

My aspiration to become an engaging solo piano performer has always been accompanied by an equal desire to be an engaging and effective teacher. I believe that musical education goes beyond acquiring performance skills. It is a discipline that includes the development of personal character, a honing of organization and communication skills, and a comprehensive study of music history, theory, and literature. It also involves a holistic approach in music making and a contextual view of music in relationship to other branches of humanities. I strive to enrich each student's life based on this philosophy.

My mother instilled a love for music in me at an early age. Her parents, influenced by the Dutch colonization of Indonesia, believed in providing cultural nourishments to their children in addition to academic studies. My mother not only taught me how to play the piano, but also how to communicate with and about music. Moreover, she nurtured her students, treating them not only as students of piano, but also of life. My subsequent three most influential teachers shared this same quality. Each had unique dispositions and teaching methods, but all helped define the person that I am today. I have also been deeply influenced by the inspiring work of Dr. José Antonio Abreu, and his idea of "El Sistema." I believe that music is a powerful force that can elevate human souls. This is the reason that I am passionate about advocating for music education. Whether I teach a private piano lesson or a piano class, whether a student is inspired to become a concert artist or a physics major wishing to enrich his life with music, I strive to guide my students to become informed and skilled musicians while instilling core values that will enrich their lives and their communities.

My approach to students and my style of teaching evolve continuously as I have been privileged to teach private and group lessons to a wide range of students in age, race, social backgrounds, abilities, and levels over the years. Regardless of each student's level, an important constant has been that of maintaining the integrity of the composers' works. This concept is something I continually practice in my own development as an active performer, and in varying levels I hope to find in each student's assessment and evaluation. In addition, I observe how the skills acquired by disciplined practice produce solid musical results.

As music is not just about the sound of the instrument or the voice, when the preliminary learning process is taking place, I apply a comprehensive approach that includes music theory, music history, and music literature. To illustrate, students need to recognize the connection of a group of three notes on the page; whether it is a triad or a stepwise scale motion. This ability to analyze and synthesize information is essential to their progress. It is also equally important that students know something about the composer whose work they learn. Knowledge of the eighteenth century Viennese classical style (of music and dance) will inform them not to accent their left hand accompaniment on every beat. I encourage students to hear other musical works and explore visual artworks from the composer's era so they see how their piano repertoire fits in a larger context of humanities.

With all the theoretical and technical components in learning music, I address the crucial role of the ears. The ears must always listen actively while simultaneously being the sage guide. With diligent and patient practice, a connection between the student's ears, eyes, brain, arms, and fingers will develop into a continuous flow. In other words, making music is a seamless integration of interdisciplinary activities. Inevitably, students could be trapped in trying to control and play everything correctly. Thus I remind them that it is equally important to use their imagination and be a creative narrator. At the end of the day, they must "say something" with their music.

As music is also about communication, I build a positive relationship with my students based on mutual respect and open dialogue. Collectively, both they and I share the responsibilities in our journey. To encourage a two-way flow of information and energy, I welcome their questions and feedback in lessons or classes. I inform students that I am also learning while engaging with them. Because education is a costly investment, I demand an unwavering commitment from each student. I believe the discipline they practice in our classroom will translate to the discipline in their personal lives and individual career paths. I believe we owe this work ethic to ourselves and to our society as a whole.

As the legendary Leonard Bernstein, the model of the "Artist-Teacher-Scholar," demonstrated, the role of the educator comes with the responsibility and privilege to continue learning. I strive to expose all my students to the rigorous discipline yet rewarding art form of music; provide skills to sharpen their musical intuitions, encourage them to think critically, and to diversify their ability to communicate to others through musical language; continue my own growth as a musician so that I may better serve my students and my own aspiration as a pianist; and support the younger generation so that they may not only be able to play the piano well but they also become informed listeners and outstanding patrons of the arts.