

Music & Performing Arts Professions -

SYLLABUS  
VOCAL TRAINING (PRIVATE LESSONS)  
MPAVP-UG 1111/GE 2111  
Academic Year 2024-2025  
2-4 Variable Credits

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## PROFESSOR INFORMATION

David J. Baldwin  
Bachelor of Music Education, Taylor University  
Master of Music–Voice Performance, BGSU  
Advanced Certificate of Vocal Pedagogy, NYU  
Singing Athlete™ Level 1,2,3 Teacher Certification  
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## CATALOG DESCRIPTION

### Vocal Training (Private Lessons)

Private or group lessons (by examination) in voice, supplemented by extra assignments, outside practice, and observation. Required attendance at recitals.

## CREDIT VALUES

2 Credits = 7 hours of instruction (2-Credit students will receive 7 consecutive 1-hour lessons, either the first ½ of semester (Q1) or second ½ of semester (Q2).)

3/4 Credits = 14 hours of instruction

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Build a healthy and communicative **vocal technique** with exercises, drills, and tools based in neuroscience, vocal pedagogy, physical and mental health.
- Build your **Toolbox of High-Payoff exercises and drills** that help you sing your best.

- Prepare new vocal repertoire for voice lessons, classes, auditions, and other uses with a focus on **musical excellence** through technique, acting integration, and musicality.
- Develop **unique individuality and artistry** as a singer, learning from other great singers and then putting a new spin on repertoire in ways appropriate to genre and style.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

- First, DO NO HARM: Establish and maintain a healthy vocal technique.
- Learn vocal exercises to warm-up and strengthen the voice.
- Gain an understanding of how your voice functions, including registers, air flow, resonance, embouchure, and how to make adjustments.
- Be able to discuss your voice and how it functions in anatomically correct terms.
- Explore physical drills and tools that impact the voice, including breathing, balance, vision, musculoskeletal drills, and more.
- Apply healthy vocal technique, tools and drills to new and old vocal repertoire.
- Build the skills of an artist, including self discipline, vocal pacing, acting integration, and mindfulness.
- Foster musicality and expressivity in music and text.
- Present repertoire in auditions, self-tapes, classes, and performances, presenting yourself professionally in all settings.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **RECORDING:** It is mandatory you record and listen back to every lesson. Cell phones work very well. Listening back to your lessons will help you understand the changes we are making; our understanding of our sound is different while we are singing than when we are listening. This will also help you go back over any new tools as you add them to your toolbox.
2. **PRINT YOUR MUSIC/PREPARE A REP BOOK:** You must print your music and bring it to lessons to take notes on the music. Your notes will help you implement feedback. These notes may be on interpretation, pronunciation, or technique. I recommend placing all sheet music in a 3-ring binder, as you will need this for auditions.
  - *You may also use an iPad to view and take notes on your sheet music. [ForScore](#) is the recommended app that professional musicians use for this purpose. However, iPads are not suggested for professional*

*auditions—though I believe that will eventually change. **When in doubt, print it out!***

3. **PRACTICING:** You must practice a minimum of 3 hours per week while you are taking Applied Voice Lessons, though more is recommended. Shorter 20-30 minute practice sessions are recommended, perhaps twice on some days. I recommend practicing 6 days a week and taking one day off.
4. **MINDFULNESS:** You are expected to practice Mindfulness Meditation for **four 5-minute sessions each week** between lessons. (Combined with the 5-minute Meditation in class, this is a minimum of 25 minutes of Mindfulness practice per week.) You can use a timer or an app such as Headspace or Calm. You can also use the recording of our 5-minute Guided Meditation from your lesson.
5. **MIDTERM & FINAL SELF-TAPES:** For Midterm and Final, you will submit a self-tape recording of one complete song. (This will constitute 20% of your Final Grade in the Fall Semester.)
6. **JURIES:** In the Spring Semester of Freshman, Sophomore, and Junior Year of Undergraduate, and 1st year of Graduate Study, 20% of your Final Grade is based on your Jury scores from me and the Full-Time Faculty.

## REPERTOIRE SELECTION AND PREPARATION

- My main objective is **healthy, efficient and communicative singing**. Whether you are pursuing Classical Voice, Contemporary Voice or Musical Theater, I want you to be able to easily meet the demands of any contract you might be offered: whether it is 8 musical performances per week, 3 opera performances per week, or a combination of numerous gigs per week.
- I view your singing as a process rather than a product. This means that I am zoomed out, looking at your 4 years of Undergraduate Study or 2 years of Graduate Study as a whole. I'm happy to discuss this big picture with you! Your first semesters will be spent working to iron out technique in repertoire, so repertoire selection is very important!
- Access your Repertoire Sheets here: <https://dbaldwin77.wordpress.com/studio/>. On these sheets, you will find a tab with your last name. The far right tabs show the requirements from the most updated Syllabi I have for Song Analysis, Diction or Repertoire courses.
- At the beginning of each semester, I will assign 5-8 songs on your Repertoire Sheet. I do this by looking ahead to the Syllabi of all performance classes (*for example, Freshman year, I am preparing you with songs by the composers you will be required to sing in Song Analysis your Sophomore year.*) When you get to these classes, you can focus on the acting instead of worrying about learning new songs.

- Please obtain Sheet Music legally: at Bobst Library, Musicnotes.com, or a similar online sheet music website.
- **Place all of your Sheet Music PDFs in a Google Drive folder**, and add me as an Editor to this folder. This way, I will always have access to your music. You should also share this folder with your Accompanist each semester.
- Sometimes a song I've chosen won't thrill you—in this case, we can work together to find another song by the same composer. If I don't feel that a song you want to sing is appropriate for what we're working on in lessons, I will talk over this with you and we can come up with something that meets the same requirement.
- All songs assigned each semester should be presented in a lesson at least once completely memorized. Any incomplete songs will be marked as such on the Repertoire Sheet and will roll over to the following semester.
- Please advise me of all the courses in which you are required to sing (i.e. Song Repertoire, Scene Study, Diction Class, Song Analysis, Opera Workshop, etc.)  
**When possible all music should be brought to a lesson before public performance.**
- If you have songs you're working on for an ensemble, auditions, or a show you've been cast in, those songs/cuts should also be brought to lessons so that we can work on them together.
- At the end of your Junior Year of Undergrad, or your 1st year of Graduate study, we will begin drafting your recital program. This will allow us plenty of time so that most of your songs are memorized at least one month before the recital.
- **Practice makes Permanent!** Hastily memorizing music often leads to ingrained errors that are often difficult to unlearn. Therefore, **be precise when learning new repertoire**. This even includes songs where singers have typically taken a degree of musical and rhythmic freedom. Learn what is on the page first.
- Feel free to listen to recordings, but don't use this as a crutch for learning and memorization. Rely on what Sondheim/Verdi wrote vs. what Patinkin/Pavarotti sang on their recordings. Discovering multiple versions of a song can be helpful in learning stylistic interpretations between singers as well as understanding the continuation of historical performance practices (i.e. How does one sing Handel vs. Puccini or Rodgers vs. JRB?).
- Research the composer and the poet/librettist. Understand the current mental/emotional state of the character. What are my character's circumstances? Why is my character saying these words? Be prepared to discuss this information during the lesson.
- If the song is in a foreign language, write out the text and word-for-word translation. Few things are more impressive than hearing a singer effectively communicate in a language not their own. The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) will be utilized in lessons.

## PRACTICING

When it comes to singing and vocal coordination, “practice makes permanent (not perfect).” I expect you to practice most days to ensure optimal vocal progress (it’s good for the voice/brain/soul to take a day off once a week). You should begin with 10-20 minutes of a vocal warm-up, then 10-20 minutes of practicing/memorizing repertoire. ***Research has shown that more practice sessions of shorter length can also be quite effective, spread throughout your day.***

Please remember to warm up prior to any class in which you are expected to perform - including choir or stage rehearsals. You do not need to warm up before a Voice Lesson.

**Vocal Load:** Since we cannot leave our instruments in a case or practice room, please pace yourself if you have a lot of singing to do within a day or week. I am a huge proponent of “marking” during rehearsals when scenes/songs are repeated more than once. Typically, it is best to mark before you experience vocal fatigue. Please ask if you need me to explain how to mark effectively.

Keep in mind that singing is a physical activity that requires patience and diligence. You cannot “cram” for a lesson/recital/ performance as you can for a history exam. Expecting your mind to thoroughly learn words, notes, and rhythms in a short amount of time is impossible. An even more impossible task is expecting your voice and body to adjust to new coordination skills with ease and longevity.

Remember that a lot of song preparation requires no singing. Reference [THIS BLOG POST](#) for ways to practice when you don’t feel 100%. You may have other drills or exercises that do not use your voice that you can continue to practice during these times.

## MINDFULNESS

Each lesson will begin with a 5-minute Mindfulness Meditation practice. You are also assigned to practice Mindfulness Meditation 4 more times in your week, for a total of 25 minutes each week, minimum.

Mindfulness: A mindful artist and performer must get out of their head and be present in the room with their scene partner or audience. To practice this skill of “being present,” we practice Mindfulness Meditation.

Interoception: Singing study requires paying mindful attention to small things in your body. Mindfulness Meditation is one way to practice this focused attention.

A beneficial side effect of Mindfulness practice is that it can help us battle Stress and Anxiety, which are enemies of learning!

## MIDTERM AND FINAL SELF-TAPE ASSIGNMENTS

Video submissions are ubiquitous in the Industry. You must be prepared to film your work. It is my goal that when you graduate, you will have a library of filmed work that you can use for submissions. Many of these recordings will also be useful for Department Auditions and summer theater auditions.

***Your Midterm & Final Assignments are to post ONE complete song that we've worked on each semester to YOUR YouTube page*** (They must be 2 complete and different songs.)

- Do not slate (state your name and title). Put the title and composer/lyricist in the video description (I.e. "Many A New Day" from Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Oklahoma*).
- Present yourself in the best light (use a ring light or daytime natural lighting—face a window).
- Plain backgrounds are best.
- Film Horizontally (Landscape orientation.)
- Make it public (Unlisted is OK) and share the LINK ONLY with me. DO NOT send a file.
- We will watch the Midterm together and discuss any ways you can improve your presentation.
- DUE DATES for these assignments are sent by email at the beginning of the semester. ***Please take note of the Due Date, as points may be taken off for late submission.***

## JURIES

You are required to present a Jury each Spring semester of years in which you have not presented a recital (typically Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, and 1st year Graduate.) The Jury grade constitutes 20% of your Final Grade in this course.

ALL:

- ***Must be introduced or reworked in the academic year, memorized and present a balanced cross section of the genre and vocalism.***
- Extended works such as The Girl in 14G, Monica's Waltz and Glitter and be Gay

are not advisable for juries.

- Students will choose the first selection and the adjudication panel may ask for additional full or sections of other repertoire listed.
- The “Adjudication Panel” consists of all VP Full-Time Faculty and your voice teacher.
- We are assessing growth based on prior assessments and are looking for improvement in vocal technique, knowledge or style/musicianship and communication skills.
- You must present a cross section of era and style as per your concentration and are encouraged to choose a selection outside of your concentration to demonstrate growth and versatility.

<b>Undergraduate:</b>	<b>Number of songs</b>	<b>Requirements in addition to balance cross section of the genre/vocalism</b>	<b>Note:</b>
<b>Music Theatre</b>		<b>Must demonstrate balanced registration</b>	
First Year	4	One classical song	
Sophomore	6		May present one CV
Junior	6		May present one CV
<b>Classical</b>			
First Year	4	Italian & English	May present one MT
Sophomore	6	German, French, Italian & English (Spanish recommended)	May present one MT
<b>Contemporary</b>		<b>Must demonstrate balanced registration</b>	
First Year	4	Recommended: One classical or traditional folk song	
Sophomore	6		
Junior	6	Recommended: one Jazz song.	
<b>Music Education</b>		<b>Must demonstrate balanced registration</b>	
First Year	4	One classical song	
Sophomore	4	At least 2 genres represented (repertoire suggestion choose from: Classical/Jazz/Folk/Music Theatre/Pop, etc.)	(requirement after 2023)
Junior	4	3 genres represented (repertoire suggestion choose from: Classical/Jazz/Folk/Music Theatre/pop, etc.)	(requirement after 2023)
<b>Graduate</b>	<b>Number of songs</b>	<b>Requirements in addition to balance cross section of the genre/vocalism</b>	<b>Note:</b>

<b>Music Theatre</b>	6	Must present a cross section of the genre / must present balanced registration	May present one CV
<b>Classical</b>	6	Must present a cross section of the genre: Baroque, Classical/Early Romantic, Romantic, Contemporary, and all 4 languages (German, French, Italian & English (Spanish recommended))	May present one MT

## OPEN DOOR POLICY

During my graduate studies at BGSU, while working throughout my career as a lesson accompanist, and during my graduate studies in the NYU Vocal Pedagogy Certificate program, I learned an immeasurable amount by observing voice lessons of all voice types. Sometimes a piece of feedback hits differently when it's given to someone else and you can observe and hear the changes.

I encourage you to observe as many lessons as you can with my other students (VP and Music Ed majors only). You are always welcome!

Vocal Pedagogy students at NYU in the Undergraduate Pedagogy course and the Advanced Certificate in Pedagogy program are required to observe lessons, and I will always say yes when they ask to observe in my studio. If you do not want to be observed on a particular day for a particular reason, you can ask NOT to be observed.

## GRADING

<b>BALDWIN STUDIO GRADING RUBRIC</b>	
<b>Competency</b>	<b>Possible Score</b>
<b>VOCAL ASSESSMENT:</b> Resonance Strategy(ies), Breath Management Diction/Articulation, Posture/Alignment Embouchure, Vowel Modification, Vocal Load Management Growth demonstrated	30
<b>PROFESSIONAL ASSESSMENT:</b> Musicianship/Accuracy Preparation of music and assignments (including Mindfulness Meditation) Genre Specific: diction, style (vocal choices) Initiative/Conduct/Attitude Communication with Instructor, Accompanist, others	20

Growth demonstrated	
<b>ARTISTIC ASSESSMENT:</b> Amalgamation of Skill Sets Poise/Focus/Communication Use of Space/Physicality Self Assessment/Correction (process) Integration of Acting and Singing in lessons and performances Growth demonstrated	30
<b>PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT:</b> Fall Semester: Midterm & Final Self-Tape Assignments Spring Semester: Jury Scores Recital Semester: Recital Grade from Instructor & Coach	20
<b>TOTAL POSSIBLE SCORE</b>	<b>100</b>
Attendance Deductions: Unexcused Absence: -10pts Excused Absences after 2: -10pts Excessive Lateness: -5pts	
<b>FINAL GRADE SCORE</b>	<b>100</b>
Steinhardt Grading Scale: A 94-100%   A- 90-93% B+ 87-89%   B 84-86%   B- 80-83% C+ 77-79%   C 74-76%   C- 70-73% D+ 67-69%   D 64-66%   F 0-63%	

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

### Basic Guidelines:

- Attendance and punctuality are mandatory.
- If you are running late, please email me ASAP..
- If you will be canceling a lesson for any reason, email me ASAP.
- Any excused absences will be made up at a time that is mutually convenient.
- There are NO make-up lessons for make-up lessons.

### Excused Absences:

- Illness (with 24 hrs notice). **I am happy to reschedule if you are sick, but 24 hrs notice is required.**
- Emergency (dealt with case-by-case)

- Religious Observance (required notice at the **beginning** of the semester)
- You may only have 2 Excused Absences in one semester. All other absences are Unexcused.

#### Unexcused Absences:

- Same day cancellations are considered Unexcused and will not be made up under any circumstances. (***Same day cancellations for illness may be excused on a case-by-case basis if determined to be a Medical Emergency.***)

#### Lateness:

- Arriving on time for lessons is respectful.
- Tardiness beyond 5 minutes will be noted in my Attendance Log.
- 3 or more late arrivals will cause a 5 point drop in the final grade.
- Tardiness beyond 15 minutes (without contacting me) is considered an Unexcused Absence.

#### Attendance Effects on Final Grade:

- First Unexcused Absence: No Makeup Lesson, No grade penalty
- Second and Subsequent Unexcused Absences: -10pts
- Excused Absences after 2: -10pts
- Excessive Tardiness: -5pts

Due to my performance schedule outside NYU, there will be times when I need to reschedule your lesson. I will give advance notice of these dates. I am aware that this process will affect your accompanist; we will do our best. *It is your responsibility to advise your pianist of any changes to your lesson schedule (date/time/location).*

## COURSE COMMUNICATION

E-mail is the official communication tool at NYU. All non-urgent communication should use this channel. You will find that I respond to all emails within 24 hours Monday through Friday.

Some conversations are better had in person. I am happy to schedule a time outside lessons to have these conversations, so that lesson time can remain committed to singing. Please do not hesitate to reach out by email to schedule a conversation about something that concerns you.

## INSTRUCTIONAL TOUCH

Voice Teachers use Instructional Touch to a varying degree in our Industry. I attempt NOT to touch my students when possible. I try first to instruct you to touch your own body by demonstrating on myself, and asking you to repeat the touch on yourself. (Often, this applies to head and neck.) On the rare occasion that I think it would be beneficial for me to touch your body (for example, touching a muscle you are activating while you are doing a drill), I will ask “May I touch you?” Please say no if you are not comfortable being touched at that moment.

## COMMITMENT

**Your Commitment:** You commit to approaching repertoire with curiosity and preparing it for lessons to the best of your ability. You commit to receiving feedback, asking questions, and participating in a dialogue around your healthiest and best singing. You commit to practicing a minimum of 3 hours a week to make the most of your time in Applied Voice Lessons.

**My Commitment:** I commit to offering feedback in a clear, kind and honest way. I commit to assigning varied repertoire that builds on your current skills and stretches you to attain new skills. I commit to continually learning all I can about the voice, the Industry, and teaching and learning.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All students are responsible for understanding and complying with the [NYU Steinhardt Statement on Academic Integrity](#).

## STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY

New York University is committed to providing equal educational opportunity and participation for all students, and academic accommodations are available for qualified students who disclose their disability to the Moses Center. Students requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center for Student Accessibility as early as possible in the semester for assistance (telephone: 212-998-4980 / website: [www.nyu.edu/csa](http://www.nyu.edu/csa) / email: [mosescsa@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsa@nyu.edu)).

## STATEMENT ON ANTI-RACISM, INCLUSION, AND EQUITY

We are committed to supporting our students and fostering an inclusive and equitable classroom environment where individuals of all backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, religious and political affiliations, and abilities are treated with respect. It is our intent that all students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. If you

feel that this course is falling short of that commitment, please feel free to speak with me.

## RELIGIOUS OBSERVATION

NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Students must notify the instructor in advance of religious holidays or observances that might coincide with exams, assignments, or class times to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives. Students may also contact [religiousaccommodations@nyu.edu](mailto:religiousaccommodations@nyu.edu) for assistance.

## MENTAL HEALTH STATEMENT

If you are experiencing undue personal and/or academic stress during the semester that may be interfering with your ability to perform academically, the [NYU Wellness Exchange](#) (212 443 9999) offers a range of services to assist and support you. I am available to speak with you about stresses related to your work in my course, and I can assist you in connecting with the Wellness Exchange. Additionally, if you anticipate any challenges with completing the assignments, readings, exams and other work required in this course, I encourage you to register with the [Moses Center](#) in advance so that you may be granted the proper academic accommodations.