

Philosophy of Teaching

The study of music as a developing phenomenon in culture, technology, and practice can show us what we, ourselves, find valuable. Why do we make music? What attracts us to it? What makes us choose one instrument, tradition, practice over others? All of these are questions we must answer for ourselves; but no one said we couldn't have a little help along the way.

Encouraging an understanding of music lends itself to the understanding of our cultures, ourselves, and those cultures and persons around us. We fall back on music as a form of expression, though not necessarily always of the aesthetic persuasion. True, we can examine what a culture finds aesthetically pleasing, but an examination of the tones and patterns used, also the words chosen to accompany some music, reveals to us the meaning and influence it carries within it. Even those cultures that abhor music, as with some Protestant sects in early colonial North American development, demonstrate those ideas and ideals that influenced the values promoted by that society.

I want to teach in a way that encourages that exploration. I aim to create a space that fosters the self-inquiry necessary to find what one enjoys and finds valuable in music, and why and what that means for the self.

I was not given such opportunities in my own music training: it was a culture of learning what was put in front of you -- and, as a singer, hoping also to glean some of the theory instrumental instruction makes inherent along the way. I had one teacher from grade 6-8 who worked endlessly to teach us the theory, with much

moaning and groaning on her students' parts. Fortunately for me, I grasped some fundamentals and it created the foundation for my development in theory.

Until university, no teacher ever encouraged me to explore my own thoughts concerning music. I had other thoughts, and went through a process by which I grew away from the music of my parents. But that does not at all mean that I veered away from them or their beliefs and values. In fact, my mother turns to my brother and me as sources of good new music.

We can argue endlessly about what constitutes "good" music, but, from my perspective, is always a matter of personal taste. I value music for its trance and meditative states, reflection of the self in elements such as vocal range, flexibility, and development, and the lyrics chosen in whatever language.

I believe that providing an environment where students feel welcomed to question the music invites a healthy relationship between the student and teacher. Not being afraid to face those questions and challenges, so long as they are presented with respect for the values of those around them, is an important venture for me as a consumer and educator of music; to be able to either back up my choices, or feel confident enough to step out of the way to let the student create their own learning.

We can use music in the classroom to guide exploration, discovery, and revelations and about the world and oneself. We can use music to reinforce respect of individuals and cultures, and values and beliefs. While studying the world through the lens of music, we can learn many things about one another.