

**New York University**  
Steinhardt School  
Department of Music and Performing Arts Professions

***Private Voice Lessons***  
MPAVP-UE 1111-017 (13222) (Undergraduate)  
MPAVP-GE 2111-017 (6919) (Graduate)

Professor Kathleen Adams

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“Singing is a way of escaping. It’s another world. I’m no longer on earth.”

-Edith Piaf

***Course Expectation***

You have chosen Steinhardt’s program to receive a solid education with hopes to become a great performer or teacher in the professional industry. Discipline and motivation are **your** responsibility. Most professional singers are employed because they have a history of great diligence, instead of great talent (though it helps to have the latter). I expect you to work extremely hard in your scholastic preparations (i.e. musical accuracy, memorization, translations, character analysis, etc.). I expect you to practice consistently. I also expect you to transfer mindfulness, which you gain during lessons, into practice rooms and performances. This is how I will assess your final grade each semester. Keep in mind that the work ethic you create now will ultimately determine your future success when you leave this institution. Please make the most of your time while you are here.

***Core Course Competencies (learning outcomes)***

When you have successfully completed this course, you will be able to:

- Establish and maintain a healthy vocal technique.
- Gain a better understanding of how your voice functions.
- Apply healthy vocal techniques to new and old vocal repertoire.
- Foster musicality and expressivity in both the music and text.
- Integrate healthy techniques into dramatic circumstances.

***Semester Requirements***

1. WATER BOTTLE AND STRAW: Bring this to each lesson.
2. RECORDING DEVICE: It is mandatory that students bring a small recording device to every lesson. Cell phones work very well. It is my goal to improve your “mindfulness” of how you sing verses how you *think* you sound. You will use this to practice and improve during the week.
3. BINDER: Students must bring a pencil to make notes and physical binder or

- iPad/computer to every lesson containing:
- a. All assigned sheet music (PDF emailed to me)
  - b. Tool Chart
  - c. Reflection Sheets
4. **TOOL CHART:** You will be asked to notate the specific tools you do in each lesson. You will use the excel template I have created for you and mark the name, mechanics, and the sensations. Please be prepared to talk about them when asked in class. This will be turned in at the end of the term.
  5. **REFLECTION SHEETS:** Are to be documented in each lesson and should be your guide for practicing the following week. This is template I have created for you to to make notes while in class. This will be turned in at the end of the term.
  6. **REPERTOIRE:**
    - a. Songs will be assigned based on the technical needs of the individual. When assigned, please learn the song within the time period allotted.
    - b. For any song, a copy of the music (PDF) must be emailed to me prior to your lesson.
    - c. You will be responsible to find the YouTube recording online to use in class. Have that ready to use for your lesson.
  7. **READY TO SING:** Students must arrive to all lessons on time, well rested, energized, and ready to work. Considering the amount of singing that will happen during your lesson, do not warm up before your lesson. This is my responsibility. Also, do not rehearse your music with your accompanist the day of your lesson. Plan ahead.

### ***Attendance/Make Up Lessons***

Students are expected to attend all sessions, both in class (and online in case of an emergency). You may only miss **one** class session (UN-excused) *without risking a drop in the final course grade.*

1. **Attendance and punctuality are mandatory. Please make every effort to attend each class to not miss your time, since I do not make-up lessons.**
2. If you cannot attend your lesson, you have two options to not miss your class (see “Lesson Swapping” below).
3. If you are running late or will not attend your lesson let me know ASAP via text. If possible, please give me at least **24-hour advance notice** if you will miss a lesson.
4. Same day cancellations are considered UN-excused and will not be made up under any circumstance.
5. If you choose to not attend your lesson, you will be marked as UN-excused if you do not bring in a doctor’s note.
6. **Emergencies do, however, happen.** If there are *extenuating* circumstances (for example, a prolonged illness or there was a death in the family), please contact me the **moment** you feel you are not well, or an emergency takes place and begin your swap (see below in Lesson Swapping).
7. Expected religious observation absences must be given at the beginning of the semester.
8. The final grade will be lowered if more than 2 excused absences occur (including

illness).

\*Steinhardt Policy: The final grade MUST be lowered for any *unexcused* absences.

### ***Lesson Swapping***

1. The moment you know you feel ill or have an emergency, swapping with another student is your **only** way to not miss your lesson. I will leave this up to you to make the swap. I ask all of you in my studio to be flexible and graciously swap with those that ask. Please use the private/only for those registered [contact sheet](#), send out a group email, and CC me. You may also find that texting individually might get a quicker response.
2. **Swapping is your responsibility.** This is the same concept as if you could not make it to your current employment you would need to make every effort to get someone to cover your shift to keep your job intact.
3. Only swap with highlighted students that are the **same color** as you (pink with pink) and let your accompanist remain at your regular lesson time. Inform your accompanist of this arrangement.
4. Once the swap has been made, that is your new lesson time for that week. Mark your calendar accordingly. There are NO make-up lessons for missed swapped lessons.
5. If you choose to not attend your lesson, you will be marked as excused if you do bring in a doctor's note.

\*If you feel slightly under the weather and your voice is not 100%, we will execute bubble therapy and make great use of your lesson time as well as help you recover. I have had students come into a lesson vocally compromised yet after bubble therapy, not only did they learn more about how to use their voice more efficiently, but they also felt much better at the end of the session.

### ***Repertoire Selection Policy***

Based on year and program, each student is expected to learn a set amount of repertoire each semester. The total songs required each term are listed below:

Freshmen: 6

Sophomores/Juniors/Seniors: 8

Graduates: 9

### ***Choosing your Music***

You will need to locate all your music and convert your music to PDFs. I do not provide music. You can find them online for free (potentially) typically by typing the title of the piece followed by "PDF" or for a nominal fee through various sites like [Sheet Music Plus](#), [Music Notes](#), [Scribd](#), or the like.

1. During your first semester at NYU, I will pick all of your songs, unless you have some you would like to suggest to me songs that you are interested in learning. **After your first semester, you will be choosing all your music for your lessons and classes.**
2. During your time at NYU, I would like you to become familiar with repertoire that

- would suit your voice. Spend time researching your music by attending other recitals, listen to music online/in person, and watch concerts/musicals/operas of singers you admire to get ideas and comprise a running list. Add this a Word Document to add to your **Recital Reference List Folder** (in your **Dropbox**).
3. When choosing repertoire, lean towards those pieces that feel amazing in your throat over those that are dramatically/vocally “impressive.” While at NYU, view your singing as a progressive process rather than a result-driven objective and we will select music that is well suited to your skills. Keep in mind that a seemingly simple or boring song selected by me most likely has a technical objective on my part.
  4. Remember to follow the guidelines on your **Repertoire Sheet Folder** (in your **Dropbox**). Musical theatre students will need to learn/memorize at least 2 art songs each semester. During your journey at NYU, we will fill our Repertoire Sheets in chronological order starting with pre-1939 & 1940-1960 during your Freshman/Sophomore year and ending your Junior/Senior year with 1960-1975 & 1975-present.
  5. With repertoire that is chosen, although I want you to initially research and select songs, I will make the final decision on all selections. **Have alternate songs in mind in case we need to swap out some pieces.**
  6. I suggest you pick and learn your songs for the upcoming term during your winter and summer break. Place your **PDFs Folder** (in your **Dropbox**) and send me an email indicating that your music is ready for me to review and approve.
  7. Songs that contain more “assets” will be chosen over those that contain a high number of “liabilities” for accelerated technical growth. Please review the [assets/liabilities](#) PDF on the website and ask questions for clarification.
  8. All music MUST be learned within the given semester - no exceptions.

**\*Please Note: If you get VERY stuck choosing music, I will help you. This should be a fun experience. Please ask for guidance if you need it. I am here for you.**

### ***Practicing Techniques***

1. When dealing with physical coordination, the phrase “practice makes perfect” should be modified to “practice makes permanent.” Therefore, I expect you to practice every day to ensure optimal vocal progress (although it’s good for the voice/brain/soul to take a day off once a week). One should begin with 25-30 minutes of the vocalises ([warm-ups](#)) utilized in the lesson, followed by 30 minutes of practicing/memorizing repertoire. Use your recording to guide you.
2. Please remember to warm up prior to any class in which you are expected to perform - including choir or stage rehearsals. Again, I would prefer that you not warm-up vocally for your lesson.
3. Since we cannot leave our instruments in a case or practice room, please pace yourself if you have a lot of additional singing during the day. 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.
4. Keep in mind that singing is a physical activity that requires patience and

- diligence. You cannot “cram” for a lesson/recital/performance as you might for a history exam. Expecting your mind to thoroughly learn words, notes, and rhythms is impossible. An even more impossible task is expecting your voice and body to easily adjust to new coordination skills with enduring effects. It takes time.
5. Remember that a lot of song preparation does not require singing.
  6. Please use your recording to guide you in your weekly practices. Please read the [guideline for practicing](#) for efficient practicing concepts.

### *Learning Music*

1. Hastily learning music often leads to ingrained errors that are often difficult to unlearn. Mindful practice is what separates professionals from amateurs. Therefore, be precise when learning new literature. This even includes songs where singers have typically taken a degree of musical and rhythmic freedom. Learn what is on the page first.
2. Feel free to find a recording of the piece, but do not use this as a learning or memorization tool. 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?).
3. 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.
4. If the song is in a foreign language, type out the text, translation, and IPA (see sample [here](#)). Nothing is more impressive than hearing a singer effectively communicate in a language it is not his/her own. The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) will be utilized in the lesson.

### *Preparation of Songs*

You are encouraged (if not expected) to bring in songs for another class, audition, performance, etc. However, we will first work on songs that I assigned from the previous lesson. Any additional music can be worked on after this point. This ensures that you are prepared for your lesson.

Here are two important guidelines:

1. When I ask you to **prepare** a song(s) for the following lesson, I expect notes, rhythms, entrances, and languages to be accurate as to the printed page. If I sense that you are searching for notes, rhythms, etc. (which is easy to spot), I deduce that you have not done your homework for my class and your grade will be lowered for the day. When singing a “prepared” song in your lesson, I expect you to use your music. Since I will give you specific technical tasks during the song, it will give you a literal place to write notes to remind yourself. The tasks are then integrated into your voice as you memorize the song.
2. When I ask you to **memorize** a song(s), you must perform your song without music. I cannot emphasize enough that being memorized **is not the final goal**, but one of

- the first steps towards mastery/artistry of the piece.
3. IPA/Translations must be prepared and typed prior to singing foreign language songs and placed in your Dropbox. Please be ready to discuss the word-by-word translation (from memory) to show mastery of this assignment. Here is another example here of [Caro Mio Ben](#).

\*When practicing your songs, mindfully apply the technique. Here is my [Guideline for Practicing](#).

### ***Class Songs***

1. Please advise me via email of all the courses in which you are expected to sing (i.e. Song Repertoire, Analysis, Opera Workshop, etc.) as soon as the information is made available to you. Please send me the syllabus via email and put in the subject line the name of the class.
2. **I must hear all songs before you sing them in class-this is NOT AN OPTION.**

### ***Performing Music***

1. All music chosen to perform in public performances or auditions must be worked in a lesson prior to performance. This includes participation as a “guest artist” (often character studies) in classmate recitals.
2. Selecting repertoire for recitals, showcases, classes and auditions will be at my discretion. You (and others) may give input, but my main goal for you is healthy and sustainable singing.

### ***Juries***

1. Each spring you will perform a jury. This is your chance to shine in front of the faculty. This is a fun day and should not feel daunting whatsoever.
2. By week 7 in the Spring semester, we will select your “best songs” from the full year (Fall & Spring) and work solely on your jury pieces from Weeks 8-14. Please plan in advance for this by memorizing all your Spring songs by Week 7.
3. **I HIGHLY recommend that during winter break you pick your Spring songs and learn them in advance.** Again, place your PDFs in your Spring folder and send me and email when you are ready for me to review and approve them.
4. For juries, you will each sing a select number of songs from memory:
  - Freshmen and music education students - 4 songs
  - First year transfer students - 5 songs
  - All other vocal performance students - 6 songs

### ***Recitals: Your Final Project***

To graduate you will need to perform a full recital.

1. **The music for your recital will be selected by you and the content will need to be approved by me and Professor Heldman. You will be choosing all your music.** That will be your **one big project** that is required of this course and degree.
2. This is an opportunity to gain a profound knowledge of music that is available to you. Comprise a list by going to the library and look over scores/songbooks, listen to YouTube videos, check out other recitals and get ideas. Starting during your first year at NYU, make a running list of all the songs/composers you like to help you

- build your **Recital Reference List**. Your Word doc list should be placed in your recital folder and will need to be updated each term and will be due by Lesson 14.
3. Another great way to narrow a search is to go to Google (for example) and research certain key words:
    - French Arts Song Composers
    - Famous/Popular French Art Songs
    - French Art Songs Recital
    - French Art Song Cycles
  4. If you have a hard time choosing from a long list of great songs, lightly sing through them and see what feels the best in your throat.
  5. Please start early and have this solved no later than the semester prior by creating your recital with music that you feel connected to, and that meets the NYU requirements. I highly recommend that you research options that would like to sing during the summer (or winter) break, prior to your recital year. Once again, place your PDFs in your appropriate folder and send me an email when you are prepared for me to review and approve them.
  5. The semester of your recital, please fill out the form [Recital Preparation](#) and place it in your recital folder in your Dropbox. We will need this by your first lesson for the term you are doing your recital.
  6. Please read the recital packet ([Musical Theatre](#) & [Classical](#)) on the website and know what is expected of you. I will help you prepare your songs, but you will need to do everything else needed to complete your recital requirements (turn in paperwork to office, translations, room reservations, programs, etc.).

\*The most fun recitals to perform are the ones that are prepared adequately in advance, so your true artistry and applied technique comes through, rather than being “somewhat memorized” and hoping for the best.

### ***Managing your Dropbox Folder***

- Each of you will have a [Dropbox Folder](#) from *my* NYU account.
- I will give your accompanist access to your Dropbox, and this is how they should retrieve your songs.
- This is where you will place your PDFs of music, vocal tracks, IPA/Translations, Recital Reference List, and a running list of all the songs on your Repertoire Sheet you will learn at NYU.
- When submitting songs for me to review, I must have PDFs, no YouTube videos. [Scribd](#) is a great site to attain a large amount of music at a nominal cost. Once again, I require all music placed in your personal Dropbox folder in PDF format for review and approval. This folder will also be shared with your accompanist, and I will provide the link for you to share.
- All music you are planning to sing for class, auditions, or lessons should be in your folder prior to singing them in your lesson. **You do not need to let me know via email each time you place a new song in your Dropbox folder that has been approved by me.**

\*For new students, this will be explained in your first lesson.

## ***Repertoire Sheet***

1. Students are expected to keep a cumulative Repertoire List throughout their NYU career. This list will be comprised of all the music you learned and have almost memorized as well as fully memorized music in specific genres and languages that fulfill your repertoire requirements. The excel spreadsheet to fill in will be in your Dropbox.
2. Your individual repertoire sheet will **need to be updated/maintained by you**. You will be required to fully update your copy of this list at the end of each semester. Transfer students will need to include their repertoire from previous studios/university.
3. As you learn and memorize your pieces during your time at NYU, please add them to the sheet, using the format provided, and highlight the songs fully memorized in light grey.

\*For new students, this will be explained in your first lesson.

## ***Accompanists***

1. It is required that you provide an accompanist for the last thirty minutes of your lesson. You are also expected to practice with him/her for an additional thirty minutes between weekly lesson times. **THIS IS NOT OPTIONAL**. Steinhardt will cover the cost of your pianist during lessons.
2. Please choose an accompanist from the [accompanist list](#), ask them if they will play for you, then register them, and send them your first 2 songs in PDF format via email and prepare these pieces for your first lesson.
3. Email me your accompanists' email and **I will add them to your [Dropbox Folder](#)** so they will have access to your PDFs for the term.
4. In regard to optional, yet suggested, weekly coaching sessions, plan on this financial commitment for your entire academic career. Lessons are not times to learn your notes or work with the accompaniment for the first time. Pianist generally charge \$20-\$25 for 30 minutes.
5. Out of respect to your pianist, give him/her a separate music notebook/binder or PDFs of your music via Dropbox. Attempting to read small notes and words over someone's shoulder while singing is neither beneficial to your posture nor to your pianist's ear.
6. When selecting an accompanist, be sure that you choose someone who can meet regularly (and practice your music). Repertoire work is extremely brief during a lesson (only 30 minutes). Addressing ensemble issues is a waste of valuable lesson time if not taken care of in advance.
7. It is always your responsibility to notify your accompanist of any lesson changes (rescheduling date/location/etc.), regardless of if the change comes from me. Do not assume I have emailed or texted your pianist (I will not), since this is **your** responsibly.
8. Your skills as a performer are highly influenced by the musicians with whom you work. If I find that your accompanist is not providing the necessary skills to support and foster your development, I will help you find a new pianist.



## *New Students*

- Before your first lesson:
  - Please choose an accompanist, register them, and send me their email.
  - Bring in 2 songs that you did for your audition/diagnostics and make sure your accompanist has these PDFs before your lesson and tell them to go to this [link](#) to access your music.
  - Upload your PDFs to your [Dropbox folder](#).
- In your first lesson, I will explain your Dropbox Folder. When you receive your link, look at it and if you can start placing items in them-wonderful. If not, I will clarify how to proceed when we meet.
  - Recital Reference List
  - PDF Folder
  - Repertoire Sheet
- By Lesson 2, please reply to the email thread containing the syllabus with the statement: ***“I have read and understand that I am responsible for the information in the syllabus.”***
- For Lessons 2 and 3, I will pick your first four songs for you, and you will be responsible for the others required for the subsequent lessons. Add all the songs that I assign you to this [link](#).
- By lesson 5 onward, all songs should have been brought into lessons and worked on together at this point and now we will review them again doing 2-3 pieces a week to develop the technique and add the artistry.

## *General Health and Vocal Maintenance*

Since we cannot leave our instruments in a case or practice room, taking good care of your body and voice are essential for healthy and consistent singing. Sleep, exercise, a healthy diet and a positive mental outlook have a direct effect on how well you sing and grow as a performer. Stay hydrated – drink lots of water and avoid caffeine.

NB: Never sing to the point of hoarseness. Hoarseness can be the result of:

- Misuse and/or dysfunction of the singing/speaking voice
- Seasonal or chronic illness/allergies
- Acid reflux

If hoarseness persists, it’s advisable to see a laryngologist. See me for recommendations.

## *Grading*

- 60% - Adherence to syllabus and growth
- 20% - Performance Assessment
- 20% - Program Meeting Attendance

## *Grading Scale*

A 94-100% A- 90-93%  
B+ 87-89% B 84-86%

C+ 77-79% C 74-76%  
D+ 67-69% D 64-66%

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

***Students with Disabilities***

Students with physical or learning disabilities are recommended to register at the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities](#).

***Special Accommodations:*** Any student attending NYU who needs an accommodation due to a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility and/or learning disability, or is Deaf or Hard of Hearing should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities located at 240 Greene Street, phone: 212.998.4980, or website address: [www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd).

***Send an email to me including this document stating:*** “I have read and understand that I am responsible for the information in the syllabus.”

***Virtual Lessons***

No virtual lessons are permitted. All lessons are in person.