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Members of the Vocal Jazz Coalition include (left to right): Top Row: Lila Ammons, Rhonda Laurie, Bruce A. Henry, and Connie Olson. Middle row: Vicky Mountain, Christine Rosholt, Katie Gearty, and Maud Hixson. Bottom row: Connie Dusseau, Lucia Newell, Arne Fogel, and Dorothy Doring. Not pictured: Sue Tucker and Colleen Wold-Heibeler.

PAULA KELLER

Singers and the Song

The Jazz Vocal Coalition keeps the jazz singer tradition alive

By Lydia Howell

Jazz. The music defined elegance for decades. The lyrics still resonate with romance. Our age of often overdubbed pop stars singing more of lasciviousness than love makes the local jazz vocalist scene a delightful alternative.

"There's an enormous amount of talented jazz vocalists in the Twin Cities," says Ronda Lawrence, singer, and president of the Minnesota Jazz Vocal Coalition (JVC). "Style runs the gamut from crooners to scatters to torch to Brazilian." With chapters in Los Angeles and New York City, it's strengthening the local network of artists carrying on a tradition that's continued by life-long artists and newcomers.

Celebrating their first anniversary, the Jazz Vocal Coalition is releasing a CD featuring its 14 members, due out for the holidays. Besides individual gigs around the Twin Cities, JVC holds one or two monthly showcase performances.

This writer spent a weekend checking out three JVC singers.

Christine Rosholt

Wearing a red chiffon dress, a droll black hat covering dark bobbed hair, Christine Rosholt looks like an ingenue from between the two world wars. A Chicago Art Institute graduate in performance art and photography, Rosholt acted at Children's Theatre Company, and has been singing only for the last three years.

"I did performance art that included Harold Arlen's song 'That Old Black Magic.' In 2000, a country music performance art band, Dixie Cups and the Little Darlin's, asked me to sit in, 'to be the cousin who sings jazz.' A country mouse, city mouse thing," Rosholt giggles. "It started as a joke. Amy Browers did Tammy Wynette's 'D.I.V.O.R.C.E.' I did 'Night and Day." Then, I decided I wanted to do it for real."

Rosholt sings with flirtatious charm, like a girl with her heart on her sleeve, who suddenly yanks it back with a blush.

"I love watching another JVC singer. See how they come out on stage. What intention they bring to the music. Are they shy or upfront?" Rosholt muses. "Few of us have our own bands, so you're always working with different musicians."

Rooted in theater more than musicality, Rosholt creates a character that's frothy entertainment.

Arne Fogel

Faithful to jazz for over 35 years, Arne Fogel writes, lectures, and has hosted radio programs about the genre since the 1970s, which provide deep roots for his singing. He's one of three men—with Bruce A. Henry and Dennis Spears—in a scene dominated by women.

"In the Twin Cities, if a man's not holding a guitar or singing the blues, then, he's seen as a lounge lizard—as that

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