

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

The study of music has brought great joy to my life; not only is the ability to transform written music into living sound incredibly worthwhile, but I find that the side-effects of character building and personal growth—as responses to the inherent challenges of music—are, for me, what make the pursuit so intrinsically rewarding. When I teach the clarinet, the role of utmost importance is the part I play in facilitating a process of self-discovery as my students engage with problems that show up during the learning of an instrument. Through thoughtful dialogue with my students, I facilitate a process of metacognitive reflection through intentional lines of questioning, encouraging students to become aware of the thoughts they are having related to a given problem. (Benton) Musicians often find themselves negotiating a balance of technique, sound production, and musical interpretation along with a variety of other inner thoughts that can overwhelm their ability to simply *play*. By cultivating a heightened awareness of these thoughts, students can attempt to manage the interruptions and begin to find their way towards their musical goal.

I believe it is important to guide my students towards an appreciation for the role that struggle and failure play as necessary steps in the learning process. All auditory feedback is purely information that helps guide the learning process; yes, even squeaks! Many of the practice techniques that I teach are designed to add cognitive challenge to a task, to maximize brain activity and receptivity to a challenge, and to encourage creative problem solving. An appreciation for process is a key ingredient in successful engagement with these methods, a value that I embed in my communication style and also in the design of the learning activities. I credit many of my teaching values to having the incredibly fortunate opportunity to study closely with Dr. Christine Carter, who has deeply influenced my understanding of teaching and learning. Her research in performance psychology and brain science has added a scientific and experimental layer to the practice strategies that I use with my students. Lessons, too, are designed in such a way to alternate between tasks in order to prevent habituation, and capitalize on the process of memory imprinting for long term retention. (Carter) Certainly when applied to younger students, I have found that these types of intentional design strategies have led to enhanced focus and engagement with the material as well as a greater perception of fun during lessons. It is my goal to model my teaching through the lens of the Learning Paradigm, stepping away from the traditional idea that knowledge travels *from* teacher *to* student. (Barr) Instead I intend to foster each student's ability to construct knowledge through interactions with the musical problems they face, guided, in a larger way, by their long term learning objectives.

Since the majority of the learning of a musical instrument takes place outside of lesson time, it is important that students are able to devise intentional and methodical ways of diagnosing and addressing the challenges they face in their independent practice time. At all times, I strive to empower my students by encouraging learner independence and the

development of self-regulation skills. This is built through self-assessment exercises, reflective listening assignments as well as my own communication and linguistic choices as a teacher.

I believe that learning happens best when students are actively engaged with problems in a non-threatening learning environment, and it is for this reason that I arrange opportunities for experiential learning and reserve dedicated lesson time for experimentation and exploration. I feel that I am able to provide the most meaningful learning experiences when I have consulted with my students to determine their learning objectives and work collaboratively with them to create a strategy for getting there. I feel strongly that a student-centered approach to learning is a progressive and effective approach for the study of music; it is socially responsible as well as being, to my knowledge, the most beneficial model when considering student mental and emotional well-being. There is no single method that will work for all students, so I appreciate that good teaching practice is highly adaptive and continually evolving. At every stage of teaching, I continue to look for ways to improve my teaching skills by providing open channels for student feedback, participating in reflexive self-assessment, adapting to individual learning styles and multiple intelligences (Armstrong), by incorporating the principles of the Universal Design for Learning (Higbee), and through an ongoing commitment to professional development so that I may keep current with new information and research as it is made available.

References Cited:

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- **Holistic approach**; includes singing music at pitch, physical conditioning before major performances, movement activities that compliment musical skill sets, mental preparation and anxiety management, developing a personal artistic interpretation of repertoire that takes into account theoretical and historical context.
- **Mentorship-style interaction**; develop mental focus, growth mindset, self-regulation and grit. Strategies for dealing with motivational challenges and environmental constraints.
- Establish a **safe environment** where student feedback on teacher performance is welcome and encouraged.
- Provide regular opportunities for **progress "check-ups"**. This involves regular goal setting and self-evaluation of past performances.
- Maintenance of **teaching logs**; keeping a record of what occurs in lessons (materials used, repertoire, strategies, exercises), assessing the efficacy of teaching methods