

Katrina King Nicholson
Teaching Statement

What is my job as an artist-teacher? Simply put, it is to share. Performing and teaching are both ways of sharing music, enriching people's lives with something good, true, and beautiful. My teaching philosophy can be summed up in three words: thoughtfulness, clarity, and respect.

I have often commented to my students that the most important part of their body in the practice room is their brain. Thoughtful interaction is at the heart of every lesson, inviting my students into a deeper engagement with the music or subject matter. Giving students tools that they can use independently allows them to not only develop their skills in the classroom, but also their ability to further those skills on their own. Roleplay is a common feature of my classes and lessons, with my students acting as teachers and providing feedback on their own performance or explaining a concept as if I were the student. I invite students to bring their questions, but often avoid giving direct answers, responding instead with another question that encourages them to think critically.

Musicians have a tendency to talk in metaphors, a strategy that can be confusing as often as it is effective. Clarity in communication requires knowing my students and tailoring my usage of metaphors to their individual experiences and comprehension levels. With one sports-loving beginner I found the word "basketball" was the key to helping him understand triplet rhythms, but in many cases I tend to favor objective instructions over abstract metaphors. Questions are always welcomed, creating an open learning environment that builds confidence and self-awareness.

Human beings thrive on respect, and this is the culture I strive to cultivate in my studio, both by respecting my students and by expecting them to respect me and their classmates. By listening to their ideas, questions, and concerns; valuing their contributions and individuality; providing clear expectations and feedback; treating them with dignity; and relying on them to extend the same grace to those around them, I nurture a studio that is focused, hard-working, and supportive. A classroom built on these principles of thoughtfulness, clarity, and respect is the ideal environment for cultivating and sharing the richness that music can bring to our lives.