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Personal Teaching Philosophy

I believe that taking piano lessons is a valuable and life-changing experience. I teach my students with two purposes in mind: first, that they might satisfy the desire which challenges them to take piano lessons; second, that from the taking of piano lessons, they might learn to *think* about, *love*, and *do* things in life and in music that are true, good, right, and beautiful. The former reason is of primary importance and has to do with the students' initiative; the latter ought to be regarded as gain if achieved, and should be initiated and imparted by the teacher. Thus, I teach my students because (1) they want to learn, and (2) I would like to impart a worldview framework derived from music. Following, I will discuss both ideas.

First, for a student to have the desire to learn, he must be constantly encouraged by his family to pursue music as an end in itself. Once a student begins lessons, he begins to really *know* that he wants to continue learning. As a teacher, I have the responsibility to "light the fire" in the student so that he or she can gradually become an independent and accomplished learner. In the words of H. W. Beecher, "Education is not the filling of a bucket, but the lighting of a fire." The learning follows this initial desire to learn. The continuous act of learning and being successful at it increases the intensity of the fire. This is not only a fire that burns with passion, but one that refines the student's abilities.

To accomplish this, I commit myself to teaching your child in such a way that is pedagogically sound and constructive. I will try to choose age- and level-appropriate repertoire, technique, keyboard and aural skills, and music theory. The repertoire chosen will be musically appealing. I will make my expectations clear to your child, and during

lessons, my students will learn how I expect them to practice during the week. With this said, I in turn expect my students to practice at least five days per week for the length of their lesson every time. They must follow my practice instructions. Through those instructions, I show my students efficient ways to practice, and I expect my students to follow directions. I also expect students and parents to regard piano-playing as a high priority and to be committed to this endeavor.

Secondly, the worldview framework mentioned above applies to piano, as well as to a way of life. I generally teach many pianistic concepts from life experiences; the opposite is also possible –we can learn about life through the study of piano. Thus, a frame of mind is carried from the life scenario to the practice room and vice versa, with the end of becoming more complete, thoughtful, and loving people.

Thinking in the practice room involves examining music, understanding theory, learning concepts, comparing and contrasting, constructive criticism, listening to oneself and to others (i.e. the teacher, peers), appreciating the historical background of the music, memorizing, composing, improvising, and much more that engages the mind.

Loving, or the emotional part, is never apart from the study of music. One must have a love for beauty and for a proper interpretation of the music; one must develop a knowledge of how to make a piece become alive, how to make it more than simply notes on the page. In playing, one explores and expresses a side of him- or herself that otherwise may remain unexplored. In playing the piano, one develops a love for a clear communication between composer and student, performer and audience, and teacher and student. The emotional side of piano has to be dealt with appropriately, and enhanced by thought (knowledge of the music) and action (technique and practice). Therefore, all aspects are interrelated.

Finally, *doing*. Without discipline and accountability a student cannot practice. In practice, one not only deals with theory and emotions, but also with technique, which gives the student the tools to express the other two. One also learns about rhythms, motor skills, drills, exercises, and the like. One's body is strengthened and trained to create a performer out of a student. The student who practices appropriately will be able to perform well.

In summary, I commit myself to pedagogically sound teaching of music at the piano. This kind of teaching will include a theory-based approach, enhanced by proper interpretation and technique, and aimed at performing well. This approach will not only shape students into pianists, but also into people of reason, passion, expression, and action. These elements will constitute a great liberal artist who strives for love, truth, and beauty. Such a person can then be planted on reality, can understand and submit to authority, and can know how to live passionately. Therefore, *thinking* about, *loving*, and *doing* things in life and in music that are true, good, right, and beautiful will equip students for success in many areas of life, beyond what they learn in piano lessons. These concepts can go outside the practice room and performance hall into their daily lives.