” *Choral Journal* 19, no. 2 (October 1978).

²⁶ Gene Grier, “Get Down! Jazz and Show Choir Corner,” *Choral Journal* 19, no. 5 (January 1979).

swing choirs, show choirs, and vocal jazz ensembles.²⁷ Drawing on exemplary instances of each, he attempts to find the boundaries between them, rhetorically questioning the importance of these distinctions while at the same time implicitly reinforcing them. It is perhaps worth noting that Grier's wife, Audrey, served as the choreography specialist on the national committee during these years, perhaps ensuring a more balanced approach to the two halves of the committee's charge to represent "Jazz *and* Show Choirs." Such distinctions separating vocal jazz ensembles from show choirs, while still somewhat vague in 1978, grew clearer and sharper in the decades to follow.

Vocal jazz appeared beyond the bounds of "Get Down!" during this period as well. Walter Lamble, choral and music education faculty at California State University, Sacramento, wrote a feature article that appeared in November 1976.²⁸ In it, he describes the need for increased vocal jazz experience for preservice teachers, laments the dearth of quality resources on vocal jazz education, and advocates for the discontinued use of the term "swing choir," arguing that it fails to reflect the stylistic breadth of the ensembles of his time. Kirby Shaw, another original member of the National Standards and Repertoire committee and prolific vocal jazz arranger, authored a feature article in January 1977 with practical arranging tips.²⁹ During this period, many vocal jazz directors wrote custom arrangements for their ensembles in an effort to help build their libraries. And in the subsequent issue, Gary McRoberts, a young high school

²⁷ Gene Grier, "Get Down! Jazz and Show Choir Corner," *Choral Journal* 19, no. 1 (September 1978).

²⁸ Walter Lamble, "Choral Music's New Kid On the Block: The Swing Choir," *Choral Journal* 17, no. 3 (November 1976).

²⁹ Kirby Shaw, "Arranging for the Jazz Choir," *Choral Journal* 17, no. 5 (January 1977).

choral teacher from southern California, wrote a feature article that aimed to further define the vocal jazz ensemble paradigm and promote its inclusion within secondary choral programs.³⁰

The September 1979 issue of the *Choral Journal* ushered in a new era in its representations of vocal jazz. “Get Down!” was replaced with the “Popular Choral Corner,” though the column still offered Grier and the rest of the Jazz and Show Choirs Committee a regular platform. The articles of the 1979-80 volume were the last to appear under Grier’s leadership as national chair. Despite the column’s new name, articles appeared much as they had in “Get Down!;” they included an exploration of the blues,³¹ a guideline for evaluating repertoire,³² an effort to standardize notation and terminology for jazz articulation and inflections,³³ a profile of the studio group The Arbors,³⁴ a list of recommend clinicians,³⁵ and proposed curricula for the training of vocal jazz directors.³⁶ And while Grier continued as the principal author and editor of the column, other committee members offered visible contributions, most notably Dan Schwartz’s lists of repertoire, workshops, and educational resources.

The leadership of the National Committee on Jazz and Show Choirs passed to Doug Anderson for the 1980-81 academic year. In his first entry in the “Popular Choral Corner,” Anderson introduced readers to the new members of the committee, who, according to updated ACDA guidelines, represented each of the then-seven geographic divisions of the country; the article also includes Anderson’s recommendations for exemplary repertoire, ensemble names,

³⁰ Gary K. McRoberts, “The Unheralded Choral Art—JAZZ,” *Choral Journal* 17, no. 6 (February 1977).

³¹ Gene Grier, “Popular Choral Corner,” *Choral Journal* 20, no. 1 (September 1979).

³² Gene Grier, “Popular Choral Corner,” *Choral Journal* 20, no. 3 (November 1979).

³³ Gene Grier, “Popular Choral Corner,” *Choral Journal* 20, no. 4 (December 1979).

³⁴ Gene Grier, “Popular Choral Corner,” *Choral Journal* 20, no. 6 (February 1980).

³⁵ Gene Grier, “Popular Choral Corner,” *Choral Journal* 20, no. 8 (April 1980).

³⁶ Gene Grier, “Popular Choral Corner,” *Choral Journal* 20, no. 9 (May 1980).

and vocal jazz recordings to use in the classroom.³⁷ Anderson followed this in the November 1980 issue with a review of three published vocal jazz improvisation methods.³⁸ In January 1981, Southern Division representative Sandra Cryder and Eastern Division representative Dan Schwartz split the column, offering a practical guide to show choir microphone techniques and a discography of vocal jazz groups, respectively;³⁹ the following month's column, written by Northwest Division representative Ken Krintz, encouraged choral directors to embrace vocal jazz as their instrumental colleagues had come to embrace jazz bands.⁴⁰ The March 1981 issue of the *Choral Journal* featured an explanation of the ACDA's revisions to the Standards and Repertoire committees as the organization sought to establish a federated, national infrastructure.⁴¹ Within this report, each of the thirteen Standards and Repertoire committee chairs provided an outline of their committee's goals and achievements. Here, Anderson states the committee's guiding belief, "that a total choral program includes an exploration of popular choral literature, attractive staging, and vocal improvisation."⁴² In addition, he emphasizes the role of the "Popular Choral Corner" in disseminating "practical 'how to do it' articles."

The Backlash

While the May 1981 issue included typical "Popular Choral Corner" material (a detailed review of ensemble arrangements and a guide to upcoming summer workshops),⁴³ elsewhere in the *Choral Journal*, the vocal jazz and show choir movement faced its first significant criticism.

³⁷ Doug Anderson, "Popular Choral Corner," *Choral Journal* 21, no. 1 (September 1980).

³⁸ Doug Anderson, "Popular Choral Corner," *Choral Journal* 21, no. 3 (November 1980).

³⁹ Doug Anderson, "Popular Choral Corner," *Choral Journal* 21, no. 5 (January 1981).

⁴⁰ Doug Anderson, "Popular Choral Corner," *Choral Journal* 21, no. 6 (February 1981).

⁴¹ Karle Erickson, "National Committee Report," *Choral Journal* 21, no. 7 (March 1981).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴³ Doug Anderson, "Popular Choral Corner," *Choral Journal* 21, no. 9 (May 1981).

In a feature article titled “The Show-Choir Movement: Some Food for Thought,” California State University, Fullerton, professor Gordon Paine questions the aesthetic and educational validity of jazz and show choirs. His critique is multifaceted; Paine alleges that jazz and show choirs are, in a majority of cases, superficial, musically shallow, and unsuitable for the development of healthy vocal technique.⁴⁴ Though he accepts the artistic merit of jazz, he maintains that few if any of those merits appear in “choral jazz,” which he deems “at best a dubious hybrid.”⁴⁵ Moreover, Paine regards the promotion of such ensembles a threat to the traditional choral paradigm and a corruption of the ACDA’s purposes.

Paine’s article inspired ACDA members around the country to join in his refutation of jazz and show choirs. Both the September and November 1981 issues featured letters to the editor that amplified Paine’s critique.⁴⁶ The “Popular Choral Corner” offered no direct response; the October 1981 issue featured an unadorned bibliography of pedagogical resources and a list of repertoire,⁴⁷ and December’s issue offered an affirmative anecdote from Kathy Bergwell and Gary Fiscus of Council Bluffs, Iowa, on the positive influence jazz artist-in-residence Preston Love had had on their choral program.⁴⁸ By January 1982, Anderson included a preface to the “Popular Choral Corner” article, stating that “several ACDA members have voiced their concern [...] regarding Gordon Paine’s article,” adding that “we do not feel ‘rebuttal’ to Mr. Paine’s

⁴⁴ Gordon Paine, “The Show-Choir Movement: Some Food for Thought,” *Choral Journal* 21, no. 9 (May 1981).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁶ Charlene Archibeque, Charles Slater, and W. Wayne Johnson, “Letters to the Editor,” *Choral Journal* 22, no. 1 (September 1981); Margaret Hawkins, “News Briefs,” *Choral Journal* 22, no. 3 (November 1981).

⁴⁷ Doug Anderson, “Popular Choral Corner,” *Choral Journal* 22, no. 2 (October 1981).

⁴⁸ Doug Anderson, Kathy Bergwell, and Gary Fiscus, “Popular Choral Corner: Vocal Jazz In Your Classroom,” *Choral Journal* 22, no. 4 (December 1981).

statements is necessary,” and “we would like to submit continued positive statements.”⁴⁹ The article that followed Anderson’s preface was, however, a clear rebuttal to the several criticisms that had been leveled at jazz and show choirs. Written by Diana R. Spradling, then professor of music education at Syracuse University, the article aimed to systematically dismantle a series of six critiques of the paradigm. She emphasizes the aesthetic potential of vocal jazz ensemble and solo singing, and the stylistic variety within jazz practice.⁵⁰

However, it seems Spradling’s defense was deemed insufficient, and no “Popular Choral Corner” entries appeared in the next three issues. In May 1982, Michael L. Masterson of Northwest Community College, Powell, Wyoming, authored a feature article calling for compromise between the pro- and anti-jazz and show choir interests.⁵¹ Masterson agreed with Paine’s concerns of superficiality, but argued that jazz and show choirs *could* achieve high levels of aesthetic merit, and called on directors in the movement to aspire to higher artistic achievement. The remainder of 1982 saw only three additional entries in the “Popular Choral Corner,” each of which consisted of repertoire lists without commentary.⁵²

In December 1983, Spradling returned in a feature article titled “The Art of Entertainment.” While not a direct commentary on the controversy Paine had ignited nineteen months prior, Spradling’s article promoted an inclusive view of professionalism and

⁴⁹ Doug Anderson and Diana R. Spradling, “Popular Choral Corner: The Swing Choir: Issues with an Answer,” *Choral Journal* 22, no. 5 (January 1982): 33.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Michael L. Masterson, “Response to Gordon Paine’s Essay on Show Choirs,” *Choral Journal* 22, no. 9 (May 1982).

⁵² Doug Anderson, “Popular Choral Corner,” *Choral Journal* 22, no. 9 (May 1982); Doug Anderson, “Popular Choral Corner,” *Choral Journal* 23, no. 3 (November 1982); Doug Anderson, “Popular Choral Corner,” *Choral Journal* 23, no. 4 (December 1982).

entertainment that sought to highlight the common ground on which choral excellence of any kind might be built.⁵³

Response to Criticism

February 1984 witnessed the mantle of leadership pass once again, this time to long-serving national committee member Dan Schwartz, while Doug Anderson and Gene Grier took up positions as Northwestern and Central Division Chairs, respectively.⁵⁴ In many ways, Schwartz's first entry parallels that of his immediate predecessor; he thanks Anderson and Grier for their dedication to the organization, introduces the new committee members, and offers a bibliography of pedagogical resources.⁵⁵ In the following issue, Schwartz offered more repertoire lists, and called on any interested music educators to submit suggestions for the advancement of jazz and show choirs.⁵⁶

Schwartz's next effort did not materialize until October of that year, though the article brought new life to one of the fundamental discourses in the field. Featuring responses from nine leading jazz and show choir figures, Schwartz's article probed the merits of visual elements in performance, particularly those of choreography.⁵⁷ In his introduction, Schwartz highlights the definitional distinction that had developed between the increasingly-visual show choir paradigm and the increasingly-aural vocal jazz paradigm. While the responses from Gene and Audrey Grier and Doug Anderson maintained an encompassing perspective that promoted the value of

⁵³ Diana R. Spradling, "The Art of Entertainment," *Choral Journal* 24, no. 4 (December 1983).

⁵⁴ Dan Schwartz, "Popular Choral Corner," *Choral Journal* 24, no. 6 (February 1984).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Dan Schwartz, "Popular Choral Corner," *Choral Journal* 24, no. 7 (March 1984).

⁵⁷ Dan Schwartz, "Popular Choral Corner: Will Movement or Choreography Improve Your Group's Performances?," *Choral Journal* 25, no. 2 (October 1984).

visual elements in general terms, those from Roger Emerson and Joyce Kumlien implicitly accepted that jazz choirs and show choirs offered differing, yet complementary, visual-aural practices.⁵⁸ Ken Kraintz and Phil Mattson, on the other hand, offered responses that clearly promoted vocal jazz ensembles as musically superior to show choirs; both asserted that the more harmonically- and rhythmically-demanding vocal jazz idiom requires a focus on aural over visual elements.⁵⁹

The 1984-85 volume of the *Choral Journal* included only one other entry in the “Popular Choral Corner.” In a reprint from *The School Musician*, Paul E. Thoms summarized a quantitative study on the impact of show choirs on traditional choral programs.⁶⁰ Gathering responses from eighty-one show choir directors around the country, author Sister Mary Seton concluded “as long as pop and jazz are not the only styles [...] taught in the curriculum, that swing choir could be a good investment for a choral program.”⁶¹ Additionally, Seton’s study reinforced the imperative that such ensembles program literature of high aesthetic merit.

The subsequent two volumes saw only two entries in the “Popular Choral Corner:” a list of repertoire appeared in September 1985,⁶² and a list of pedagogical resources appeared in November 1986,⁶³ neither with any supportive commentary by Schwartz. The most significant discussion of vocal jazz during this period came in a one-page feature article by Diana Spradling.

⁵⁸ Dan Schwartz, “Popular Choral Corner: Will Movement or Choreography Improve Your Group’s Performances?,” *Choral Journal* 25, no. 2 (October 1984): 22-23.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁶⁰ Paul E. Thoms, “Popular Choral Corner: Show Choir Research—An Important Study,” *Choral Journal* 25, no. 7 (March 1985).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁶² Dan Schwartz, “Popular Choral Corner,” *Choral Journal* 26, no. 2 (September 1985).

⁶³ Dan Schwartz, “Popular Choral Corner,” *Choral Journal* 27, no. 4 (November 1986).

In it, she highlighted key similarities in the vocal technique required in both jazz and bel canto singing, and aimed to quantify the technical vocal elements unique to the jazz idiom.⁶⁴

The final articles of the “Popular Choral Corner” appeared in the spring of 1988. The March issue included an interview between Dan Schwartz and popular choral composer/arranger Carl Strommen.⁶⁵ In May, however, the National Committee on Vocal Jazz and Show Choirs presented what the members believed to be their crowning achievement to that date: committee-approved adjudication forms for jazz choirs and for swing/show choirs. The fundamental differences between the two idioms are clearly manifest in these separate forms: twice as much emphasis was placed on balance and blend for jazz choirs over show choirs, 10% of the jazz score is earned uniquely through “creativity” (improvisation), and 20% of show choir score uniquely reflects “choreography.”⁶⁶

Is Anybody Out There?

The next four volumes saw minimal discussion of vocal jazz, possibly due to a significant reorganization of the *Choral Journal* itself. In the October 1988 issue, “Repertoire and Standards Committee Reports” debuted as a replacement for the collection of special-interest columns of which the “Popular Choral Corner” had been a part. As explained in that issue, “notes from chairpersons of the different National Repertoire and Standards Committees [were to be] presented each month,” with three committees represented in each report.⁶⁷ In his first three consecutive such R&S Reports, Dan Schwartz presented no material, but rather asked for input

⁶⁴ Diana R. Spradling, “Pedagogy and Vocal Jazz,” *Choral Journal* 27, no. 4 (November 1986).

⁶⁵ Dan Schwartz, “Popular Choral Corner,” *Choral Journal* 28, no. 8 (March 1988).

⁶⁶ Dan Schwartz, “Popular Choral Corner,” *Choral Journal* 28, no. 10 (May 1988).

⁶⁷ “Repertoire & Standards Committee Report,” *Choral Journal* 29, no. 3 (October 1988): 35.

from readers.⁶⁸ Each subsequent plea for article submissions is more desperate than the last. His reports in February 1991⁶⁹ and December 1992⁷⁰ consist of little more than promotions for the committee-sponsored sessions in upcoming ACDA conventions. In the latter of these, Schwartz states plainly and emphatically that the absence of substantive articles during this period reflected a total absence of article submissions.⁷¹

Then, in April 1993, Schwartz presented an article by Natalie Wilson, a high school vocal jazz director from Camas, Washington. Though the article was submitted for publication through the Vocal Jazz and Show Choir Committee, Wilson's practical tips for a successful festival experience had broad applicability and little specific reference to the vocal jazz ensemble paradigm.⁷² Nevertheless, it appears Schwartz was inspired to produce original material of his own after this point, producing five entries over the following two volumes. These articles included a discography of recent vocal jazz ensemble recordings, both student and professional,⁷³ a brief article on the importance of individual voice instruction (penned by Gene Grier),⁷⁴ a summary of the committee's achievements since 1975,⁷⁵ and a list of a cappella vocal jazz repertoire.⁷⁶ Most significantly, these articles also included "Ten Myths About Jazz and Show

⁶⁸ Dan Schwartz, "Vocal Jazz and Show Choir Committee Report: Attention Jazz and Show Choir Directors!," *Choral Journal* 29, no. 9 (April 1989); Dan Schwartz, "Vocal Jazz and Show Choirs," *Choral Journal* 30, no. 7 (February 1990); Dan Schwartz, "Vocal Jazz and Show Choirs," *Choral Journal* 31, no. 1 (August 1990).

⁶⁹ Dan Schwartz, "Vocal Jazz and Show Choirs," *Choral Journal* 31, no. 7 (February 1991).

⁷⁰ Dan Schwartz, "Vocal Jazz and Show Choirs," *Choral Journal* 33, no. 5 (December 1992).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Dan Schwartz, "Vocal Jazz and Show Choir," *Choral Journal* 33, no. 9 (April 1993).

⁷³ Dan Schwartz, "Jazz and Show Choirs," *Choral Journal* 34, no. 1 (August 1993).

⁷⁴ Dan Schwartz, "Jazz and Show Choirs," *Choral Journal* 34, no. 10 (May 1994).

⁷⁵ Dan Schwartz, "Jazz and Show Choirs," *Choral Journal* 35, no. 2 (September 1994).

⁷⁶ Dan Schwartz, "Jazz and Show Choirs," *Choral Journal* 35, no. 10 (May 1995).

Choirs,” in which Schwartz broadly advocates for the inclusion of such ensembles by dismantling commonly-held misconceptions.⁷⁷

The Firebrand

In November 1995, Schwartz offered a follow-up to his August 1993 discography, featuring recordings that had debuted during the intervening years.⁷⁸ By this time, however, he had stepped down as chair after over eleven years. He was succeeded by Phil Mattson, the first to become chair of the national committee who had not served on the initial committee in 1975. Mattson, who had been among the most vocal advocates for the aesthetic superiority of vocal jazz more than a decade earlier, wasted no time staking out his position. In his first R&S Report in February 1996,⁷⁹ he outlined a brief history of the vocal jazz paradigm, and advanced his belief that the idiom should be celebrated for its capacity for transcendent aesthetic experiences. His tone is reverent and philosophical:

The participator in the study and performance of great literature as an end in itself receives, paradoxically, an unintended and greater grace...In the study/performance process, the self is set aside and vision is clarified...With the self absent, deep psychological/spiritual change is possible, and the richest vein of music's gold can be mined...As joy is an unintended result of virtue, so an enlarged consciousness is a result of passionate effort in the pursuit of the musically beautiful.⁸⁰

In November 1997, Mattson followed with an R&S Report that more pragmatically expressed the tensions he perceived.⁸¹ He suggests that jazz and jazz-influenced music, though historically maligned in the traditional choral community, had become an integral part of the contemporary

⁷⁷ Dan Schwartz, “Jazz and Show Choirs,” *Choral Journal* 35, no. 4 (November 1994).

⁷⁸ Dan Schwartz, “Jazz and Show Choirs,” *Choral Journal* 36, no. 4 (November 1995).

⁷⁹ Phil Mattson, “Jazz and Show Choirs,” *Choral Journal* 36, no. 7 (February 1996).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁸¹ Phil Mattson, “Jazz and Show Choirs,” *Choral Journal* 38, no. 4 (November 1997).

American musical landscape. More crucially, Mattson openly questioned the continued representation of vocal jazz and show choirs within a joint committee, citing their pervasive differences.⁸²

The Pedagogue

Mattson's tenure as chair, however, came to an end in May 1997, and the position was vacant for the rest of the calendar year. In January 1998, frequent *Choral Journal* contributor and long-time vocal jazz advocate Diana Spradling assumed leadership of the national committee. The March issue that year included a feature article entitled "Response to Change." In it, representatives from several of ACDA's various Repertoire and Standards committees authored essays on the future of their respective fields. Michele Weir of the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) identified a need for specialized training of future vocal jazz directors.⁸³ Citing the idiom's unique position at the intersection of instrumental jazz and the choral tradition, Weir specified five key areas of skill and knowledge required for successful vocal jazz direction, and called for the inclusion of vocal jazz experiences for preservice teachers.⁸⁴

Of the five R&S Reports published under Spradling's leadership, four were rich, pedagogically-focused articles. The first of these appeared in May 1998, and built on the topic she explored in November 1986—popular vocal technique vis-à-vis bel canto technique.⁸⁵

Though the later article lacks the earlier article's specificity, it additionally addresses technical

⁸² Phil Mattson, "Jazz and Show Choirs," *Choral Journal* 38, no. 4 (November 1997).

⁸³ Michele Weir, "Vocal Jazz Ensembles: The Future of a Choral Style," *Choral Journal* 38, no. 8 (March 1998).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁸⁵ Diana R. Spradling, "Jazz and Showchoir: Some Similarities and Differences Between Classical and Non-Classical Choral Singing," *Choral Journal* 38, no. 10 (May 1998).

distinctions between *and within* the vocal jazz and show choir idioms,⁸⁶ and urges directors to become familiar with a diversity of technical characteristics. In March 1999, Spradling authored an updated review of vocal jazz pedagogical resources, including detailed summaries of each recommended publication.⁸⁷ The October 2000 R&S Report featured an article by Tom Dustman of the commercial vocal group Beachfront Property with practical guidance on sound reinforcement equipment,⁸⁸ and in May 2001, Spradling offered a methodical approach to instructional listening activities in vocal jazz.⁸⁹

The Split

Spradling's February 2000 R&S Report detailed her efforts to better understand the needs of show choir directors.⁹⁰ During meetings at show choir camps the previous summer, directors had expressed their need for increased support and visibility within ACDA, leading Spradling to help form a committee to establish national standards of excellence for the idiom.

In August 2002, Vijay Singh of Central Washington University became the chair of the national committee, though the first article on vocal jazz during his tenure appeared in the journal's book reviews. Written by Michael Bultman of Lincoln-Way Central High School, the article reviews one of the seminal texts in vocal jazz education—Stephen Zegree's *The Complete*

⁸⁶ Diana R. Spradling, "Jazz and Showchoir: Some Similarities and Differences Between Classical and Non-Classical Choral Singing," *Choral Journal* 38, no. 10 (May 1998).

⁸⁷ Diana R. Spradling, "Jazz and Showchoir: Fifteen Resources for the Vocal Jazz Director," *Choral Journal* 39, no. 8 (March 1999).

⁸⁸ Diana Spradling "Jazz/Show Choirs: More Thoughts on Sound Reinforcement," *Choral Journal* 41, no. 3 (October 2000).

⁸⁹ Diana R. Spradling "A Vocal Jazz Listening Checklist for Developing Jazz Enthusiasts," *Choral Journal* 41, no. 10 (May 2001).

⁹⁰ Diana R. Spradling "Jazz and Show Choirs: Show Choirs, Advocacy And National Standards of Excellence," *Choral Journal* 40, no. 7 (February 2000).

Guide to Teaching Vocal Jazz.⁹¹ Bultman's was the first and only book review on a vocal jazz topic to appear in that section of the *Choral Journal*. Singh's first R&S Report came in April 2003 and outlined the argument that most defined his tenure as chair—vocal jazz and show choir must be represented by separate committees.⁹² His position is clear and pragmatic:

Jazz choirs and Show choirs are two different types of contemporary choral ensembles. This is due to variances in musical demands (harmonic/rhythmic sophistication), physical demands in choreography (or lack there of), definitive repertoire from definitive composers, authenticity of stylistic performance practices, and some prevalent educational beliefs. Each of these factions would be better served by their own separate R&S areas.⁹³

In August 2003, Singh offered an article on specific creative practices unique to the vocal jazz idiom,⁹⁴ implicitly reinforcing the differences in performance practice between vocal jazz ensembles and show choirs. Then, two months later, the National Chair of the Repertoire and Standards Committee officially adopted the position that had been advocated by Singh, Mattson, and Krantz; a proposed vote to form independent national committees for vocal jazz and show choirs was announced in that issue.⁹⁵ In that year's November issue, Singh published a stand-alone plea to the ACDA at large, imploring members to vote in favor of "the split,"⁹⁶ a sentiment echoed in a letter to the editor by noted show choir authority Peter Kiefer of Pennsylvania State University the following month.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Michael Bultman, review of *The Complete Guide to Teaching Vocal Jazz*, by Stephen Zegree, *Choral Journal*, 43, no. 8 (March 2003).

⁹² Vijay Singh, "Jazz and Show Choirs," *Choral Journal* 43, no. 9 (April 2003).

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁹⁴ Vijay Singh, "Creative Vocal Jazz: How to Personalize Your Performances," *Choral Journal* 44, no. 1 (August 2003).

⁹⁵ Mark Malone, "A Vote to Expand the R&S National Committee Is Proposed," *Choral Journal* 44, no. 3 (October 2003).

⁹⁶ Vijay Singh, "A Milestone in ACDA History," *Choral Journal* 44, no. 4 (November 2003).

⁹⁷ Peter Kiefer, "Letters to the Editor," *Choral Journal* 44, no. 5 (December 2003).

The vote passed overwhelmingly in February 2004,⁹⁸ and in August of that year, Singh authored his first R&S Report as National Chair for the R&S Committee for Jazz Choirs.⁹⁹ The article itself was largely a reprint of his 2003 article on creative rehearsal and performance practices, perhaps underscoring the distinct status vocal jazz education now enjoyed within ACDA.

A Renaissance

The 2004-05 and 2005-06 volumes in the *Choral Journal* witnessed a marked increase in articles on vocal jazz, and a greater diversity of perspectives. While Singh authored articles on the continued lack of specialized jazz training for future directors¹⁰⁰ and on the stylistic variety of contemporary a cappella jazz repertoire,¹⁰¹ Laurie Cappello, Northwest Division R&S Chair on Junior High and Middle School Choirs, authored two articles promoting vocal jazz education within her own R&S Reports.¹⁰² Significantly, Cappello's articles represented the first time vocal jazz was positively represented in another committee's section of the *Choral Journal*. In a further sign of growth for the field, Frank Eychaner authored an article admonishing vocal jazz directors to observe copyright law and stock their libraries with arrangements legally purchased through established publishers.¹⁰³ And in a feature article by Noël Archambeault, professor of voice at

⁹⁸ "Application for National Repertoire & Standards Show Choir Chair," *Choral Journal* 45, no. 2 (September 2004).

⁹⁹ Vijay Singh, "Jazz Choirs: Creative Vocal Jazz: How to Personalize Your Performance," *Choral Journal* 45, no. 1 (August 2004).

¹⁰⁰ Vijay Singh, "Vocal Jazz: The Challenges of Vocal Jazz," *Choral Journal* 45, no. 9 (April 2005).

¹⁰¹ Vijay Singh, "Vocal Jazz: A Cappella Jazz: Possibilities, Methods, and Experimentation," *Choral Journal* 46, no. 3 (September 2005).

¹⁰² Laurie Cappello, "Junior High/Middle School Choirs: Vocal Jazz: Do You or Don't You?," *Choral Journal* 45, no. 2 (September 2004); Laurie Cappello, "Junior High/Middle School Choirs: Middle School Vocal Jazz... Where Do You Start?," *Choral Journal* 46, no. 11 (May 2006).

¹⁰³ Frank Eychaner, "Vocal Jazz: The Jazz Choir Goes Legit: Copyright Law for the Vocal Music Educator," *Choral Journal* 46, no. 8 (February 2006).

Texas A&M, classical vocalists were invited to the art of jazz singing through a lens of respect, specialized knowledge, and discrete technical elements.¹⁰⁴ Archambeault's article attracted attention from former founding committee member Kirby Shaw, who wrote a letter to the editor gently correcting a few of Archambeault's less authentic assertions on vocal jazz style.¹⁰⁵

Shaw's letter appeared in December 2006, in the first year of Kirk Marcy's tenure as national vocal jazz chair. Following the model established by Grier and Anderson, outgoing chair Vijay Singh authored the first R&S Report of Marcy's tenure.¹⁰⁶ In the article, Singh once again takes up the issue of insufficient preservice vocal jazz experience, offering several workshops and print resources for the aspiring vocal jazz director. Notably, the article was the first to include a list of recommended repertoire since the tenure of Dan Schwartz over a decade prior.

Indeed, much of the output during Marcy's period of leadership from 2006 through January 2013 echoed the tone and content of those articles published during Gene Grier's tenure as chair. Articles during this period connected with the historical roots of group vocal jazz,¹⁰⁷ discussed balanced vocal jazz ensemble programming,¹⁰⁸ offered directors additional workshop opportunities and print resources,¹⁰⁹ and detailed comprehensive rehearsal methods for vocal jazz ensemble direction.¹¹⁰ In the May 2008 R&S Report, Marcy featured responses to frequently-

¹⁰⁴ Noël Archambeault, "'Come On-A My House': An Invitation to Vocal Jazz for Classical Singers," *Choral Journal* 46, no. 11 (May 2006).

¹⁰⁵ Kirby Shaw, "Letters to the Editor," *Choral Journal* 47, no. 5 (December 2006).

¹⁰⁶ Vijay Singh, "Vocal Jazz: Advocacy for Jazz Pedagogy: Where to Find Resources and Quality Teaching Tools," *Choral Journal* 47, no. 3 (September 2006).

¹⁰⁷ Kirk Marcy, "Vocal Jazz: Vocal Jazz: Is Your Ensemble Creative or Re-Creative?," *Choral Journal* 47, no. 6 (December 2006).

¹⁰⁸ Kirk Marcy, "Vocal Jazz: 'What's In Your Folder?' Balanced Programming for Vocal Jazz Ensembles," *Choral Journal* 51, no. 10 (May 2011).

¹⁰⁹ Kirk Marcy, "Vocal Jazz: Re-Charging Your Vocal Jazz Battery," *Choral Journal* 47, no. 12 (June 2007).

¹¹⁰ Kirk Marcy, "A Template for the Comprehensive Learning of Vocal Jazz Repertoire," *Choral Journal* 50, no. 7 (February 2010).

asked ensemble director questions, offering answers from the many diverse perspectives of the vocal jazz division chairs.¹¹¹ The period also looked toward a bright future for the field, featuring articles on elementary vocal jazz education,¹¹² sound system basics,¹¹³ and an updated definition to reflect modern vocal jazz ensemble performance practice.¹¹⁴

The High-Water Mark

Marcy was succeeded in February 2013 by Patrice Madura Ward-Steinman, professor of music education at Indiana University. A prolific author and researcher, Madura Ward-Steinman quickly brought her experience in quantitative inquiry to bear on the ACDA vocal jazz community.¹¹⁵ In her May 2013 R&S Report, Madura Ward-Steinman launched a survey to gather information on the most popular vocal jazz ensemble repertoire.¹¹⁶ Following up on a similar study conducted in 1993 by Russ Baird, Madura Ward-Steinman sought to reassess programming practices within the field. Unfortunately, after ten months, she had received so few responses as to be statistically-unrepresentative.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, Madura Ward-Steinman published her preliminary results in the February 2014 issue, representing the first quasi-experimental article on vocal jazz in the *Choral Journal*.

¹¹¹ Kirk Marcy, "Vocal Jazz: Real Situations, Real Solutions!," *Choral Journal* 48, no. 11 (May 2008).

¹¹² Kirk Marcy and Natalie Wilson, "Through the Eyes of a Ten-Year-Old: Taking a Look at Elementary Vocal Jazz," *Choral Journal* 49, no. 11 (May 2009).

¹¹³ Kirk Marcy and Keith Corning, "Learning a Sound System is Like Learning a Chart," *Choral Journal* 51, no. 4 (November 2010).

¹¹⁴ Kirk Marcy and Diana Spradling, "Vocal Jazz: A Definition of the Vocal Jazz Group: An Ensemble of Solo Singers, One-on-a-Mic," *Choral Journal* 50, no. 1 (August 2009).

¹¹⁵ "In Memoriam: Patrice Madura Ward-Steinman 1945-2020," *Choral Journal* 61, no. 1 (August 2020).

¹¹⁶ Patrice Madura, "Vocal Jazz: What Is the Best Vocal Jazz Repertoire?," *Choral Journal* 53, no. 9 (May 2013).

¹¹⁷ Patrice Madura, "Vocal Jazz: What Is the Best Vocal Jazz Repertoire?: Preliminary Results Are In!," *Choral Journal* 54, no. 7 (February 2014).

Though a feature article on jazz influences in Swedish and Finnish choral music appeared in October 2014,¹¹⁸ the June/July 2015 issue was the crowning achievement of Madura Ward-Steinman's tenure as chair. As explained in the editorial note for the issue, June/July 2015 was the first of the *Choral Journal's* special focus issues to feature vocal jazz.¹¹⁹ Five articles on vocal jazz appeared in the issue, each by a different author and each highlighting a different aspect of the field. Gregory Amerind provided a comprehensive history of group vocal jazz.¹²⁰ Roger Emerson authored a concise-if-thorough guide on starting a vocal jazz ensemble.¹²¹ Michele Weir provided a detailed pedagogical article on vocal jazz improvisation.¹²² Madura Ward-Steinman's own article for the issue advanced a vision of the vocal jazz director as an improvising jazz artist, and highlighted methods for cultivating creative expression in jazz improvisation.¹²³ At the heart of issue was a jointly-authored article by Diana Spradling and Justin Binek that combined elements to deliver a cohesive resource on vocal jazz pedagogy.¹²⁴ Most notably, the article featured the culmination of Spradling's career-long effort to quantify and systematically describe the technical and stylistic features of jazz singing, drawing from years of spectrographic research.¹²⁵

¹¹⁸ Sarin Williams, "Blending Genres: Elements of Jazz in Finnish and Swedish Choral Music," *Choral Journal* 55, no. 3 (October 2014).

¹¹⁹ "From the Editor," *Choral Journal* 55, no. 11 (June/July 2015).

¹²⁰ Gregory Amerind, "The Collegiate Vocal Jazz Ensemble: A Foundational History," *Choral Journal* 55, no. 11 (June/July 2015).

¹²¹ Roger Emerson, "Starting a Vocal Jazz Ensemble," *Choral Journal* 55, no. 11 (June/July 2015).

¹²² Michele Weir, "The Scat Singing Dialect: An Introduction to Vocal Improvisation," *Choral Journal* 55, no. 11 (June/July 2015).

¹²³ Patrice Madura, "The Choral Music Teacher as Artist: Vocal Jazz and Improvisation as Expressions of Artistry," *Choral Journal* 55, no. 11 (June/July 2015).

¹²⁴ Diana Spradling and Justin Binek, "Pedagogy for the Jazz Singer," *Choral Journal* 55, no. 11 (June/July 2015).

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 10-11.

The Tide Goes Out

In August 2015, Madura Ward-Steinman stepped down as chair, and was succeeded by Gregory Amerind. The November 2016 issue included an extensive article on vocal technique and aural skills for the jazz singer by Leila Heil of the University of Colorado, Boulder, and Ron McCurdy of the University of Southern California.¹²⁶ In the sole R&S offering to date of Amerind's tenure as chair, Sarin Williams provides a detailed musicological analysis of Icelandic composer Gunnar Reynir Sveinsson's jazz-influenced choral music.¹²⁷ This comparative absence of vocal jazz topics in the *Choral Journal* marks the years following the June/July 2015 special issue as the period of least representation since before the founding of the initial standing committee in 1975. In light of this absence of representation, the June/July 2015 issue stands yet-clearer as the zenith of vocal jazz in the *Choral Journal*.

Future Inquiry

The preceding narrative likely invites more questions than it answers, indeed than can be answered by examination of the *Choral Journal* alone. Interviews with surviving past national committee chairs and an examination of intra-organizational communication could shed light on the decisions that led to the topics discussed and the articles published. Additional quantitative research methods could be applied to this body of articles, perhaps revealing as-yet unseen patterns in the type and distribution of vocal jazz articles.

¹²⁶ Leila Heil and Ron McCurdy, "Building Vocal Technique and Aural Acuity in the Vocal Jazz Rehearsal," *Choral Journal* 57, no. 4 (November 2016).

¹²⁷ Gregory Amerind and Sarin Williams, "Gunnar Reynir Sveinsson: Jazz-Influenced Choral Music," *Choral Journal* 59, no. 10 (May 2019).

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