

## STATEMENT OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

As a teacher, I aim to perpetuate the joy of performing music. Though my specific skills have been honed in the world of percussion, I strive to always remind students that they are musicians first, and percussionists second - the instruments and tools that we use are means to an end, not the end itself. My goal is to help students to make beautiful music, without any qualifications or limitations of instrument, to broaden their musical horizons, and to push them to be better than they thought they could be. I also want them to be able to think critically about why they may (or may not) find something aesthetically and aurally pleasing, whether it is their own performances or others' concerts. I want them in turn to use both of these skills to foster their own love of music, and use their performance or educational skills to encourage it in others.

In order to develop these skills, it is essential to emphasize the student's responsibility for their own learning. I expect that students will be prepared musically to the best of their ability, and will arrive punctually and with any necessary instruments already set up and ready to play. I encourage students to ask questions of anything they may not understand, or anything they might be curious about. I, in turn, teach by asking questions: "What did you like about what you just played?" "What do you think you could have done better?" "Why did you make that choice?"

While technique is extremely important (especially at the beginning undergraduate level) and will be emphasized, my primary focus is always on sound: this importance was imparted to me during my undergraduate degree, and I have appreciated it ever since. Even when practicing technical exercises, one must always ask, "How does it sound? Am I happy with the tone I'm producing? If not, why not?" Many issues with technique can be illuminated when starting with these questions. I also recognize that technical solutions that have worked for me may not be right for all my students. I am open to a variety of approaches, both technically and musically, if they serve the music and the students' best interests. Few things are more rewarding to me than watching a student present an approach to a composition and for me to think "I never thought of that - but I like it!"

I realize that all students learn slightly differently, and I therefore work hard to quickly understand what the best approach is for a particularly individual. It may be to maintain a very structured lesson and provide direct, concise information; or it might be to structure lessons as discussions, to encourage greater active participation. I also make an effort to ensure that I am not asking anything of students that I would find unreasonable myself. I do my best to make myself available outside of lesson times, including open lines of communication through phone, email and social media.

To that end, I encourage students to be as musically well-rounded as possible. This means that not only knowing basic theory, harmony and analysis, but actively incorporating it as applicable into preparing for performance. Theory is not something additional you learn when you're learning music: it IS the music! I also encourage the exploration of repertoire outside of the standard undergraduate-level canon. I am thrilled when a student brings a piece I don't know into a lesson and asks "Can I learn this?" It shows that they are enthusiastic, and are taking initiative to further their own progress.

Last, but perhaps most importantly, I do my best to instill a sense of community among my students. The nature of the percussionist (especially when playing in an ensemble setting) is a social one: we need to be able to work with our colleagues to do our jobs successfully. I encourage percussion students to support, challenge and encourage each other, to reach - and hopefully succeed - their potential. Students are always more successful if they have a community of which they feel a vital part.

I try to teach with the qualities that have been present in my teachers: a desire for the student to succeed, honest and constructive feedback, approachability and an open mind, and a love and enthusiasm for music and for percussion. These qualities have served me well in my varied teaching experiences so far, and I'm confident they will continue to do so.

**JAMIE DRAKE**

(647) 210-3786 - writetojamie@gmail.com - jamiedrake.ca