

# Department of Vocal Music Contact Information

2008-2009

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Washington, DC 20007

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Rory Pullens, Head of School

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## Faculty Contact Information

### Vocal Teachers

Dr. Mary Jane Ayers (Chair, Vocal Techniques I-IV, Opera Workshop)

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Email: [mja4457@aol.com](mailto:mja4457@aol.com)

Room: 304

Samuel L. E. Bonds (Vocal Techniques I-IV, Concert Choir, Show Choir, Male Ensemble)

Telephone: 202-298-1777, x2691

Email: [sleebonds@hotmail.com](mailto:sleebonds@hotmail.com)

Room: 314

Edward Jackson (Vocal Techniques I-IV)

Telephone: 202-298-1777, x2692

Email: [ejackson121@aol.com](mailto:ejackson121@aol.com)

Room: 301

Angela Powell Walker (Vocal Techniques I-IV, Female Ensemble, Music History)

Telephone: 202-298-1777, x2693

Email: [operawalker@verizon.net](mailto:operawalker@verizon.net)

Room: 311

### Vocal Coach/Accompanists - Contact through 202-298-1777

Lynné Gray (Music Theory, Music History, Accompanying)

Earnest Hargrove (Accompanying)

Eliza Ching (Accompanying)

Susanne Hubbard (Accompanying)

### Contacting Faculty

Please do not contact faculty at their homes unless they have given you specific permission to do so. Thank you for respecting their privacy. Faculty will communicate with parents and students through the following means:

- Email
- Monthly Vocal Parent meetings
- Telephone
- Handouts in class
- Regular mail

To give or correct a parent or student email address or phone number, contact Dr. Ayers.

## **We believe...**

In the Vocal Music Department, our goal is college admission for any student who wants to major in music.

To achieve this, we believe in using a traditional curriculum of classical music, including art songs and arias in English, Italian, German, French, Spanish and other languages along with music theory and piano.

We believe in honoring the cultural past of most of our students with a study of spirituals.

We believe in supporting our students' interest in gospel, jazz, R & B, pop and rap, trying to bridge the gap between that and the exacting demands of the classical repertoire.

We believe that the study of vocal techniques and music theory will help students achieve success in whatever aspect of music they elect to pursue.

We believe in producing students who are musically educated, but who also have some understanding of the broader world. Music can be a universal language, but we also require students to translate and thoroughly understand the texts of all songs in foreign languages, and songs in English, which often draw upon poetry with great depth of meaning. This leads to understanding and acceptance of ideas and emotions that might otherwise not have been experienced. As students become more musically sophisticated, the corresponding vocal literature demands more and deeper comprehension from the student.

By the time vocal students graduate from Ellington, we want them to have a much clearer vision of possible careers, feel positive about all kinds of music, and have doors opened to them that may not have known existed before they began their musical journey with us. And it is a journey—from the small world of a child into the larger one.

Graduating seniors should be able to:

- Demonstrate performance skills that show an understanding of the vocal techniques of breath management, posture and support,

beautiful tone, vowel placement, accurate diction and pronunciation in at least three languages, text interpretation, musical expression, and stage presence.

- Perform a successful college or conservatory audition
- Demonstrate the level of musical competence necessary for college courses in performance technique and music reading and writing

We know not all Ellington vocal students will pursue a career in the arts, but it is our hope that our students will be lifelong advocates for the arts in their communities, homes, and places of worship.

## Voice Teachers' Biographies

**Mary Jane Ayers** is the Chair of Vocal Music at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts, where she teaches Voice and runs an instructional and performing Opera Workshop. Her lengthy singing and conducting career includes performances of early music, oratorio, chamber music, opera, and jazz. Before coming to Washington in 1987, Dr. Ayers was an Assistant Professor of Music at Georgia Southern University, where she developed a Summer Institute for Choral Directors. She also taught at Catawba College in North Carolina and at the University of South Carolina at Lancaster. She founded the Children's Chorus at The Washington Conservatory of Music. Dr. Ayers is an experienced and skillful stage director for opera and musicals, and studied directing at The Studio Theater with founder Joy Zinoman. Her directing credits at Duke Ellington include seven "An Evening at the Opera" presentations and collaborative productions of *Into the Woods*, *Pacific Overtures*, and *The Fantastics*.

In addition to teaching and other music activities, Dr. Ayers writes student and teacher materials for the Choral Arts Society of Washington and is a member of the Teachers Advisory Council at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, serving as their representative for an international project in Dublin, Ireland. Her lesson plans appear on the Kennedy Center Artsedge website, and she has written student and audience materials for the Kennedy Center Education Department, the Washington Opera, and the Lincoln Theatre. She has a best-selling choral composition for children published by Alfred Music.

**Samuel L. E. Bonds** has dedicated his life to the training and counseling of singers of all ages with an emphasis on the young voice. In addition to his work at Ellington, where he conducts the Concert Choir and the world-renowned Show Choir, Mr. Bonds teaches at George Mason University. He founded The Walton Singers and Howard D. Woodson Senior High School Male Chorale as well as the Duke Ellington Show Choir. He has taught voice at Morgan State University, Catholic University of America, The University of the District of Columbia, and Prince Georges Community College. He established the Samuel Bonds Vocal Workshop and conducted Master Classes at The University of the West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica.

Mr. Bonds has served as director of music or choir director at many local churches, including Mt. Carmel Baptist, Metropolitan Baptist, Hughes Memorial United Methodist, All Souls Church Unitarian, and numerous others. Presently, he is director of the Senior and Men's Choirs at Plymouth congregational UCC and the Male Chorus at Zion.

In addition to degrees from Howard University, Mr. Bonds studied at The American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria, the Boris Goldovsky Opera Institute, the University of Cleveland, and the Catholic University as a doctoral candidate in voice. He was a long-time vocal student of acclaimed teacher and performer Todd Duncan. Mr. Bonds has continued to maintain active membership in numerous organizations and has been the recipient of many awards and tributes.

**Edward Jackson** has taught at Ellington since its inception in 1974. He has been a concert artist, choir director, orchestra and choral conductor, recording artist and music critic. He taught at Howard University, Federal City College, and The Catholic University of America. As Director of the DC Youth Chorale, he won many awards, including a Mayoral Citation and Plaque for years of outstanding service. He received a Certificate for Outstanding Contribution to Public Education from D.C. Citizens for Better Education and a Teacher of the Year Award from the D.C. Public Schools. The DC Youth Chorale represented the nation's capital at the World's Fair EXPO '74 in Spokane, Washington.

Mr. Jackson conducted music workshops for Project Upward Bound at Howard University and served as music consultant and director for Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation for two years. He was Vocal Consultant to teachers of secondary school music in D.C. Public Schools. He also received a Key to the City.

Throughout his career, he has worked with people from every walk of life, including the International Convention B'Nai Brith Women's Organization, The Jamaican Embassy, The Romanian Embassy, and several African Cultural Organizations and Embassies. These activities have afforded Mr. Jackson the opportunity to meet heads of government, ambassadors and key government officials of the U.S., Romania, several African countries and Jamaica, as well as college and university presidents and deans, executives of large corporations and national organizations.

Mr. Jackson received the Mayor's Citation for Service in the District of Columbia and Outstanding Contribution to Education, has performed at the White House and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City, and was Assistant Conductor for Washington Civic Opera Society. He was the voice instructor of world-renowned mezzo-soprano and Ellington graduate, Denyce Graves of the Metropolitan Opera.

**Angela Powell Walker** is critically acclaimed throughout the United States and Europe for her "quintessential lyric soprano voice," personifying the highest standards of artistic performance. She has appeared in numerous operatic roles and is a long-time favorite of concert audiences at the Kennedy Center. Her work also has been enthusiastically received by audiences at the Metropolitan Opera and in Rome, Prague, and Vienna. She won the Metropolitan Opera National Council Audition, the Paul Robeson Competition, the National Society of Arts and Letters Vocal Competition, and the Sigma Alpha Iota National Vocal Competition. A graduate of Oberlin Conservatory and the University of Maryland, her voice has been hailed by critics as "impressive, sultry, and rich toned."

Ms. Powell started her own training at the School for Creative and Performing Arts high school in Cincinnati, Ohio. While at the University of Maryland, Ms. Powell joined forces with doctoral student Rose Bello to create a workshop to help choral conductors get the best sound from their choirs. Along with continuing these workshops, Ms. Powell maintains a private voice studio of a wide variety of students. She has taught at Suitland High School, Washington Bible College, and is currently the Artistic Associate for Vocal Development with the Master Chorale of Washington. She recently released a CD, titled *A City Called Heaven*.

## Structure of the Music Curriculum

Upon entrance, each vocal student will be assigned a vocal techniques teacher with whom he/she will study throughout his/her tenure at Ellington. He/she will be placed in the Male or Female Ensemble for the first year, after which all students will be members of the Concert Choir.

In addition, all students will be evaluated and assigned to a Music Theory class, which is usually Piano/Theory for first-year vocal students. Those who are more advanced in music reading and writing will be placed in a higher level Theory class. All voice students must take a minimum of two years of class piano. Every year vocal students take courses in these three areas:

1. Applied Music: Vocal Techniques I - IV
2. Ensemble (Concert Choir, Male Ensemble, or Female Ensemble)
3. Music Theory, which can include sight singing, ear training, harmony, composition, improvisation, and beginning piano.

## Electives

In addition to the required courses listed above, students can take music department electives when they have time available in their schedule of class periods. Music electives include Show Choir, Jazz Vocal Styles (juniors and seniors only), Opera Workshop (juniors and seniors only), Music History, Music Technology, Advanced Traditional and Jazz Theory, Music Composition. Electives from other majors are sometimes accessible for Vocal Music students, depending on scheduling availability.

## Visiting Professionals and Special Performances

In the Vocal Music department, we often have visiting professional singers, teachers, and college groups. World-renowned opera singer Denyce Graves, a graduate of Ellington, often comes to lead Master Classes for our students. In addition, in the past year there were singers from the Choral Arts Society, including the masterful bass Alvy Powell, and three sets of young singers provided by the Vocal Arts Society, including the amazing mezzo-soprano Isobelle Leonard.

Our Female Ensemble got to do two performances with TV and movie star Scott Bakula, as well as to perform on the Millennium Stage at the Kennedy Center.

The Concert Choir was the chorus for a professional performance of the opera *Porgy and Bess* at Strathmore Hall. We were visited by and shared an afternoon with choirs and an orchestra from Ireland. In the spring they participated in the Choral Festival at King's Dominion, winning a superior rating.

The Opera Workshop attended the opera *Elektra*, performed by The Washington National Opera.

Our junior and senior students were invited to special recruitment sessions at Marshall University in West Virginia, and at Oberlin College Conservatory in Ohio.

The Duke Ellington Show Choir did innumerable concerts throughout 2007-2008 at venues as diverse as the Capitol and the Convention Center. They also did in-house performances of the opera *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and the music of Motown. In February, those Show Choir members who were not singing lead parts in the school-wide production of *The Wiz* served as the pit singers for the 11 performances of that hugely successful musical. In March, Show Choir traveled to Hawaii, where they participated in the FAME Show Choir festival, winning high honors in both the Show Choir and Concert Choir divisions.

In the Vocal Music Department, we subscribe to the Ellington Creed:

**Commitment Respect Excellence Empowerment Dignity**

**VOCAL MUSIC DEPARTMENT COURSE STRAND  
COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

<b>FIRST YEAR</b>	<b>Credits</b>
• <b>UA1 Applied Vocal Technique I</b>	<b>1.00</b>
• <b>U57 Piano Theory or other Theory class (coordinator will assign)</b>	<b>1.00</b>
• <b>U51 Male Ensemble or Female Ensemble</b>	<b>1.00</b>
Electives:	
• <b>UE5 Show Choir I UE5</b>	<b>1.00</b>
 <b>SECOND YEAR</b>	
• <b>UA2 Applied Vocal Technique II</b>	<b>1.00</b>
• <b>U58 Music Theory/Ear Training II (or theory class as assigned)</b>	<b>1.00</b>
• <b>U52 Concert Choir II</b>	<b>1.00</b>
• <b>U96 Piano Lab I (or II, if advanced)</b>	<b>1.00</b>
Electives:	
• <b>UE5 Show Choir UE5 or UE6</b>	<b>1.00</b>
 <b>THIRD YEAR</b>	
• <b>UA3 Applied Vocal Technique III</b>	<b>1.00</b>
• <b>U53 Concert Choir III</b>	<b>1.00</b>
• <b>U97 Piano Lab II (as assigned)</b>	<b>1.00</b>
• <b>U59 Music Theory/Ear Training III (as assigned)</b>	<b>1.00</b>
• <b>U61 or Jazz Theory</b>	<b>1.00</b>
• <b>UF3 or Composition</b>	<b>1.00</b>
• <b>U62 or Advanced Placement Theory</b>	<b>1.00</b>
Electives:	
• <b>UE5 Show Choir I or UE6 or UE7</b>	<b>1.00</b>
• <b>UF1 Opera Workshop (may be repeated as Applied Techniques)</b>	<b>.50</b>
• <b>U17 Music History/Literature I</b>	<b>.50</b>
• <b>U18 Music History and Literature II</b>	<b>.50</b>
• <b>UF2 Jazz Vocal Styles (may be repeated as Applied Tech 2)</b>	<b>.50</b>
 <b>FOURTH YEAR</b>	
• <b>UA4 Applied Vocal Technique IV</b>	<b>1.00</b>
• <b>U54 Concert Choir IV</b>	<b>1.00</b>
• <b>U60 Music Theory/Ear Training IV (as assigned)</b>	<b>1.00</b>
• <b>U61 or Jazz Theory</b>	<b>1.00</b>
• <b>UF3 or Composition</b>	<b>1.00</b>
• <b>U62 or Advanced Placement Theory</b>	<b>1.00</b>
Electives:	
• <b>UE5 Show Choir I or UE6 or UE7 or UE8</b>	<b>1.00</b>
• <b>UF1 Opera Workshop (may be repeated)</b>	<b>.50</b>
• <b>U17 Music History/Literature I</b>	<b>.50</b>
• <b>U18 Music History and Literature II</b>	<b>.50</b>
• <b>UF2 Jazz Vocal Styles (may be repeated)</b>	<b>.50</b>

## Grading, Status, and Transfer

At the end of each semester, all freshman, sophomore, and junior vocal majors will demonstrate their progress in Vocal Techniques before a jury panel of faculty members. Each jury member will give the student a grade based on their presentation of songs and translations studied in the Vocal Techniques class that semester. These grades are averaged, and that average represents 50% of the student's grade for that advisory. *Minimum* jury requirements include:

- First year: four songs in two languages (English and Italian)
- Second year: four songs in three languages (English, Italian, German)
- Third year: four songs in at least three languages
- Present a memorized melody (vocalise) sung using a neutral syllable like "ee" or "ah."
- Presentation of memorized word-for-word translations for all songs that are not in English.
- Dress for a professional event:

For ladies, a modest (not tight) dress or dressy blouse and skirt to the knee (at least), dressy shoes. No cleavage, midriff, or bare shoulders should be visible.

For gentlemen, shirt with a collar, coat and tie, dress shoes, dress slacks.

Students who achieve an "A" or "A-" average on the jury will be invited to sing on the Vocal Honors Recital, which occurs twice a year. Students who fail a jury through lack of preparation or unexcused absence will receive a failing grade in vocal techniques for that advisory and can be recommended for transfer from Ellington. Students who are inappropriately dressed, or who have not memorized their song translations, can be denied the opportunity to complete their jury. *The jury represents an audition for the following year.*

Seniors take a Senior Hearing (or senior jury), usually during February, to demonstrate preparation for their senior recital, which is presented in the spring. For this hearing, seniors will sing at least four songs, sing in at least three languages, translate all songs not in English, and sing a vocalise on a neutral vowel such as "ee" or "ah." Seniors who do not pass the senior hearing will not be invited to give a recital.

Vocal students are expected to maintain a "B" average in their music courses. Those who fail to maintain a "B" average can be recommended for probation or transfer. Those who fail music theory can expect to be transferred.

Grades in Vocal Music classes are assigned according to District of Columbia guidelines and according to standards set by the teacher in his/her classroom.

## Student Responsibilities

The Ellington Vocal program is challenging and time-consuming. A high level of commitment must be maintained, even if a student decides that professional music study is not his/her goal. Students should be prepared for every class and rehearsal by bringing the appropriate materials: vocal books or choir folder, pencils, notebooks, other materials as required by the teachers.

A positive attitude, respect for teachers and each other, and cooperation are expected at all times.

### Attendance

- Students must attend class *regularly and on time*. Excessive absence, even for legitimate reasons, will affect student's work, especially in performance classes like Vocal Techniques and the Choirs, and advisory grades will reflect those absences.
- No class-cutting is allowed. One unexcused absence can lower a class grade.
- Students are required to attend all music department recitals. Absence will affect the grade in Vocal Techniques class. Students who do not display appropriate recital behavior can receive a failing grade in Vocal Techniques class.
- When a concert or other performance is part of the work of any course (as in the choirs), missing a performance is equal to a zero on a final exam, and the advisory grade will reflect that zero.
- Being on time to rehearsals and classes is an important part of your professional training. This seems to be an especially difficult problem for Ellington students. If you cannot respect the teacher, the work, and your fellow students enough to be on time to class, you may find yourself at another school!

### Homework

Homework for a vocal student means practicing, whether it is practicing voice, piano, or theory skills. All students should practice every day. Practice should include scales and other vocalises or warm-up exercises, practice of solo pieces assigned in techniques class, practice of ensemble music, when appropriate, practice of exercises in ear training and sight singing, and written assignments.

Students usually make the most progress if they practice at the same time and in the same place every day. It is essential that each student have a quiet place at home (or nearby) to practice.

### Other tips for Practicing

Practice is essential for good singing. Unfortunately, good singing does not happen overnight, and it can be discouraging when that growth takes weeks, months, or even years. Your voice is unique, but it is housed in your body, so it responds to changes in the weather, your surroundings, and the changes in YOU. The key to vocal growth is repetitious practice of the singing techniques your teacher has emphasized in voice class. You must use your practice time wisely and efficiently if you want to improve your singing.

Here are some practice habits you need to develop:

- Find a quiet place where you can practice without interruption.
- Keep your music organized all the time and have it with you!
- Set goals for your practice section, like "today I will perfect page 32" or "today I sing only in head voice." Work for 30-60 minutes a day.
- Always begin your practice session with warm-up exercises like those you learn in voice class. Your class vocalise can be an effective vocal warm-up, if done correctly.
- With new songs, learn the text, melody, and rhythms separately, so each can be perfected before putting together the entire song.
- Begin with the hard part—don't waste time singing what you have already learned. Learn new material or fix the mistakes first, then go back and add that to the whole. If you sing and break down at the same place each time, you are not fixing anything, you are practicing breaking down!
- With new music literature, practice at a slow tempo so you can be accurate.
- Record yourself and try to evaluate your work as if you were listening to someone else.
- Recognize that some practice sessions will go better than others.
- If you are ill, you can still work on texts and rhythms, and sing "in your head."
- Practice in front of a mirror so you can work on posture and mouth positions, and can begin to work out appropriate stage gestures.
- Finally, practice in front of your family or friends and allow them to critique your work.

## Work Ethic, Professionalism, and Self Discipline

Our goal as a department is to prepare you for the best life you can have, both professionally and personally. In order to succeed as a professional musician, you need the skills you study here. To learn those skills, you must function as an ethical, hard-working, dedicated, self-disciplined person. The rules and regulations listed below can help you achieve that goal, while working with those around you for the common good.

- Expect the best from yourself. Try every day to improve yourself in some way. You will be amazed at what you can achieve through hard work and practice.
- Ask for help when you need it. Whether it is a school issue or a home issue, there is someone in this school who can help. If it is a class or homework issue, ask for tutoring before it's too late to pass the class!
- Come to class ON TIME, prepared to work. Enter the classroom in a mature, professional, and respectful manner.
- Be courteous and respectful of your teachers, administrators, the Ellington staff and custodians, and be especially respectful of each other.
- Be respectful of the building—it can't help being old, and it needs your tender, loving care.
- You will often be observed by outside visitors, guest artists, and district officials. Please maintain your dignity, integrity, and professionalism at all times.
- It is YOUR responsibility to make up work you have missed through absence. Please communicate with your teachers often and find out what you need to do to succeed at Ellington.
- Students are NOT responsible for disciplining other students. They are responsible for their OWN attitudes and self-control. Please be a good example for others.
- Being a responsible Ellington citizen or a valued citizen of the world is not an accident—do the right thing!

## Classroom Etiquette

- Cell phones and other electronic devices are not allowed to be used in classrooms or in the theater. Cell phones and other devices can be confiscated by any faculty member.
- The Vocal Department phones in Dr. Ayers' and Mr. Bonds' rooms are available for your emergency use, but you must have specific permission to use them. Do not sit at a teacher's desk unless you have been given permission to do so.
- Please keep your classrooms and the practice modules as clean as possible. Throw away trash and pick up your belongings.
- Make-up and personal grooming are prohibited in the classroom, the modules, and the music floor hallway. After the first warning, grooming items will be confiscated and not returned.

## Concert and Recital Etiquette

All vocal students will sing on recital at some point in their tenure at Ellington, whether it is a regular student recital, a Vocal Honors Recital, or a senior recital. As this is an experience we all share, it should be an experience that is satisfying and rewarding for the performer and for the audience.

Acceptable behavior at classical concerts and recitals is based on common courtesy and the traditions of concert-goers for the last 150 years. As an audience member, you are there to listen and watch, not to actively participate in the concert. You cannot listen and talk at the same time, so rule number 1 is that you must remain quiet while others are performing. It is very important that you sit quietly and listen to the performance, whether it is a vocalist or an instrumentalist. There should be no yelling, as that can ruin the concentration of the performer.

Performers should be welcomed with applause, and should be thanked with applause at the end of the performance. No one should move around the theater while there is a performer on stage. Flowers and gifts should be presented to the performer in the lobby after the concert. Cell phones should be turned off while in the theater. Teachers have the right to confiscate cell phones used in the theater, whether you are calling, texting, or playing games.

All students are required to attend recitals. Recital attendance is taken, and absence from recitals will lower students' technique grades. Proper concert decorum is expected at all times.

- Vocal students perform on recitals at the discretion of the technique teacher. In all cases, the technique teacher will specify the date and the repertory for performance.
- Students performing on recitals must check in back stage 10 minutes prior to the announced starting time of the recital. Students who arrive late or who are inappropriately dressed may not perform.
- Performers are required to dress appropriately. Performers who are dressed inappropriately will not be allowed to perform:

Ladies - Modest (not tight) dress or dressy blouse and skirt to the knee (at least), dressy shoes. No cleavage, midriff, or bare shoulders may be visible.

Gentlemen - Shirt with collar, coat and tie, dress (leather, shine-able) shoes, dress slacks (or tuxedo)

Technique teachers are responsible for approving outfits for recital, but faculty members in charge of the recital will make the final determination on the appropriateness of recital attire. Performers who are dressed inappropriately are not allowed to perform. Non-student performers must also meet the requirements of the performance dress code.

### Failing Music Classes

Unfortunately, music classes are not able to be made up in the summer. They are not offered as part of any summer school curriculum in the District of Columbia. That means that in order to receive a Duke Ellington certificate in addition to a DCPS diploma, students must pass all of their music courses each year at Ellington. As a result, students who fail classes in their arts major are usually transferred from Ellington.

The only other option is for students to be taking two years of a subject at the same time, for instance, repeating Music Theory 2 while also taking Music Theory 3. This is not an ideal solution for those who are already struggling in their major and not meeting the requirements of the department. Students who receive a C or less in arts classes are placed on probation and are subject to transfer for failure to meet the standards of the Department.

## RESUMES

Every Ellington student is required to prepare a professional resume using the template outlined below.

Duke Ellington School of the Arts  
Student Resume Template

Vocal Music Department

### **Jane Smith, Soprano**

403 E Street NE  
Washington, DC 20020

202-667-8899

[Jsmith360@aol.com](mailto:Jsmith360@aol.com)

(This should be a professional-sounding address, not "babygirl@...")

#### ***Career Objectives***

To be a vocal music performer, in either classical or popular music.

To use the knowledge I acquire as a student at Duke Ellington to get acceptance to college and to obtain scholarships.

#### ***Performance Experience***

Three years, Duke Ellington Concert Choir, multiple performances in and outside of school, including trips to Florida Mozart Festival (2006), FAME competition in Branson, Missouri (2007), King's Dominion Choral Festival (2008)

Two Years, Duke Ellington Show Choir, hundreds of performances in and outside of school, including FAME Competition in Branson, Missouri (2007), FAME Competition in Hawaii (2008), King's Dominion Choral Festival (2008), numerous concerts at the White House, soloist, 2007, 2008

Principal performer in *The Wiz*, Duke Ellington School of the Arts 2008

Soloist, section leader, Praise Choir, Missionary Baptist Church, Washington, DC

Director, 2nd Sunday Youth Choir, Missionary Baptist Church, Washington, DC

#### ***Awards and Honors***

ACTSO competition, first runner up, 2007

Arts Recognition Talent Search competitor, Honorable Mention, 2008

Best Female Soloist award, FAME competition in Branson, Missouri

Scholastic and Arts Honor Rolls, 2006, 2007, 2008

#### ***Education and Training***

Shaw Middle School, grades 6, 7, 8, Juanita Tyler, vocal instructor

Duke Ellington School of the Arts, 9, 10, 11, 12

Private piano lessons, 2001-2005 Arlene Smith, piano instructor

Vocal Training at Duke Ellington, Edward Jackson, 2004-2008

(special classes?)

Repertoire

Community Service

Other Interests and Activities

Offices Held

Group memberships

Special Talents

## **Senior Responsibilities**

### **The next step!**

Senior vocal majors at Duke Ellington, while trying to finish high school at the highest level possible, should be planning to attend the college, university, or conservatory of their choice. Planning for post-secondary education should begin in your junior year. The department, in collaboration with your counselors, will advise you about this next step in your educational development.

### **College Auditions**

If you plan to major or minor in music in college, you should take the opportunity to audition for several different schools. Some schools will come to Ellington to hold auditions. Audition for the experience of auditioning, even if that school is not one you think you will attend.

Please work with your vocal techniques teacher to make sure you understand what music is appropriate for college auditions, especially if you plan to major in music theater rather than vocal performance or music education. Your teacher will help you find appropriate music and can guide you toward finding monologue materials. See the Department Chair if you have other questions about auditioning for music theater.

### **Auditioning and Competitions**

Vocal seniors should plan to make an audition tape at the beginning of their senior year. Seniors should plan to compete for scholarship and at vocal competitions throughout the year. Some may wish to participate in the Arts Recognition Talent Search competition. At the end of the junior year, students should apply online, and in the fall of the senior year, make a recording of appropriate music for the competition. The recording of a minimum of five (5) songs must be completed by October 20. Talk to the Department Chair or your Vocal Techniques teacher for further information.

### **Senior Recitals**

The culmination of the vocal major's training at Ellington is the presentation of a senior recital. Senior recitals are expected of all graduating seniors, although

the senior jury (hearing) meets the minimum requirement for graduation.

The senior recital is limited to 20 minutes of music and should demonstrate the music literature studied in Vocal Techniques class. The literature for the senior recital is chosen and/or approved by the individual vocal techniques teacher. Seniors will demonstrate their preparation for the recital at a senior hearing (jury) in February, presenting a minimum of four (4) songs in three languages with translations.

All the performers on a given senior recital must be seniors, graduates, professionals, or part of a faculty-sponsored ensemble. The dress code (see below) applies to ALL performers, whether they are Ellington students or not. Anyone not meeting the dress code requirement will not perform.

**Senior recital dress code:**

Ladies: Modest (not tight) dress or dressy blouse and skirt, falling at least to the knee, dressy shoes, stockings. No cleavage, midriff, or bare shoulders are allowed. Ladies who wear a strapless or spaghetti strap dress must add a shawl or jacket to cover shoulders. No pants or pants suits are allowed.

Gentlemen: Coat and tie (or suit), a dress shirt with a collar, dress shoes made of shine-able leather, dress slacks, dark or matching socks, or may wear a tuxedo with appropriate bowtie, shoes, and socks.

**Vocal Senior Showcase of Contemporary Music**

At some time during the year, senior vocalists will have the opportunity to perform on a senior showcase concert of contemporary music. Most of the planning and preparation for this concert is done by the seniors themselves in conjunction with the Department Chair. Please see Dr. Ayers if you would like to work on the preparation for the Senior Vocal Showcase.

## Parent Responsibilities

Parents of Vocal Music students are expected to attend a Vocal Parent meeting once a month. They should make a concerted effort to maintain contact with their child's music teachers throughout the school year.

The purpose of the Vocal Parent Group is to support student-related aspects of the Vocal Department, including ticket sales and fundraising, organization and attendance at concerts and other events, feeding and chaperoning students for rehearsal, concerts and other school events. Ellington Vocal Department teachers will call on parents for support throughout their tenure at Ellington. In return, parents can expect teachers to provide a high quality music education for their children.

Parents do not share responsibility for deciding how department funds are spent, for curriculum decisions, for teacher evaluation, or for scope and sequence of classes.

Parents need to provide a quiet place and time for their child to practice and study without interference from television and other distractions. Parents should encourage students to sing and practice daily on the technical and song materials assigned by the vocal techniques teachers.

It is extremely important that you support your child's performances and other activities at Ellington. Despite what he/she may tell you, your child needs and desires your support through your attendance and positive attitude about his/her activities. Parents should plan to attend all recitals and concerts in which their child participates, and to support other students if possible. Parents should provide a quiet place where students can practice for their vocal and piano lessons.

If there is a financial difficulty in purchasing tickets for a performance, please let the Department Chair know so an arrangement can be made.

Parents are welcome to observe classes at Ellington after receiving a visitor's pass from security at the downstairs entrance; however, parent/teacher conferences must be arranged in advance.

## Parent Officers

Each year the Vocal Parents group elects a slate of officers to serve for one year. Officers are asked to attend all meetings and to arrange the help necessary to successfully run concessions, tickets sales, and other fundraising activities to benefit the Vocal Department. Parents are also expected to help feed the students on the evenings of late rehearsal and performances, and to serve as chaperones for concerts and trips. If you are unable to participate in one way, we can probably find another way for you to have an impact! Please be in communication with the Vocal Parent president and other officers to find out how you can help.

### 2008-2009 Parent Officers

President: Karen Britton: [Karen.g.britton@verizon.net](mailto:Karen.g.britton@verizon.net)

Vice President: Betsy DeMulder: [edemulder@gmu.edu](mailto:edemulder@gmu.edu)

Co-Secretaries: Carole Suarez: [c/s80@starpower.net](mailto:c/s80@starpower.net)  
and Corliss Patten: [capatten123@yahoo.com](mailto:capatten123@yahoo.com)

Treasurer/Fundraising Chair: Monique Chase: [Chasemonique@aol.com](mailto:Chasemonique@aol.com)

## Fees and Other Expenses

All Duke Ellington students are required to pay a yearly activity fee of \$200, which directly benefits the Arts department in which they are enrolled. This fee should be paid at the time of registration, but can be paid in installments. Money orders and checks should be made to DESAP.

These fees are spent at the discretion of the department for the good of all, on sheet music and performance outfits for Concert Choir, Female Ensemble, and Male Ensemble, choral folders, field trips, program expenses, extra musicians for performances, guest artists, food for after-school rehearsals, piano tuning and repair, student workshops.

Vocal majors are required to purchase three song books, which will be used throughout the student's tenure at Ellington. The total cost of these books is less than \$50. Individual Vocal teachers will have more information about music book purchases. Students may also be asked to buy notebooks, binders, pencils, recording devices, and other school supplies.

Students should have a piano or electric keyboard (with regular sized keys) at home to use for vocal and piano practice.

Concert Choir, Female Ensemble, and Male Ensemble members are required to purchase appropriate performance shoes to go with the performance outfits provided by the Vocal Department. Young ladies must purchase black "character" shoes; young men must own black dress shoes made of shine-able leather. Replacement cost for lost or damaged performance outfits is \$75.

When the Vocal Department goes on trips to festivals or competitions, a great deal of the cost is covered by fundraising, ticket sales, and concert fees, but sometimes students may need to pay additional monies to participate.

Parents are expected to provide (or find donors for) concession sales at concerts and to provide student meals on days with extended rehearsals or evening concerts. Parent fundraising is handled through the Vocal Parents group that meets monthly. Parents are assessed a \$20 concession fee at the beginning of the year.

Students who are a part of the Show Choir will have additional expenses as outlined in the Show Choir handbook.

Non-residents of the District of Columbia will be assessed a tuition for attending Ellington. This tuition is paid to the District (not to Ellington) and replaces part of the taxes that District residents pay for school funding.

### **Purchase of music class materials**

Vocal Music majors will purchase and respectfully maintain song books as recommended by their techniques teacher. Individual vocal instructors will give more information regarding purchase of these materials. Students may be required to provide a black choir folder and a recording device.

Vocal students are provided with a Concert Choir/Female Ensemble/Male Ensemble costume. Replacement cost for this costume is \$75. Female students are expected to purchase stockings and character shoes to complete their performance outfit. Male students are expected to supply white dress shirts, black dress shoes (made of shine-able leather), and black socks.

Music Theory students may have to purchase some of their materials. All music theory students will use a pencil in class. Theory work done in ink may receive a failing grade despite the content of the work.

Each student must maintain school-owned equipment, such as choir costumes and music. Girls' concert dresses are washable in warm water and can be dried on low heat. Boys' tuxedos must be dry-cleaned. In case of loss or damage, the student is responsible for notifying the teacher for repair or replacement, and will be charged appropriately for the loss or damage.

## Ensembles and Performances

**Concert Choir**, directed by Samuel L. E. Bonds, is the required ensemble for first-year males, and all second-, third-, and fourth-year vocal majors. The Concert Choir performs a wide variety of music, including classical, spirituals, gospel, and traditional choral music. The Concert Choir meets at 9<sup>th</sup> period and may have after-school rehearsals before major concerts. The Concert Choir usually performs two to three times each year at school (including graduation) and multiple times off campus. They may participate in festivals or competitions in other cities.

**Female Ensemble** is a required ensemble for first-year girls. It is directed by Angela Powell Walker. It meets at 7<sup>th</sup> period. Female Ensemble will perform a minimum of two times and may perform with the Concert Choir from time to time.

**Male Ensemble** is a required ensemble for first-year boys. It is directed by Samuel L. E. Bonds and meets during 7<sup>th</sup> period. Male Ensemble will perform a minimum of two times and may perform with the Concert Choir.

**Show Choir** is an elective ensemble open to all students at Ellington through permission of the director, Samuel L. E. Bonds. The internationally-known Show Choir was created by Mr. Bonds in 1986, and sings almost every style of music from classical to jazz to Motown. Show Choir members are required to sing and dance at an advanced level, and to commit a great deal of time and energy to rehearsals and performances while maintaining academic and arts excellence. Show Choir meets at 10<sup>th</sup> period and will have additional rehearsals after school. Students interested in joining the Show Choir should contact Mr. Bonds about the audition procedure.

**Jazz Vocal Styles** is an elective ensemble created three years ago, supported by the Ella Fitzgerald Foundation. Students who take Jazz Vocal Styles will sing in various jazz styles and begin to learn the art of improvisation. They will study the history of jazz and listen to the music of great jazz singers. Class members will have several opportunities to sing at school and in the community.

**Opera Workshop** is an elective class open to junior and senior vocal students who have an interest in learning about and singing opera. It was created by Dr. Mary Jane Ayers. After learning about the history of opera, studying operas and opera singers, and a hands-on introduction to acting and stagecraft, the class culminates in a fully costumed and staged opera production in May.

## Performances and other activities outside the department

### Private Lessons

Taking private voice lessons with an outside teacher can lead to confusion for the vocal student and does not replace the requirements for Vocal Techniques class. Vocal students are discouraged from taking voice lessons outside of Ellington. Performances arranged by teachers outside of Ellington should be discussed with and approved by the technique teacher. On the other hand, private piano lessons can be very helpful to the vocal student and will help develop musicianship and other music skills and are encouraged.

### Outside performances, etc.

- Students are NOT excused from classes, from rehearsals, or (especially) from in-school or school-related performances because of non-school-related activities. If outside performances conflict with Ellington activities, the student will still be graded for the Ellington activity.
- Students are NOT excused from Vocal Department classes and activities in order to participate in sports events either at Ellington or at other places.
- Only SENIOR Vocal majors are allowed to participate in the Senior Variety Show and the Senior Fashion Show. Senior participants must have permission from their Department Chair and must maintain a 2.5 grade point average.
- Students who wish to perform with another Department at Ellington must have no less than a "C" in the previous advisory in any music class, and must have the written permission of his/her vocal technique teacher and the Department Chair.

Teaching and Learning Healthy Vocal Techniques:  
Things Which Cause the Voice to Grow and Develop  
(Samuel L. E. Bonds)

Objective:

*To develop a healthy vocal technique that can be used to sing in any musical style, classical, jazz, musical theater, rhythm and blues, etc.*

- I. Posture
  - A. Placement of Feet
  - B. Alignment of Spine
  - C. Position of Shoulders and Chest
  - D. Position of Chin and Jaw
  - E. Position of Hands
  
- II. Breath Management - Respiration
  - A. Diaphragmatic
  - B. Costal
  
- III. The Open Throat - Phonation
  - A. Low Larynx
  - B. Forward Tongue Position
  - C. Lift Soft Palate (Velum)
  - D. Jaw Dropped Loosely from its Hinge
  - E. An Expansive and Correct Posture
  
- IV. Resonance, Resonators
  - A. Pharynx
  - B. Mouth
  - C. Nasal Cavity
  - D. Mask Resonance
  
- V. Registers
  - A. Head Resonance
  - B. Chest Resonance
  - C. Mouth Resonance
  
- VI. Articulation - Tongue, Lips, Teeth
  
- VII. Diction
  - A. Vowels
  - B. Consonants

## Seven steps to learning vocal music quickly and thoroughly

(based on material from Dr. Daryl Taylor)

1. Speak the text as poetry. Try to feel the rhythm of the words, even in foreign languages, since the text probably inspired the composer.
2. Recite or count and clap the rhythm, then examine the rhythms carefully and accurately, including the piano introduction, interludes, etc.
3. Speak the text in rhythm.
4. Play the melody, then sing it without words, using a neutral vowel; allow time for interludes of accompaniment.
5. Sing the melody using only the vowel sound of the words.
6. Insert the consonants, practice any awkward connections or pronunciations of consonants.
7. Work with the pianist for tempi, interpretation, and expression. Make the song YOURS.

## Hierarchy of Learning a Song

(Dr. Mary Jane Ayers)

Levels 1 and 2 are technical and require lower order thinking skills; levels 3 and 4 are interpretive and require higher order thinking skills.\* Most singers get to levels 1 and 2, and to a small part of level 3, but level 4 is where the real rewards are for the singer and for the listener.

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| Level 1 | Knowing the notes, rhythms, word pronunciation and placement, identification of tempo, expression marks, etc.   |
| Level 2 | Diction and pronunciation (correct usage of vowels and consonants), phrasing (breathing patterns), memorizing   |
| Level 3 | Expressive singing, demonstrating understanding of text ("acting"), understanding relationship between accompaniment and voice line, analysis of musical qualities, including harmony, cadences, form   |
| Level 4 | Musical integration of the song into the mind and body, deep understanding of the composer's purpose, including an understanding of the composer's world and the time in which the piece was written. An understanding of the purpose of performing the music for the singer and for the audience |

\*From Benjamin Bloom's *Taxonomy of Thinking Skills*

1. Lower Order Thinking Skills are concepts like: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application
2. Higher Order Thinking Skills are concepts like: Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation

## **Afterword**

The regulations and policies in this Vocal Department Handbook have evolved from many years of experience with vocal students and are in force for the duration of the student's stay at Duke Ellington.

When Students, Parents, and Faculty follow these policies, the Vocal Music Department functions with the kind of positive spirit we expect at Ellington. Please keep this Handbook as a reference, and feel free to contact the members of the Vocal Department if there are questions or concerns regarding these policies or if you have specific problems regarding something in the Department.

**Dr. Mary Jane Ayers, Chair**  
Vocal Music Department  
202-333-2984, 202-298-1777 x2690  
[mja4457@aol.com](mailto:mja4457@aol.com)

## Syllabi and Rubrics for Choirs and Vocal Techniques Classes

### **Vocal Music Department Course Syllabus for: Vocal Techniques 1-4 Credit: One Carnegie Unit each year**

#### **Course Description**

Vocal Techniques is an ongoing (three or four year) course of study that develops the fundamentals of good singing through group and voice classes. Techniques of study include exercises that develop singing skills, repertoire in several languages and formal and informal performances. It is an essential course for every vocal major each year, and a yearly requirement for graduation from The Duke Ellington School of the Arts.

#### **Content Standards**

Six DCPS Content Standards are basic to the core skills, concepts and knowledge for vocal techniques courses:

- Students Sing Alone and with Others, a Varied Repertoire of Music Representing Diverse Genres, Styles and Cultures
- Students Read, Notate, and Interpret Notational Symbols for Rhythmic and Melodic Patterns
- Students Listen, Analyze, Compare and Describe Different Forms of Music
- Students Critique Their Own Performance and the Performances of Others
- Students Identify, Investigate and Interpret Relationships Among the Principles of Music and Other Disciplines
- Students Explore a Variety of Heritages from Music of Many Cultures

#### **Course Outline**

Primary to the study of vocal techniques are the fundamentals of singing—posture, breath management, vowel production, consonant production, musical line, vocal flexibility and the ability to interpret music with expression and appropriate style. Each student is expected to make progress in each area of the fundamentals of singing through class participation and daily practice.

Students will learn the physiology of the voice and apply that knowledge to their technical studies. They will study vocal hygiene and professional care of the voice, diction in several languages, and they will be introduced to the International

Phonetic Alphabet. Students will apply their music reading and writing skills to the study of voice.

Students will memorize repertoire in the songs' original languages, and they will be able to translate and interpret texts and poetry. They will learn and demonstrate appropriate stage presence, poise and discipline.

### **Grading and Evaluation Procedures**

Students are graded on class work each advisory and on a jury each semester. Class works includes learning and performing classical vocal literature as outlined below. Class grades may also include written work (song translations tests, composer papers, program notes, concert reports, etc.) or any criteria the teacher deems necessary to the development of the student. Jury grades are determined by averaging the grades given by the teacher/evaluators on the faculty jury panel. The jury grade counts for 50% of the class grade for advisories 2 and 4. Students who fail the final jury may be asked to transfer from Ellington.

Seniors are expected to give a senior recital of not more than 20 minutes during their senior year, reflecting the music they have studied while at Ellington. Those who are not able to give a recital must perform a senior jury with the same repertoire criteria.

**All students are expected to treat each other and their teachers with respect and to follow the guidelines given in the Music Department Handbook and the Duke Ellington School of the Arts Community Handbook.**

### **Literature Requirements**

Vocal students are expected to purchase their own music for vocal classes. Individual teachers will assign books in class. Specific songs are assigned by individual voice teachers, but general guidelines for study are outlined below.

1 <sup>st</sup> Year	Each semester: 2 songs in Italian, 1 Spiritual, 1 English Song
2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	Each semester: 1 song in Italian, 1 German, 1 Spiritual, 1 English
3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	Each semester: 4 songs in 3 languages
Senior Year	4 songs in 3 languages for Senior Hearing, Limit of 20 minutes of music for Senior Recital

# Vocal Music Department

## Course Syllabus for Concert Choir

### Credit: One Carnegie Unit

#### Course Description

The Concert Choir is a large vocal ensemble course required for all vocal music majors after their first year. The Concert Choir performs music from the great choral literature of the last five centuries and contemporary literature as selected by the instructors. The Choir may be separated into smaller choirs at the discretion of the directors.

#### Content Standards

Four DCPS Music Content Standards are basic to the core skills, concepts and knowledge needed for Concert Choir:

- Students sing alone and with others a varied repertoire of music representing diverse genres, styles and cultures
- Students read, notate and interpret notational symbols for rhythmic and melodic patterns
- Students critique their own performance and the performances of others
- Students explore a variety of heritages from music of many cultures

#### Course Outline

The Concert Choir rehearses regularly, learning complex music. The Concert Choir performs when appropriate, at least twice a year, and will participate in festivals and competitions at the discretion of the instructors. Student leaders can be elected from the Choir, and student section leaders will be assigned by the instructors.

#### Grading and Evaluation Procedures

Grading is based on attendance and performance as outlined in the Concert Choir Rubric found below:

Each Concert Choir member is expected to meet the standards of performance and behavior outlined below:

To receive a grade of "A", students will

- Attend and perform at all concerts
- Attend all rehearsals on time and stay to the end
- Know the music and be able to perform it individually in quartets
- Remain quiet, respectful and attentive in rehearsals
- Assist others in maintenance of music, which may include
  - Black folder with name on front
  - Selections being rehearsed
  - Sharpened pencil
- Have music available at every rehearsal
- Return music after each rehearsal
- Maintain performance outfit in good condition
- Show leadership regarding the participation of others in rehearsals and performances
- Develop music reading skills and help others to develop reading skills
- Be a section leader or a responsive member of a section
- Respond positively to whoever is in charge during rehearsal or performance

To receive a grade of "B", students will

- Attend and perform at all concerts
- Attend rehearsals on time
- Know the music and be able to perform it individually in quartets
- Remain quiet, respectful and attentive in rehearsals
- Maintain music in good condition
- Maintain performance outfit in good condition
- Develop music reading skills and help others to develop reading skills
- Be a section leader or a responsive member of a section
- Respond positively to whoever is in charge during rehearsal or performance

To receive a grade of "C", students will

- Attend and perform at all concerts
- Attend rehearsals on time
- Know the music and be able to perform it individually in quartets
- Remain quiet, respectful and attentive in rehearsals
- Maintain music in good condition

The grade of "D" or "F" will be given to those not meeting the responsibilities outlined in "C" above. Concerts and other performances are the "tests" for this class, and will be graded accordingly. Those students on academic or artistic probation are not allowed to perform off campus.

# Vocal Music Department

## Course Syllabus for Show Choir I - IV

*Credit: One Carnegie Unit*

### Course Description

The Show Choir performs a diverse choral and vocal repertoire, including selections from various musical styles and genres: Classical (16<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries), Spirituals, Gospel, Folk, Opera, Operetta, Blues, Jazz, and Motown. Today, singers are not only expected to sing beautifully, but also to dance and act. The Show Choir offers multi-talented students the opportunity to develop all of their performing abilities. The course is designed to help young performing artists learn to effectively combine beautiful singing, good acting and expressive dancing. Developing all of these performance skills enhances the singers' ability to communicate, giving the singer a greater opportunity for success.

### Content Standards

Four DCPS Music Content Standards are basic to the core skills, concepts and knowledge needed for Show Choir:

- Students sing alone and with others a varied repertoire of music representing diverse genres, styles and cultures
- Students read, notate and interpret notational symbols for rhythmic and melodic patterns
- Students critique their own performance and the performances of others
- Students explore a variety of heritages from music of many cultures

### Pre-Requisites:

Students must possess an outstanding voice with good tone quality, excellent tonal memory and the desire to learn and study dance and acting.

The course is open to all students at Ellington, regardless of student's major or department, but each student must have permission of the instructor and pass an extensive audition that includes singing, dancing and acting.

## **Course Outline**

The Show Choir rehearses five days a week, with extra dance and drama classes as needed. There are also workshops on make-up, staging, choreography, etc. The philosophy guiding the group is that students learn best by practicing what they learn through performance.

## **Grading and Evaluation Procedures**

Grading is based on attendance and participation at rehearsals, performances, workshops, and other activities. Complete costume attire is required to participate in performances. Any student improperly or incompletely attired in the designated costume will not be allowed to perform at that event. An active parent support group assists the Show Choir with logistical and financial matters and helps to mentor and encourage students in their commitment to the Show Choir.

## Handbook Receipt

I have received the Vocal Department Handbook and understand that I am responsible for following the policies and procedures set forth in the Handbook. I further understand that

\_\_\_\_\_ (student's name) has the status of **CONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE** for the first year of entry into our program, and will be evaluated at the end of each year for continuing study at Ellington. Those conditions are outlined in the Vocal Handbook, and include curriculum, behavioral, and financial obligations.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Vocal Student

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_

Date