

Joseph Swift - Teaching Philosophy

Pedagogic Values:

My pedagogic approach centers around the student's needs. Every student is different. Some traits of the craft come easy, some are challenging, and some come with glaring gaps in their performative approach. I believe in a non-conforming approach to instruction; students all need different things and learn different ways. I strive to be as well rounded an educator as possible, able to deliver what my students need through any communication method or structural design. For bassoonists, my private instruction centers around reeds, finger technique, oral cavity manipulation, air control and musical expression.

Bassoon Instruction:

As outlined above, it is important that bassoonists pursue technical mastery of the instrument in order to achieve the ultimate goal of free musical expression. We should not feel weighed down by the technical nature of what we do, or the forces that we think are out of our control (i.e., reeds). I lead by example in my instruction, and never ask students to do what I would not. Students study technical exercises for their hands, articulatory and tone exercises for their oral cavity manipulation, air exercises for proper intonation and breath awareness, and have regular reed classes to ensure that they always have serviceable reeds to practice and perform with. I also place a great deal of emphasis on proper postural alignment, ergonomics of playing the instrument optimally, and emphasize preparing students for the shifting world of a modern artist.

Emphasis on the Modern Artist:

The career opportunities for today's musicians and artists at large have shifted from what used to be. The days of pursuing a degree to perform in an orchestra, then winning said job to live out your days are much rarer and incredibly competitive. While this career aspiration can, and should, still be a goal for aspiring musicians, there are many other viable paths they can learn about to supplement their livelihood while supporting their musical career. It is not only my goal to produce great bassoon players, but also physically and mentally healthy graduates ready to take on the field, equipped with the knowledge and savvy it takes to get started.

Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion:

It is my mission to serve the students that choose to study with me with absolute commitment. I am aware of the influence that we as educators have on our students and strive to celebrate our differences.

Student Goals:

1. All students regardless of their degree are equipped with the knowledge of resources and outlets to pursue careers in music.
2. All students are aware of how to prevent common physical ailments that often plague instrumentalists.
3. All bassoonists feel comfortable and confident in their reed making abilities and technical competency to play whatever is on the page in front of them
4. All students are confident in their musical decisions and perform to the best of their abilities