

We All Sing Like Sinatra in the Shower.

Barbara J. Simon knows what it takes to sing like Frank on stage.

by Christopher M. Halleron

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Photo: Justin Dolan

Barbara J. Simon (singing teacher / coach) is the author of [Singing—Body and Soul: A Medley of Fresh Ideas about Musical Theater](#). Her book garnered an endorsement from Stephen Flaherty, the Tony-winning composer of [Ragtime](#).

At the BJ Simon Singing Studio, most of Barbara's students range between 10–25 years old, though all are welcome. Her skill set covers a wide variety of musical genres: Pop, R&B, a Cappella, Swing, Gospel, Musical Theater and original Singer/Songwriter material.

This past June, Simon served as one of the judges for the City of Hoboken's annual "Sinatra Idol Contest." "Song choice is key," says Simon. "Sinatra had great taste in the songs he recorded, but some are better than others for competition, and for showing off a singer's performance skills. I like to see songs that the performer relates to personally, that have an emotional impact on the audience, as well as being able to create the Sinatra feel."

Of course covering "The Voice" isn't easy. "Contestants need good vocal technique—a well developed, expressive voice—that can handle the range of the songs chosen," says Simon. "I'm looking for high-quality musicianship—in addition to emulating the Sinatra style, the performer should have a clear understanding of the lyrics and possible layers of meaning, to be able to work inside the shape and style of the arrangement, and the overall flow of the song." Finally, you really need to work it. "An engaging physical performance helps. There needs to be a look that suits the song, the Sinatra time period, the performer's own personality, and also has a universal timeless appeal."

Tony Corrao, from Marlboro, NJ won the program, and won 1st place with a relaxed and elegant version of "The Best is Yet To Come." "Judges awarded him the top score of 5 all across the board, so we knew he had won immediately," says Simon. "My comment to him was how skillfully and effortlessly he handled the difficult melody of that song."

Of course Simon herself is no stranger to singing Frank, having done a set of songs at the Hoboken Elks Club for the Hoboken Historical Museum Benefit—My Way: Celebrating Frank Sinatra's Centennial. A Finalist for 2014 Hoboken Chamber of Commerce Business Award as an Education Provider, Simon is involved in the Hoboken Rotary Club, and was on hand to sing "The Star-Spangled Banner" at the American Legion Post 107 building dedication.

During her diverse career in the entertainment industry, Barbara has always maintained a private singing studio, teaching around her busy schedule. She has also apprenticed to several master voice teachers, and continues to research and study the many aspects of the human voice.