



tenor | voice teacher | vocologist

Even as a young performer, my sights have always been set on teaching. It is gratifying to give back by helping singers develop a love for music and their vocal instrument. I have been fortunate to study with master artist-teachers over the years, and my mission is to synthesize this myriad of learned techniques with continued research in the fields of vocal pedagogy and vocology to cultivate the next generation of professional singers.

One of my primary goals as a voice teacher is to work toward breaking the stereotype that singers are lesser musicians than their instrumentalist counterparts. Many of those who join my studio do not have an instrumental background, and I strive to help all of them become independent musicians, regardless. Too often, singers rely on coaches and reference recordings to learn music, and I urge my students to instead trust that their skills are sufficient. We discuss efficient practicing techniques as well as my preferred sequence for learning any new piece of music: text and translation, rhythm, pitches, vocal coordination on neutral vowels, and synthesis. Outside of private lessons, I remind students that they are their own voice teacher, and I find that my singers become increasingly mindful musicians over the course of their study with me.

Unlike instrumentalists, singers cannot see or directly control their instrument. My teaching style includes constant use of the questions, “What are you feeling?” and “What are you exploring right now?” Singers must be keenly aware of the physical sensations involved in optimal vocalism, and this can be tracked by encouraging a strong inner monologue. When a vocal exercise or passage of music yields a consistently positive result, I ask students to describe how it felt, and then I help them to generate a phrase that will command the same vocal set-up, eventually instilling a habit in their technical toolbox. This also applies to students’ awareness of vocal fatigue and illness. When a singer enters my studio in poor voice, we discuss possible causes and then create an action plan together. Although I will dismiss a student if they experience pain with phonation, I do assist singers in learning how to call upon reliable vocal technique in times of reduced physical health.

Voice teachers can best monitor student progress through the succession of repertoire, and it is imperative to take ample time considering a student’s current level of musicianship, range and comfortable tessitura, predominant technical struggles, and foreign language diction skills before assigning a piece. With that in mind, I typically choose to challenge one or two of those areas when selecting a song so that the student has a specific focus. In order to further expand my knowledge, I seek to discover new songs (classical and CCM), arias, and musical theatre excerpts regularly, and I avoid assigning a piece to multiple members of my studio during the same term.

Lastly, and most importantly, I believe that in order to foster the skill set necessary of twenty-first century musicians, we must move beyond the notion that the term “vocal performance” is synonymous with opera and song literature from the United States and a handful of countries in Western Europe. As someone who grew up in the southern US, I have made it a mission to assign more music by Latinx composers, even though Spanish is still considered an auxiliary classical singing language in many circles. Students should be encouraged to learn repertoire from their own cultures and from others outside of the canon. Modern audiences are becoming increasingly interested in performances that reflect the diversity of our world, and this work can begin in the voice studio. Additionally, I make it known that my classrooms have a place for people of all backgrounds. As a member of the LGBTQIA+ community and someone who works with a variety of ages, ethnicities, gender expressions, sexual orientations, and abilities, I am committed to creating a learning environment that champions a collaborative spirit among our wide range of experiences. When students know they have an advocate, they push further with their endeavors. This can also account for why one chooses to enroll in an institution in the first place.

Just as is the case with learning to sing, my teaching style will continue to evolve over time. I am dedicated to being a life-long learner of this craft, remaining open minded to new trends in research as well as seeking the advice of my trusted colleagues when needed. Each voice lesson fills me with new ideas, and I look forward to further aiding singers in their development of an art form that is so essential to what makes us human.