

Teaching Philosophy – Louis Arques louis.arques@gmail.com

My teaching philosophy is based on a musical and scientific education, a family inherited curiosity, life experiences through sports, travels and cultural encounters, and philosophical and pedagogical readings. Teaching is an opportunity for me to meet musicians of diverse backgrounds and speak with them about our common passion for music and the broader aspects of life. Below are six concepts that articulate how my philosophy aims, through proprioception and critical thinking, to empower students to become their own artistic tutor.

Music

To paraphrase Victor Wooten, “music is a language.” We can speak through music using our personal voice to express our opinions and feelings, driven by a greater desire to interact with others. Therefore, in my teaching I favor ensemble playing and companionship combined with a deep knowledge of the repertoire. I encourage my students to collaborate with professional musicians, and I often join them on stage.

Noises and Mistakes

Like painters with colors we should not exclude tones from our palette, not even the strangest. Practicing “noises” is the best way to explore the instrument’s range and acoustic boundaries. For example, squeaks are undesired but are accurate high partials that we should be able to produce.

Note, rhythm and phrasing “mistakes” are opportunities to analyze and learn about the music. We make mistakes because we do not anticipate a harmonic surprise, a turn in the melody or the end of a repeating pattern. It is a means of enriching our vocabulary and celebrating composers’ genius.

Dance and Drama

Music is intimately related to dance, so I often suggest that students add steps to the music they play. This provides a deeper feeling of tempo or groove and a more physiological, ever-moving approach to the instrument, thereby reconciling movement and performance practice.

Music is also dramatic, expressing feelings and emotions. I regularly challenge my students to add subtext to a melody or to impersonate characters while playing. These acting games strengthen their stage presence and interpretation, making their performances multi-dimensional and more compelling.

Body and Mind

Instrumentalists are seldom aware of the physical aspect of playing. Yet attending a voice lesson proves that our true instrument is our body, not the musical tools in our hands. This is why I encourage my students to exercise like athletes, to be self-aware and respectful of their physical mechanic and internal rhythm, and to have a balanced way of life. The power of the mind over the body should not be used to break it but to guide it, to practice intelligently and to learn how to learn efficiently.

Meaning

It is critical to discover one’s musical personality and expressive domaine. To aid in that search, I balance my teaching between the student’s favorite repertoire, the instrument’s canons and underrepresented composers. Curiosity is my driving force, so I always look forward to learning from my students’ cultures and experiences, as well as exposing them to new repertoire such as early, new and non-classical music.

Style, Arts and Culture

Finally, through in-class performances, listening sessions and recommended extracurricular research, I endeavor to give my students a sense of style in many genres of music, thus preparing them to be proficient musicians. I employ all my abilities to help them become acquainted to all art forms, and to be informed by history, theory, literature, philosophy and experience. These qualities not only enable our development into accomplished contemporary artists, but also into open-minded and self-actualized people.