

Katharine (Kat) Guiles Ellis Biography

Katharine (Kat) Guiles Ellis is a highly curious and creative career science educator originally from Syracuse, NY, who now resides and creates in Boulder, Colorado.

Her music life is inspired by her love of swing dancing and connecting with others. She is a Colorado Conservatory for the Jazz Arts ([CCJA](#)) trained musician who is authentic and accessible. Her gift of expression and storytelling using her emotive voice lets her cover tunes ranging from reflective to torchy, witty to sorrowful. She is the featured vocalist with the Denver Jazz Orchestra and leads a jazz quintet and sextet. She has shared the stage with Brad Goode, Pete Lewis, Clare Church, Paul Romaine, Harold Summey, Mark Simon, Gonzalo Teppa, Eric Gunnison, Dana Landry, Dave Hanson, Mark Diamond, Chris Symer, Eric Verline, and Gary Hobbs. She has studied with Brad Goode, Victor Mestas, Eric Gunnison, Jeff Jenkins, Dru Heller, Bob Rebholz, Greg Gisbert, Dave Corbus, Adam Revell, Joey Blunk, and Heidi Schmidt, as well as private lessons, immersion experiences and master classes with Rene Marie, Sachal Vasandani, Ansyn Banks, Jerry Tolson, Sara Gazarek, Rachel Caswell, Judy Niemack, and Alexis Cole.

Katharine's visual arts path started in middle school, and in high school she won a Scholastic Art Gold Key Award for her portfolio. Her passion for science came from wanting to understand causes of color, and a deep yearning for understanding landscape features in relation to her artistic interests. Her day job as a chemistry and earth systems science teacher has allowed her to share her passion for learning art, music, and science with thousands of students over her 35-year career, while granting her time to pursue her painting and music. She has studied painting and drawing extensively with [Gordon Muck](#), [Jamie Skvartch](#), [Bob Niedzwiecki](#), and [Scott Ruthven](#). Other influences are [Kari Ganoung Ruiz](#) and other great plein air painters.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

"Let yourself be silently drawn by the stronger pull of what you truly love. It will never lead you astray."

~Rumi

In one of my existential moments, it occurred to me that all of the things I was saving to do in retirement would not get done if I died before I retired. The "WE ARE ALL GOING TO DIE!" thought sank deep into my viscera. In that same period of time, I realized I had been teaching science for a long time, and my foray into yoga had taught me to always keep a beginner's mindset in everything I was doing, to stay curious and mindful. I was observing how difficult chemistry is for first-time learners and wanted to force myself to try something difficult as a true beginner to put myself in the position my students were in. As luck would have it, once I started looking for something, I met Scott Ruthven, an oil painter, who told me he was going to present a beginning oil painting au plein air and invited me to the course. I jumped in with full enthusiasm and failed miserably time after time, painting after painting, until the failures became less common and paintings that said what I wanted them to say were being made.

Learning to learn by failing fearlessly led me to say 'yes' when I was encouraged to sing at a jazz jam I went to observe. I had started singing as voice therapy to strengthen my speaking voice for teaching. My teacher, Heidi Schmidt, asked me to sit in with her band "Nice Work Jazz" at a local venue and that was the moment I fell in love with singing for others. Brad Goode was

hosting the jazz jam at the Muse Performance Space and asked me if I wanted to sing, and that became a regular outlet for my artistic needs. Once the Colorado Conservatory for the Jazz Arts (CCJA) started offering adult jazz combos, my learning took off. I also studied jazz with Jonathan Saraga, Joey Blunk, and currently with Adam Revell.

Some people wonder why a science teacher is singing jazz. When I sing and move from tune to tune to tell stories loaded with emotional content, I am creating neural networks, laying down patterns of emotional flexibility that are needed to do the job of teaching every single day. I am modeling life-long learning for my students. I am learning to listen in new and more sophisticated ways and can hear subtle changes in the energy of my classroom. I am showing my students that just because you choose a day job for practical reasons, you can still live an artful life to be fully expressed as a human.