

March Helpful Hints: Vocal Jazz in the Elementary Music Classroom

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- Have you ever wanted to teach your students a vocal jazz standard, but found the piano accompaniment or chord lead sheet symbols too challenging? There's an app for that! It's called iReal Pro, and it comes equipped with hundreds of chord charts for vocal jazz standards that are pre-loaded into the app. All you do is find the vocal jazz standard, hit play, and voila! iReal Pro also allows users to create their own chord charts, and you can choose which instruments are in your chart's final arrangement as well.
- Looking for an easy yet authentic way to model scatting and vocal improvisation for your students? Famous scatting solos (such as Ella Fitzgerald's solo in *Blue Skies*, 1958) have actually been transcribed by vocal jazz artists such as Andrea Calderwood and Justin Binek. Teachers can learn and model entire scatting solos for students, then help students build their own scatting vocabulary by echo teaching small portions of the scatting solo. Through imitation, students will grasp syllables, rhythms, and chord structures of professional solos until they feel comfortable to create their own scatting solos.
- When teaching elementary-aged learners about vocal jazz style scatting and improvisation, utilize a layered, elemental approach. Beginning with speech-based scatting syllables that are echoed from the teacher, progress with question and answer improvisation where learners' 4-beat answers differ from the teacher's 4-beat questions. Gradually encourage students to add pitch to their spoken improvisation by adding a blues scale-based accompaniment. Chordal accompaniment based on a blues scale is the perfect sound carpet for beginning vocal jazz improvisers.