

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Jesse Gilday

As a music educator, I seek to guide students toward musical and intellectual independence while preparing them for continued learning and collaboration. As students develop individual musical thought, it prepares them to adapt to any situation in music or life. I guide my students to gain awareness of what they know, to ascertain what they don't know, and to seek out answers to the unknown. Music learners are resourceful, using their current knowledge and creatively utilizing colleagues, mentors, or trial and error. When students solve musical enigmas and explain their process, I am confident that they are on their way to self-sufficiency.

My methodology of performance education is influenced by cognitive learning theory as applied to musical expression and technique. When teaching in the classroom and in private lessons, I use developmental discussion. Students assess what they hear as they play, and in so doing, identify both successful elements and areas for improvement. They present relevant information related to the situation at hand and also indicate their desired alternative outcomes. Based on this, I ask them to dictate possible solutions and attempt the most plausible first.

For example, a student may squeak as she ascends a scale in her lesson. I encourage her not to become frustrated and to instead assess objectively. While her tone may have been lovely, she wants play the scale without the squeak. Based on her awareness of what she played, she indicates that an air leak caused by her fingers is most likely. Upon the next attempt she positions her fingers differently and plays the scale successfully, without a squeak.

To catalyze student learning, I create a supportive environment in lessons. I am perpetually learning to take joy in the process as well as the product of music, and I hope to impart this to younger musicians. Thus, my assessment of student learning is criterion-referenced, but with emphasis on individual progress rather than perfection. If students apply the critical thinking skills learned in class, they return capable of a new process, technique, or expression, or having achieved greater refinement and nuance.

In the classroom, I prefer to expand upon cognitive learning theory toward a methodology influenced by Bloom's taxonomy. Through guided discussion, low-stakes writing, and open-ended prompts, I encourage students to expand upon their own prior knowledge with feedback from peers and instructor. This, ideally, leads to new knowledge as well as new questions as students work toward higher-order thinking skills.

As educators, we constantly grow. Through my time teaching at the university level, I have continually gained insight in my own learning and approach to music-making from students. It is my hope that they, too, consistently seek insight into multiple aspects of life through their study of music.