

Philosophy for Instrumental Private Lessons

As a private lesson teacher, my goal is for my students to ultimately not need me. Once a student doesn't need me, then I know that I have taught him or her everything that I know. The way I do this is to teach students how to practice, and how to effectively listen to themselves.

Improvement is a direct result of practice, thus it is of crucial importance that practicing is effective and efficient. Technical passages must be mastered slowly first, and then slowly worked up to performance tempo. Often playing a passage in a variety of different rhythms is also helpful. Also, all passages must have a plan, especially slow passages. Dynamics, rubato, articulation, phrasing: all of these things must be decided ahead of time in a well thought-out and executed plan in order to be convincing.

Effective listening is also necessary in order to progress desirably. There is no lesson teacher present when practicing at home, so a student must be able to be their own teacher. After a student plays a passage, I often ask, "How do you think it went? Do you remember where you played that wrong note or missed that accidental? Etc."

As a composer myself, I also recognize the importance of taking a hard look at a piece of music and try and get inside the composers head. What is the form of the piece? Where is its climax? What is the function of any given section? Why did he/she write this passage like this? All such questions need to be answered in order to giving a convincing performance. I always include music theory as a portion of the lesson for advanced students because despite how it's often taught, looking at a piece from a theoretical perspective greatly enhances understanding and performance of any piece of music.

Before any of this can take place, it is crucial that all of the fundamentals of playing the instrument are in place. Things like breathing, embouchure, articulation, posture, and playing position are the solid foundation for which more detailed concepts must rest.

Additionally, for bassoon students, I also make and sell reeds and will happily adjust them as necessary!