

About Me

I love the passion, irony and grit of European cabaret and the toe-tapping sass and wit of classic American Pop! I've sung both of these songbooks for more than a decade and feel uniquely suited to them, having spent my life in the U.S. and Europe. I seek the intimacy of cabaret and songs that give me the range and versatility I desire as singer and actress.



I was born in Frankfurt and raised in New York. My parents are Berliners and I am often in that city performing and enjoying its unique culture. Classically trained in arias, Lieder, theater and opera at the University of Arizona (BA cl. 1985), I've also trained in the Broadway repertoire and jazz. My voice/acting mentors

include Jeanette Walters, Gina Ducloux, Carlo Faria and Tovah Feldshuh.

Living in Austin for 12 years, I fell in love with the blues, bluegrass and folk, and bring all of these influences to my song. While there I journeyed back to the music of the Weimar Republic and in cabaret found a home for all my women and sensibilities. In 1999, my success with this repertoire convinced me to leave a great salary and a heap of stock options for a life as a full-time singer.

In 2000, I was invited to sing a centennial tribute to Kurt Weill at the German Embassy in Washington, D.C. and introduced as "an ambassador of German culture." This convinced me that I had made the right choice in careers. Returning to New York a year later, my first gig took place in a jazz parlor in Harlem where you can still hear me.

My classes on the history of cabaret and cabaret performance have been received by clients like the Austin Lyric Opera, Long Island University and Texas Christian University. I also instruct privately.

In 2003, I formed the Kabarett Kollektiv, an award-winning ensemble of European performers, and 2007, conceived and produced Kabarett Fête, NY's first festival for European cabaret to sold-out houses. Having become a dual German-American citizen in 2004, I now make my home in NYC and Berlin.

Cabaret Scholarship

The Peter E. Kohler Scholarship in Cabaret Performance honors the memory of the man who introduced me to the music of Marlene Dietrich and in so doing, changed my life. The C.W. Post Campus is the only college or university in the New York metropolitan area committed to professional cabaret performance. Contact me or the C.W. Post School of Visual and Performing Arts for more information.

Bring three pennies and a touch of Venus
to your classes this year!

Karen Kohler "sings" with her entire body. She becomes the temptress, gasps, utters guttural sounds, has a soprano voice that soars, bellows, whispers, sighs, and is totally brazen, when called for. She is mesmerizing.

— Theater Scene

Kohler doesn't just sing radiantly and strongly, she tells stories — expressing the character of the songs exactly as she wants them to be. These are not mere covers, but new interpretations that lead one to forget the original.

— Süddeutsche Zeitung

2006 New York Nightlife Award
"Unique Cabaret Performance"

2006 Manhattan Association of Cabarets & Clubs
"Best Revue"

Contact

Lectures and master classes can be designed to meet a variety of requirements and budgets. Interested programmers and presenters may contact me through my production company at:

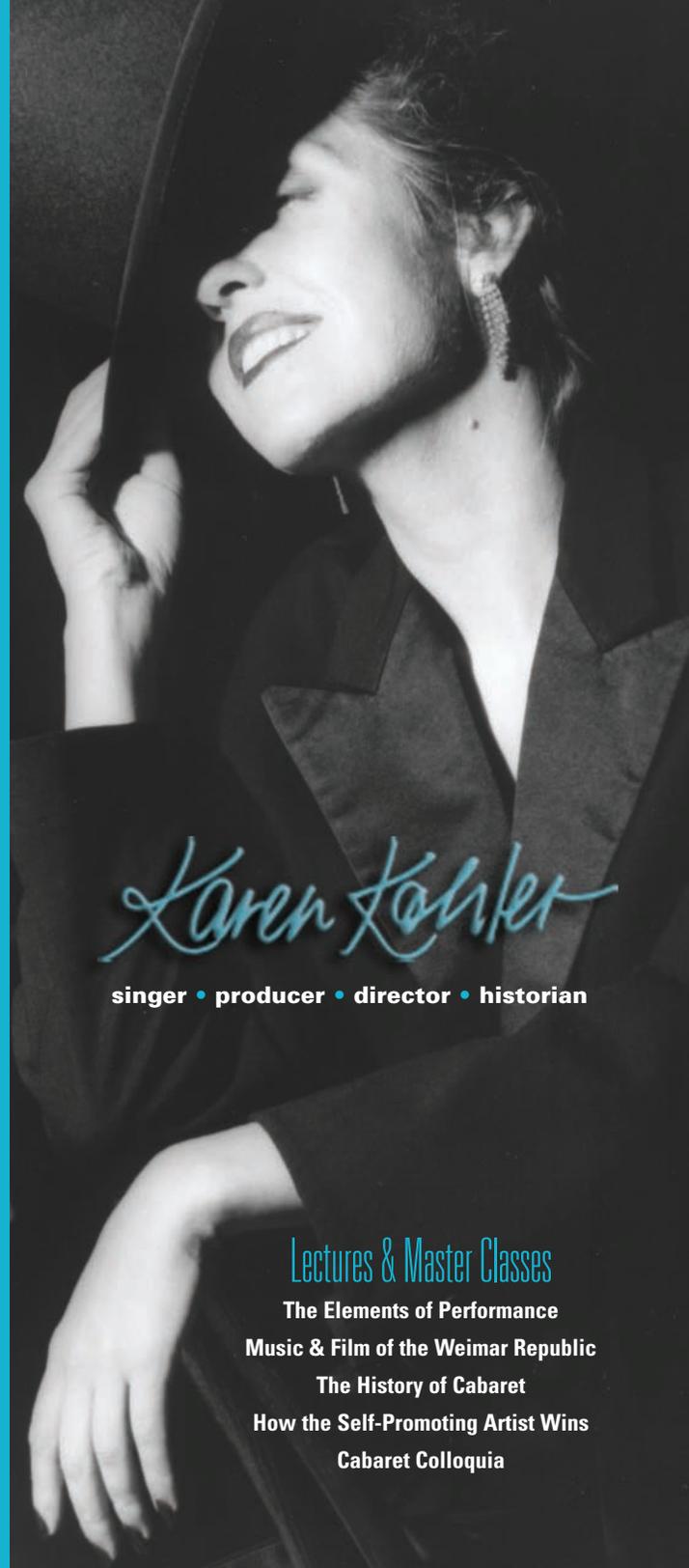
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Karen Kohler

singer • producer • director • historian

Lectures & Master Classes

The Elements of Performance

Music & Film of the Weimar Republic

The History of Cabaret

How the Self-Promoting Artist Wins

Cabaret Colloquia

The Elements of Performance

Beyond the Beautiful Voice: The Art of Singing a Song

This master class explores the essential, non-technical aspects of performance that make a singer unique and a song memorable: carriage and the silhouette, gesture, stage presence, characterization and subtext, audience rapport, patter and more. I invite singers to perform for their class, provide feedback and coaching, and engage them in an active dialogue.

Tackling Weill: The Actor Who Sings or the Singer Who Acts?

Kurt Weill's unique and successful career began in Berlin and ended on Broadway. By inviting students to perform songs from his diverse repertoire, this class explores how differences in interpretation make "an actor who sings" and "a singer who acts." They begin to learn that there are many ways to bring over a song, and that success depends on our ability to tell our own truth and play to our own unique strengths.

Music & Film of the Weimar Republic

The Making of *The Blue Angel*

A behind-the-scenes look at Germany's first talking picture, the 1930 classic that catapulted Marlene Dietrich to stardom and gave us the first popular conception of cabaret life. Directed by Josef von Sternberg, it features silent film star Emil Jannings and cabaret performers Kurt Gerron and Rosa Valetti. We discuss the casting of Lola, the creation of the Dietrich mystique, the on-set tension between the film's leads, and the fate of the actors in the wake of the Nazis' rise to power.

1933 — Berlin to Exile

This workshop showcases the leading lights of Weimar Berlin's artistic scene and follows them into exile after Hitler takes power, having declared their art "degenerate" and forbidding it. While some emigrés enjoyed success again in exile in places like New York, Hollywood and London, the fates of others were tragic.

The History of Cabaret

When Cabaret Was Young

Part 1 — Chronicle: Monmartre & Beyond Part 2 — The Weimar

The music of the cabaret is an aesthetic extension of early 20th century social and political turmoil. This course opens with a survey of cabaret; from Paris in the 1890's, Berlin in the 1920's, New York in the 1950's, as well as an overview of the worldwide resurgence in the art form today. Part 2 focuses on the era when cabaret reached its zenith: the years of the Weimar Republic 1920–33. The class will listen to composers and interpreters such as Weill, Schoenberg, Hollaender, Heymann, Spoliansky, Marlene Dietrich, Kurt Gerron, the Comedian Harmonists and more. The course can include a live performance segment of my own.

How the Self-Promoting Artist Wins

Note: Typically these 90-day intensives are conducted once a week. They can also be condensed into a standard class hour.

Goal-Setting for the Artist

This class guides students in clarifying their immediate career priorities, setting a 90-day goal, planning the details and taking action. We will discuss the self-limiting barriers that come up and identify ways to begin working past them.

Press Kit Intensive

This workshop helps students assemble winning press kits that are expressive of their unique personality and art. Students should bring any existing materials such as bios, headshots, reviews, and audio/video demos for feedback.



Getting Gigs!

Through exercises such as mock telephone calls and interviews, this workshop helps students gain an understanding of how to land a gig and work with booking managers and presenters in a confident and efficient manner. Topics such as follow-up communication, fee negotiation, and the importance of contracts will be discussed.

Cabaret Colloquia

Option A — Private Study

Drawn from my master classes, Private Study is designed to give you, the Student, one-on-one exposure to the history of cabaret and the art of cabaret performance, with the aim of making you a more conscientious singer and performer. The history component includes published biographies and historical texts, as well as rare film footage and archival recordings. For the performance component, I incorporate the writings of, most notably, Yvette Guilbert (*The Art of Singing a Song*, 1928), Carolyn Sloan (*Finding Your Voice: A Practical & Spiritual Guide to Singing and Living*, 1999), and Renee Fleming (*The Inner Voice*, 2005), as well as the teachings of my mentors: Jessica Kubzansky and Tovah Feldshuh in acting, and Jeanne LoVetri, Carlo Faria, Mady Kaye and Gina Ducloux in voice.

Option B — Performance-Directed Intensive

The Performance-Directed Intensive is designed to give you, the Student, one-on-one exposure to the history of cabaret and the art of cabaret performance as outlined in the Private Study option, with the goal of mounting a performance in New York City at the conclusion of the study term.

As Producer and Director

In addition to coaching, I will act as your producer and director and provide a pianist, venue, contract negotiation, publicity and networking, and showcases when available. Contact me for a complete syllabus and tuition information.

