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TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

I believe that learning to play the piano can be attained by any person, no matter their musical background and skill level. Each student has unique strengths and individual learning needs. As a result, I provide a space in which students explore level-appropriate music from both standard and contemporary repertoire, coaching them as they find and develop their personal musical voices.

In my experience, students learn the best when they feel safe. To me it is important that students not see mistakes in a negative light but view them as opportunities to develop critical thinking. When errors occur, I do not simply tell students how to fix it. Instead, I challenge them to consider why it happened. Do they know the notes well enough? Was it a memory issue? Are they relying only on muscle memory? Perhaps it was a technical issue, which then requires digging deeper. How can the fingers and arms move more efficiently? This in turn helps them become independent musicians, capable of solving problems on their own.

It is also important to help students be well-prepared for public performances. My main resource for this is leading by example. I model disciplined, thoughtful practice and a positive attitude towards performance. Rather than demonstrate anxiety about it, I explain to my students that a successful performance is the result of the work I have already done over the previous months, practicing, recording myself, and performing for my peers. To that end, I encourage them to take advantage of any opportunity to practice performing, be it for a friend in a practice room or for their colleagues in studio class and other piano area events.

Finally, I work to prepare my students to become teachers, as the best way to learn is through teaching. Much of the knowledge I impart to my students stems from personal experience overcoming technical, interpretational, and personal challenges. As a result, I teach them to take notice of their own struggles and question how they would help their own students with such challenges. For instance, if they are struggling with practice discipline, I ask them to think about ways in which they would help a student who had difficulty in this area. Perhaps they could have their students keep a practice diary, so they could keep track of their progress.

By providing my students with a healthy atmosphere in which to explore piano repertoire, I help them develop their own voices, ensuring that they will stand out amongst their fellow musicians. In teaching them efficient practice strategies, I help them prepare for and deliver successful public performances. Through sharing my experiences, I teach my students to become independent thinkers, capable of growing on their own and imparting knowledge to the next generation of musicians.