

“I like to sing the words as if I was talking to someone.”  
**Shirley Horn** (jazz singer supreme)

Here’s a simple example using the first four bars of the verse to ‘The Lady’s In Love With You’ by Burton Lane and Frank Loesser. This is what the original sheet music looks like...

**Example 1a**

The Lady's In Love With You - Burton Lane & Frank Loesser

*Colla Voce*

F            D<sub>Mi</sub><sup>7</sup>            G<sub>Mi</sub><sup>9</sup>            C<sup>7</sup>            F            A<sub>Mi</sub><sup>7</sup> D<sup>7</sup> G<sup>9</sup> C<sup>7</sup>

Have you ev - er seen the dawn of love? \_\_\_\_\_

It all looks pretty simple and uncluttered, so when accompanying this verse, one would presume that all the chords should be played. But that’s not necessarily the case. If the singer is smart, they will shape the phrase in a conversational manner, emphasizing just one word in every phrase, just as we speak. In the above lyric, let’s say the singer’s chosen to emphasize the word ‘seen.’ Speak this phrase aloud, emphasizing ‘seen.’ Do you find yourself hurrying over ‘Have you ever’ to arrive at ‘seen,’ holding ‘seen,’ a little and then hurrying along again through ‘the dawn of love’? If that’s how the singer decides to phrase it, then we will need to make some editorial decisions on where to place the accompanying chords and which chords we’ll choose to use.

If we insist on playing the Dmi7 on beat 3 of the first bar, the vocalist is forced to wait for us. This can result in a ponderous performance with the vocalist having to put equal emphasis on each beat—a habit that we try and beat out of all our vocal students! But we’re creative jazz musicians, and the written music of example 1a is only a guide. Music does have to be notated in order to inform us of the composer’s intent, but to bring the page to life, we sometimes need to take liberties with the composer’s intentions. Back to our verse—here’s how I would recommend editing this particular passage.

## Example 1b

**The Lady's In Love With You - Burton Lane & Frank Loesser**

*Colla Voce*

voice

ber Have you - ev seen the dawn of love?

piano

$F^6$   $C^{13}_{sus}$   $F^{6/9}$   $E^b 7$   $D 7$   $G^9$   $C 7$

Ped. Ped. Ped. \*

One of the reasons we can do this is because the Dmi7 that had occurred on beat 3 of the first bar isn't really going to be missed. F6 and Dmi7 have all the same notes, and the melody fits either of them, giving us the freedom to edit and the singer the freedom to phrase without the encumbrance of waiting for the piano player to catch up!

Let's also look at the music in bars 3 and 4. Is it necessary to play all of those chords and make the vocalist wait to start the next phrase? Yes and no. I'm certainly not trying to stifle those little opportunities when we get to shine, but one needs to take into account whether the singer wants to get to the next part of the story quickly or is happy to wait for you. Some singers will tell you exactly how they want to phrase a passage, but some will just follow you. This is where your taste and judgement are important. You can help the novice vocalist navigate the scary waters of *colla voce*. And, of course, this is why we rehearse!

*"Even advanced piano players will often fill too much during 'out of tempo' passages, and stop the forward motion of the vocal line."*

**Madeline Eastman** - jazz vocalist

The discussion of those 'filler' notes in bars 3 & 4 of Example 1b brings us to a very important aspect of *colla voce* accompaniment and accompaniment in general—the use of silence. Silence is an essential dramatic and emotional tool in all of music. Mind you, I have to admit that it's less effective when playing in a noisy saloon, but within the confines of this book we're all at Carnegie Hall.

We can solve the dilemma of whether to play all those chords in bars 3 and 4 of Example 1b by not playing them at all. Instead of filling every space with music, we can use our powerful and dramatic tool, silence, as a musical punctuation mark in between vocal phrases.

Here's what that might look like...

### Example 1c

The Lady's In Love With You - Burton Lane & Frank Loesser

*Colla Voce*

The musical score for Example 1c consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is one flat (Bb) and the time signature is common time (C). The vocal line has the lyrics: "Have you ev - er seen the dawn of love? Lit - tle things that..". The piano accompaniment features four measures with the following chords: F<sup>6</sup>, C<sup>13</sup><sub>SUS</sub>, F<sup>6</sup>/<sub>q</sub>, and F<sup>6</sup>. A quarter rest in the piano part in the third measure creates a moment of silence.

The effect of omitting all those chords in bar 3 is to make it seem like we've cut out the 4th bar altogether in order to create this musical punctuation. In fact in Example 1c, I have cut it out in order to make my point clearer. The quarter note rest on beat 4 of the 3rd bar is, in fact, filling in for the whole 4th bar in Example 1a. The dramatic effect of that moment of silence helps the listener concentrate on the intent of the lyric and at the same time gives the vocalist the freedom to continue on with the next phrase without having to wait for us to finish playing some pretty fill-in.

*“Carmen taught me about suspense. The space belongs to the singer. Carmen communicates with her music through space, too. If a pianist elaborates in a singer's space, the singer has to wait, and maybe the train of phrasing is broken. That's where taste and sensitivity come in; knowing where it's appropriate to elaborate. The audience should be able to hear what the singer's going to say next and not be diverted by a great piano embellishment.”*

**Norman Simmons**

We've learned how to edit ourselves when the melody is <sup>38</sup>*diatonic* and the harmony reasonably simple. But what happens when there are chromatic notes introduced into the melody? How do we navigate these dangerous waters? Here's the verse to Sammy