

Course Title; Fall, 2025

“Sweet Harmony: Great vocal groups 1950-1980”

One could say that the story of popular music is one of great singers--but it is also the story of great vocal groups. In this course we will take a trip through six different eras and genres. In this new course we will examine in depth 24 legendary singing groups, from the days of doo-wop through the pop era; stars whose power, style, and passion gave us unforgettable records. We will also listen and watch songs from other singing groups who will be remembered for that one huge hit which still resonates to this day. With a nod to choral harmonies, unique vocal arrangements and unmistakable and unforgettable trademark songs, this fun course promises to be much more than a trip down Memory Lane.

Sweet Harmony Course Outline by Week:

week one 1950-1960 gospel and doo-wop groups

Soul Stirrers

Dixie Hummingbirds

Flamingos

Platters

Jordanaires

week two 1950's and 60's male R&B groups

Little Anthony and the Imperials

Coasters

Dion and the Belmonts

1960's female pop/rock “girl” groups

Ronettes

Shirelles

Crystals

Chiffons

1960's pop/rock male groups

Drifters

Isley brothers

Four Seasons

Righteous Brothers

1960's and 70's pop/R&B female and mixed gender groups

Staple Singers

Mamas and Papas

5th Dimension

Pointer Sisters

1960's and 70's pop-rock/R&B (male)

Impressions

Spinners

Stylistics

O'Jays

Suggested reading, viewing and listening (for entire course)

Reading:

People Get Ready! A New History of Black Gospel Music, by Robert Darden

A City Called Heaven: Chicago and the Birth of Gospel Music by Robert Marovich

Doo-Wop: The Forgotten Third of Rock 'N Roll by Anthony Gribin/Matthew Schiff

The Doo-Wop Decades, 1945-1965: A Resource Guide to Vocal Groups and their Recordings by B. Lee Cooper and Frank W. Hoffmann

Lonely Avenue: The Unlikely Life and Times of Doc Pomus by Alex Halberstadt and Peter Guralnick

Always Magic in the Air: Bomp and Brilliance of the Brill Building Ken Emerson

He's a Rebel: Phil Spector--Rock and Roll's Legendary Producer, Mark Ribowsky

Leaders of the Pack: Girl Groups of the 1960s and Their Influence on Popular Culture in Britain and America by Sean MacLeod

Jersey Boys: The Story of Frankie Valli & the Four Seasons by David Cote

California Dreamin': The True Story of the Mamas and the Papas: The Music, the Madness, the Magic that was by Michelle Phillips

The Gospel According to Mavis Staples, July 4 2022 New Yorker, David Remnick

A House on Fire: The Rise and Fall of Philadelphia Soul by John Jackson

Viewing:

Streetlight Harmonies, 2020, a documentary by Brent Wilson

20 Feet from Stardom, 2013 by Morgan Neville

Monterey Pop, 1968 by D. A. Pennebaker

Wattstax, 1973, by Mel Stuart

Jersey Boys, 2014 by Clint Eastwood

The Sound of Philadelphia, Warner Brothers, coming in 2023

Listening: "Greatest Hits" compilation by any/all of these groups:

Soul Stirrers

Jordanaires

Dixie Hummingbirds

Little Anthony and the Imperials

Flamingos

Coasters

Platters

Dion and the Belmonts

Ronettes
Shirelles
Drifters
Isley brothers
Staple Singers
Mamas and Papas
Impressions
Spinners

Crystals
Chiffons
Four Seasons
Righteous Brothers
5th Dimension
Pointer Sisters
Stylistics
O'Jays

In-class playlist for each week:

week one:

Soul Stirrers

He's been a shelter for me
I'm a soldier
Jesus gave me Water
Were you there
Touch the Hem of his Garment

Dixie Hummingbirds

The Final Edition, 1959
Maybe It's You
Bedside of a Neighbor
In the Morning
Loves me like a rock

Platters

Only you
The great pretender
Twilight time
Smoke gets in your eyes

Flamingos

I'll be home
I Only have eyes for you
Jump Children 1959

Jordanaires

Don't Be cruel--Elvis
Return to Sender— Elvis
Poor Little Fool—Ricky Nelson
Fall to Pieces—Patsy Cline

week two:

The Coasters

Searchin'
Yakety yak
Charlie Brown
Along came Jones
Poison Ivy

Little Anthony and the Imperials

Tears on my Pillow
Shimmy Shimmy Coco pop
Anthony remembers
Hurt so bad 1964
Goin' Out of my head

Dion

Teenager in love
The Wanderer, 1960,
Runaround sue, 1960
Ruby Baby
Abraham Martin and John 1968,

Others

Frankie Lyman and the teenagers--
Why do fools Fall in Love
Cadillacs—Speedoo
Five Satins—in the still of the night
The Diamonds—little darlin'

The Rays—Silhouettes
Maurice Williams and Zodiacs—Stay

week three:

Ronettes

Baby I Love You
Be My Baby
Walkin' in the Rain
The Best Part of Breaking Up
Sleigh Ride

Shirelles

Dedicated to the one I love
soldier boy
boys
Will you still love me tomorrow
I met him on a Sunday

Crystals

There's no other like my baby
He's sure the boy I love

week four:

Drifters

This Magic Moment
On Broadway
Under the Boardwalk
Save the Last Dance for Me
There goes my baby
Up on the Roof

Isley Brothers

Shout
Twist and Shout
This Old Heart of Mine
It's your Thing

Four Seasons—1962-66

Dawn
Big Girls Don't Cry

Dovells—Bristol Stomp

Uptown
He's a rebel
Da Doo Ron Ron
Then He kissed me

Chiffons

Sweet talkin' guy
He's so fine
One Fine Day
My boyfriend's back

Others

Chains --the Cookies
Tell him --the Exciters
Mr. Lee--the Bobbettes
Chapel of Love --the Dixie Cups

Sherry
Walk like a Man
Ragdoll
Righteous Brothers
Little Latin Lupe Lu
You've Lost that Lovin' Feelin'
Soul and Inspiration
Unchained Melody
Time of My Life

Others

Jay and the Americans--Come a Little
Bit Closer-- **video**
Tokens—Lion Sleeps Tonight
Vogues—5 o'clock world
Archie Bell & the Drells—Tighten Up

week five:

Staple Singers

Heavy makes you happy
Respect Yourself
I'll Take you There
If you're ready, come go with me
The Weight, from The Last Waltz

Mamas and Papas

Go Where you Wanna Go
California Dreamin'
Monday Monday
I call your name by John Lennon
Dedicated to the one I love, 1967
12:30

week six:

Impressions

Gypsy Woman
It's all right
Keep on Pushin'
People get ready
Amen

Philadelphia International acts

Delfonics—La la means I love You

Intruders---Cowboys to Girls

Spinners

I'll be around
Could I be I'm falling in love
Mighty Love
Then Came You (with Dionne Warwick)
Rubberband Man

Fifth Dimension

Up, up and Away
Stoned Soul Picnic
Age of Aquarius/Let the Sun Shine in
Wedding Bell Blues
One less bell to answer

Pointer Sisters

Yes we can can
Fire
He's So Shy
Slow Hand
I'm so Excited
Jump

Stylistics

Betcha By Golly Wow
I'm Stone in Love with You
Break up to make up
You make me feel brand new

O'Jays--

Backstabbers
For the love of money
Love Train

Other hits:

Oh girl--Chi-Lites
Everybody plays the fool—Main Ingredient
If you don't know me by now--Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes
Disco Inferno—Tramps