

# Applied Voice Course Syllabus SPRING 2008

Sam Houston State University  
School of Music  
MUS 225- VOI101/301  
2 CREDIT HOURS

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## I. DESCRIPTION

In studio time gives each student one on one instruction in the area of vocal technique (posture, breathing, phonation, resonance, articulation), song interpretation and language diction.

## II. REPERTOIRE

Repertoire varies each semester according to the pedagogical goals for each student. Typical repertoire for freshmen may include standard legit Broadway ballads and up-tempo (Kander & Ebb, Lerner & Loewe, Loesser, Rodgers & Hammerstein, etc) and early Broadway ballads and up-tempo (Berlin, Gershwin, Porter, Kern, Rodgers & Hart, etc.). Sophomores continue with the above-mentioned genre and may add more contemporary pieces (Finn, Lloyd Webber, Menken, Schonberg & Boublil). Junior and senior students continue learning music from the above-mentioned genre as well as non-music theatre standards, operetta/opera, and comic songs. Our goal is to build a functional audition folder. The attached “Building An Audition Folder” document will serve as our guide. Half of your literature should be able to be sung from memory mid-semester. All songs should be able to be sung from memory two weeks before juries. Memory means singing with correct pitches, rhythms and diction without looking at your music.

## III. PRACTICE

Productive, consistent practice is assumed. Daily work is more important than lengthy practice. You must practice enough to securely memorize your literature. Time spent studying interpretation, characterization and music is often your most effective practice. Listen to your lesson CD each week. A guide to learning a song is provided as part of this document to assist you in making the most of your practice time.

## IV. ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance at lessons and studio classes is required. Advanced notice is required if you plan to miss a lesson or class; unexcused absences from either will result in a drop in your grade. Absence from a lesson without advanced notification could jeopardize your position in the studio. Visitors in private lessons are permitted at the teacher’s discretion. Visitors are welcomed to attend studio class as long as they do not disrupt the class by their attendance.

## V. PREPARATION

Students are expected to come prepared for each lesson. A CD recording of your lesson will be provided to you each week. Part of your preparation should be listening to your CD and recording your thoughts in your vocal journal. Your journal should be used to track to your process and progress throughout the semester. Your music should be prepared and given to your accompanist at the beginning of the semester. Accompanists' music should be copied front to back and hole punched. Be sure all staves are legible as well as key signatures and the title of the song. Accompanists are to be in attendance 20 minutes after the start of each lesson. Each accompanist has set fees and every voice student needs to be responsible for paying those fees without having to be reminded by the accompanist. We are privileged to have an accompanist present for our studio class. Each student needs to plan to pay \$10 for this service.

## VI. PERFORMANCES

For studio classes, be prepared to give background on the piece being performed. Practice introducing your piece (pronunciation and projection) and know who composed it! You should always seek your teacher's counsel regarding all singing including your repertoire choices, auditions, roles, competitions, gigs, apprentice programs, critiques from judges and coaches, and choral singing. Allow your teacher to exercise veto power to prevent vocal dilemmas.

## VII. GRADES

Your final grade is divided as follows: 50% jury, 50% studio (which includes the completion of repertoire requirements, preparation, attendance, vocal health choices, singer/accompanist relationship, technical growth and outside assignments). You will be assigned a grade following each lesson. This grade is assigned by your teacher and is based on your preparation, attendance, technical growth and successful completion of assigned work.

## Learning a Song

Successful song learning should be done with systematic approach. The most efficient way to learn a song is to study each component separately until it is mastered independently.

- Begin by listening to the entire song either in live performance, on a recording or at a read through session with your accompanist. You will have a better understanding of the song if you learn what you can about the composer, the style and the textual source. A little research will reveal information concerning creative and historical aspects of the song, a practice that will increase your appreciation, interest and enthusiasm for songs.
- Your goal as a performer is to become independent musically in the areas of theory, sight-singing, ear training and piano. Take these courses seriously and work toward proficiency with these skills. You must have a solid foundation in the fundamentals of music to be a career viable performer. In any song you study, you should take time to examine the text, rhythm, meter, tempo, melody, form, harmony, dynamics, phrasing and musical articulation.
- When learning a song, use this sequence:
  1. **Text**- Study the text. Pay close attention to your pronunciation, inflection, articulation, phrasing and meaning
  2. **Speak aloud**- Read it in a dramatic manner with attention to word emphasis and expression. Numerous repetitions of the text will make you comfortable and secure with the text *before* voicing it to the rhythm of the song.
  3. **Speak in rhythm**- Start by clapping or tapping, in a slow tempo, the rhythm of each musical phrase until you have mastered the entire song. When you feel secure with the song's rhythm, clap it in the correct tempo. The important thing is accuracy, not speed.
  4. **Get the pitches in your ear**- Your piano skills should be proficient enough as a singer as to allow you to learn your pitches by playing your melody line. If they are not, you will need to pay a pianist to record your melody line for you. Learn your melody using your favorite vowel. Aim for connected, legato singing using the vocal habits you are learning in your lessons. Note: Using a recording to learn your melody limits your ability to digest and own a song, never allowing it to be truly your own.
  5. **Sing!**
- When working with your accompanist, take time to listen to the accompaniment, how does it sound. The purpose of rehearsing is to work the ensemble- where to breathe, phrasing, tempo, dynamic changes, etc. This is not the time to learn your pitches! Do that on your own time! Be courteous and respectful when working with your accompanist. They do not work *for* you- they work *with* you! Come prepared to your rehearsal sessions. Have rehearsal goals established so that you are being efficient with your and your accompanist's time. Record these sessions on a cassette tape so that you have them to work with in your own study time.

Following these guidelines will ensure success in your learning process. All of these steps should be included in your daily practice regiment. Consistent, steady practice is the key to becoming a successful student of singing.