

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY:

The more I teach, the more my philosophy of teaching continues to evolve. However, there is one aspect that continues to stand firm through every student interaction, through every teaching environ, and through every area of instruction...the importance of practicality. As someone who did not take a traditional path through higher education, and instead entered the professional field first before returning to academia, I have found the need for practicality and real-world application to be of utmost importance when educating future professionals.

As a vocal coach in a private studio, I thrive on one-on-one interactions with my students. I work hard to communicate my personal expectations of each student, as well as to identify the student's personal goals, and find ways to incorporate those goals into each student's learning outcomes. I find that this individualized approach fosters an environment in which high expectations can be placed, while the student remains excited and motivated to achieve them. In my experience, students who are able to see the real-world benefits of their work are always the students who achieve better and more long-lasting results.

As a music theory instructor, the importance of real world application and practicality is of paramount importance. Why should a student care about the key of a song? Why should a student care about solfege? Why should a student care about developing aural skills? The answer to these questions can be summed up in my personal experiences in the professional industry of musical theatre. Over the last decade of working regionally as a Musical Director, I began to notice a trend in the young performers coming out of a variety of Musical Theatre programs across the country. While it was clear they had been well trained as singers, dancers, and actors during their time spent at their universities, musicianship skills consistently tended to be underdeveloped. It was often these performers who would struggle the most during the rehearsal process, and as a result were not immediately rehired for future work. Sharing these types of stories from my own personal professional experience has helped greatly to instill a universal desire and drive for my students to achieve the high expectations that I place upon them. Musicianship skills cannot be learned in a bubble or else they will never be used. Escorting the real-world into the classroom is a key component in cultivating a culture of students who want to learn.

As a musical theatre history lecturer, the same notions of practicality apply. While it is admittedly harder to get students to engage with history as an immediately practical area of study, I have found certain techniques to keep them actively engaged while encouraging them to learn on a deeper level. I regularly use weekly listening quizzes in which students must continually interact with the music pulled directly from the in-class material. I also employ weekly timeline reviews in which students must continuously engage with the order of events and how they relate to the development of musical theatre and America as a country. Once

students are empowered with the knowledge of what has come before them, I encourage them to dig deeply and identify ways in which those topics directly affect them today and will continue to affect them in the future.

In rehearsing and performing educational/departmental productions, I am particularly passionate about providing this real-world experience. I believe in the importance of educational theatre, and particularly how it serves as a laboratory for students to further utilize the skills being developed in the classroom. It is here in production that students can be treated as professionals, and as a result will rise to the demands of any given rehearsal/performance process. I believe that giving students opportunities to practically apply their developing skills is essential in the training of undergraduate musical theatre students.

In all of these teaching environs from the general classroom to the private studio, to the mainstage, my teaching philosophy remains consistent. I am passionate about educating students in a way that directly affects their professional aspirations. Whether it is learning musicianship skills, learning about the development of musical theatre, learning to develop professional auditioning skills, learning to sing in a variety of genres, or learning to thrive in a rehearsal/performance process, I feel it is my responsibility to create an individual who is well-rounded and marketable in their field. As a result of this philosophy, I have found that my students not only excel in areas that they themselves might deem difficult, but they also find great joy in their own success. Throughout my educational career, I have loved nothing more than developing students who will not only become professionals in their field, but will continue to be lifelong learners.