

MUSI 733
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Statement of Teaching Philosophy

My primary goal as a cello teacher is to give my students the tools they need to take ownership of their own growth. I help them not only to listen critically and identify their own areas for improvement, but also to devise efficient and effective practice solutions. It is my hope that they emerge from my instruction with the resources and the confidence to tackle any musical challenge in a stress-free, step-by-step way. I want to instill high self-standards but also self-foregiveness.

In a teacher-student relationship, I value mutual respect and a spirit of open dialogue. Rather than enforcing my own musical ideas, I try to help students reach their own conclusions through ongoing conversation. In my own musical education, I have been fortunate to have teachers who have valued my ideas, even if they diverged from their own. Being told that my own fingerings and bowings were worth exploring was crucial to my self-confidence and ability to be self-sufficient in the practice room. I want my students to feel heard and understood, and to not be afraid of experimentation.

I place great importance on honing excellent technique, without which it is difficult to reach one's full expressive potential. To that end, my students move through a comprehensive curriculum of exercises aimed at refining their physical approach to the instrument, and take part in weekly group classes where we explore the extensive body of existing cello technique literature. The guiding principle behind my method of technique is relaxation. My students become aware of barely perceptible muscles and learn to recognize and dispel unnecessary tension. This affords them the fluidity to explore expressive possibilities unencumbered.

While a solid technique is the bedrock of good musicianship, it is of course meaningless without an expressive vision. If they are struggling with artistic inspiration, I encourage my students to approach their repertoire in cinematic terms. They begin by forming visual and narrative associations from the sounds in the piece. I challenge them to be as specific as they can with these associations, and then to be swept up in this cinematic universe as much as possible while they are performing.

While it is gratifying to know that, as a cello teacher, I am helping people improve and reach their goals, I ultimately want my students to become their own teachers. As a result of my instruction, I hope they begin to approach challenges with self-assurance and to cultivate their own artistic imagery.