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TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

The most salient lesson I learned from my mentor Mark Lusk is that when you teach students, you need to prioritize *teaching students*. A teacher must be sensitive to how each student comes from a different background and has different aspirations; it isn't the case that every trombonist wants to win an orchestral job, or tour with a big band, or be a high school band director, or simply play for the joy of playing as a hobby. I aim to teach people first, music second, and trombone third. This allows me to meet students where they are and focus on incremental growth from A to B and the improvement process itself.

In teaching people first, my priority is ensuring students develop consistency of curiosity, motivation, and intentionality. Building a habit of being actively engaged and hungry for learning is the most important facet of studying, as it trickles over to every one of their pursuits. So, my lessons incorporate the Socratic method and emphasize not memorization or drilling but rather understanding through analysis. To this end, a priority of mine is ensuring the student maintains a sense of love and excitement for music: this is the best way for a student to feel internally motivated, curious, and engaged. While the cliché of “teaching students to teach themselves” is invaluable, it's even more important to teach students to *want* to teach themselves.

Teaching music second prevents students from falling into the trap of being “trombone players;” the world doesn't need more trombone players, but it could certainly use more musicians who play trombone. I believe every person has a song within them and I aim for each and every one of my students to be a musician first and foremost. My students sing, count, conduct, and listen through their parts in addition to playing them on the horn to ensure they have a strong musical foundation, then they learn all they can about the piece to develop a more nuanced and idiomatic understanding of the piece. Learning about the composer, time period, genre, and historical context are absolutely paramount: my students know what would be “on the postcard” for each piece they play. A postcard for Paris might have the Eiffel Tower on it, or a postcard from Rome might include the Colosseum. Students should know that the postcard for *Elegy for Mippy II* by Leonard Bernstein includes a *West Side Story*-esque approximation of jazz swing feel or that the postcard for *Evidence* by Thelonious Monk is a rhythmically angular contrafact of the American Songbook tune *Just You, Just Me*.

From a more technical perspective, my students learn to analyze music methodically through lenses such as “Rhythm, Pitch, Sound, Style” (how rhythmical/etc. was that and why?). Musicality cannot compensate for a lack of technique or discipline, so it is imperative students have straightforward and measurable ways of identifying opportunities for growth that can then be refined in the practice room through experimentation and repetition. Applying this method to music the students love or are hoping to perform allows students to build technique in a practical and engaging way, focusing on how technique applies to music making from the get-go rather than learning technique for technique's sake. In the practice room, I encourage self-recording with audio and video, as it gives the student an unbiased look at musical elements like rhythm, pitch, sound, and style in addition to trombone idiosyncrasies like slide technique, embouchure placement, breathing, and posture.

If I could pick three musical lessons for my students to learn, it would be (1) to be intentional and analytical every time they make music, (2) be musically curious, and (3) that musicality cannot compensate for discipline.