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Teaching Philosophy

The teaching of the arts today requires not only comprehensive knowledge of one's field of expertise, but also a firm grasp of the greater benefits that study of the arts provides. It is my belief that education in the arts is an indispensable part of a complete education for any student. The arts help us to connect with the world around us, a world filled with a diverse abundance of people, cultures, and ideas. New ideas and foreign concepts are frequently encountered in everyday life, and may be seen as frightening or confusing. One can easily choose to ignore these ideas, but the expense is an insular and one-dimensional existence. When the strange and new are presented in the context of the arts, these properties can be seen as compelling and exciting, benefiting from the familiarity of the medium, be it music, film, or painting. Individuals who may very well be otherwise unwilling are thus brought into contact with the new and the different, and forced to confront and resolve the conflicts presented by the work. This is the subtle power of the arts - the ability to educate and connect the audience to both new ideas and one another. This is why arts education is significant and necessary - it enhances a student's ability and willingness to confront the strange and different with an open and willing mind.

With regard to music, my approach to education is fundamentally similar for all levels of student. My students receive instruction which builds their knowledge of the underlying techniques and processes which govern music. Furthermore, my students are exposed to significant works which display these techniques in context. The objective is to create an informed musician, one who not only has intimate knowledge of a body of specific works, but who also has the skills to approach new material in an informed manner.

For the average student, not studying music as a major, technical instruction would include introduction to core musical concepts – melody and harmony, rhythm, timbre, simple forms. An emphasis needs to be placed on expanding students' horizons to the different possibilities inherent in music. For this reason, repertoire for such a class should be drawn from as wide a range as possible. Works by Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven must be accompanied by works from more contemporary composers, and jazz, world music, and popular music should also be represented. Finally, discussion of context must always be present. "Who wrote it?" "Why did they write it that way?" "Who performed it, and for what audience?" These questions help lead towards a better understanding of the role of music in our society at large, and in the student's life in particular.

For the burgeoning professional musician, rigorous training in music theory and composition should be an essential part of one's studies. Music theory provides a foundation for the understanding of how music works, and composition reinforces theoretical concepts by putting them into practice. The resulting insight allows the musician to make more informed decisions in performance, a practical application which should always be emphasized. The creation of intelligent, thinking musicians, capable of making fresh and

compelling interpretations of new and old works, should be one of the key objectives of basic education in music theory and composition.

Today's student-composer requires special guidance. The composer of the 21st century has an unprecedented amount of music surrounding him, all of which can be drawn upon for inspiration. Aesthetic constraints are a thing of the past, but ignorance of the wide range of techniques available to composers is inexcusable. Student-composers must therefore be exposed to music which makes use of an array of technical approaches and must be encouraged to assimilate as much as possible in their own works. By exploring a number of different aesthetics and techniques, my composition students will finish their studies with a range of solutions to any compositional challenges they might encounter. The role of the composer in today's world and the consideration of one's potential audience (and how these factor into shaping one's music) should also be subjects each student is encouraged to consider.

I have outlined above my thoughts and philosophy on both the importance of arts education and specific approaches to the teaching of music, particularly in relation to my own fields of expertise, composition and music theory. This philosophy reflects my belief in the significance of helping to create an educated and open-minded group of listeners, performers, and composers for the next generation, and my commitment to make this vision a reality.