

Collegiate Studio Teaching Philosophy

Music is incorporated into every aspect of society these days. We hear it in the grocery store, at a restaurant, sporting events, sacred and secular ceremonies, company jingles, movies, video games, and common platforms such as spotify, and youtube. We use it to teach memorization at such an early age (like learning our ABC's). Then of course there is the communal experience of live concerts of all styles and genres.

Learning how to play an instrument can be a life-changing experience not just through school, but for the rest of your life. Having the ability to recreate music, analyze it, understand it, control it, and influence others by it is empowering, even at a basic level. These skills bring confidence and tools to analyze or interpret other avenues of life - focus, meaning, purpose, analytical methods, memorization, understanding of ones emotions, empowerment, courage, hope, loss, anger, adventure, ways of learning, and insight with other people or cultures to name a few.

The beautiful part is that the tools work both ways. Not only do they assist the student to learn in other areas of life, so too can the tools be a medium from other subjects for understanding music better. In order to teach students music fundamentals, I have related musical studies to principles in science, math, movies, video games, sports, working out, linguistics, yoga, and much more. It is important to me to be diverse in thinking and open minded as a teacher to utilize the tools they have in their figurative tool belts. No two students have the same life experiences nor might they experience life events in the same way. Therefore, it is my philosophy that teachers must find ways of relating the music concepts through whatever medium is necessary for comprehension.

The art of music is fundamentally an aural experience for the audience, which is why the most important question I ask my students is, "What does it sound like?" This applies to the immediate reaction of what the student hears, listening to a recording later, and comparing that recording to other recordings of professionals. Once they can distinguish the good and the bad, we can work out together how to get the sound where it needs to be. But, if they cannot admit the problem (in this case, hear the differences), then they will not or cannot fix it. I teach listening to one phrase or one lick at a time is the best way to ensure accurate listening as too many students

make the mistake of listening from beginning to end every time. The more comfortable the student gets with listening to recordings and building their aural skills, the better their playing will get.

Most teachers instill the importance of consistent performance to get used to the vulnerable feeling of standing in front of people. However, I feel it is important to teach the nature behind the feelings. All students know that people get nervous, and most of them know that professionals look like they have gotten over that hurdle and seem calm and controlled. But, most of them do not know ways to counteract the physical and mental processes their bodies go through while performing. I feel it is important to talk and practice those processes in a studio environment where it is a safe place to experiment and make mistakes.

The final philosophy I tell my students is this: "How well you play does not define who you are!" Music is a field where it is easy to attach your soul and personality to the instruments you play. It is one way we can portray the emotions so well. However, it is easy to categorize likeability to a person based on how we perceive their abilities as a player. People we deem better than us are placed on an unreachable pedestal and players beneath us are unlikeable and not worthy of our time. In my studio, I try to teach that those two things are separate. Yes, we all are here because our playing is a large part of who we are, but just like religion or race, it does not define us in entirety. Besides, we all have something to learn.