

## Teaching Philosophy of Candida Wiley

My teaching philosophy has evolved greatly over the last 30 years, thanks largely to my experiences with hundreds of string and other students, and exposure to great teachers and courses.

A central tenet of my teaching philosophy is the application of Alexander Technique during lessons. My strongest teaching and performing influence has been 16 years (and counting) of Alexander Technique study, culminating in becoming an AT teacher myself. Briefly, Alexander Technique teaches conscious improvement of one's body use by lessening the pressure of a person's head down on the neck. It is imminently useful for violinists and violists whose turned head is used to help balance their instruments. Using this technique with my students cuts through wasted time and verbiage by going straight to the postural issue holding them back. This technique proves invaluable for avoiding injuries in over-zealous students

The study of Alexander Technique completely transformed my own technique and my relationship to music as career.

Insuring proper technique is the basis for much of the time I spend teaching. I find full musical expression and artistry most often bloom with proper technical training. Frequently a student does not know what degree of expression is possible until technical mastery is formed. Seldom does a student with subpar technique come to me with their voice and expressivity intact, although it has happened!

Frequent performance is one basis of my teaching philosophy. When it is a requirement that students perform several times during a semester, students rethink their practice techniques more often and especially after each performance. As a result, they begin to teach themselves more constructively. Frequent performances contribute to a more urgent, practical approach to practice, similar to the conditions of the professional.

At the Performing Arts School where I teach, I arrange for students to perform at least 3 times per semester, not including orchestra concerts or juries. Some performances are solo with piano, others are chamber concerts. Dates are set at the beginning of each semester for strategizing purposes. The result has been great student involvement in the process of performance -preparation. As well, there is peer pressure and musical bonding within the small ensembles.

Selection of repertoire is at the core of my teaching philosophy. Selecting music for each student is one of my biggest jobs and a constant challenge. Well-chosen pieces make or break the string student. The Royal Conservatory of Music violin syllabus Grade 8 is a good starting point for college students. There are often faults in students' technique or musical understanding which can be mitigated by surreptitious repertoire adjustments. To me it is crucial for the student to have some input in the selection of repertoire. I am always on the lookout for new music, since I often tire of the same pieces. I relish finding new repertoire.

Repertoire is at the heart of strategizing the arc of study for each student. At first, we decide how far the student plans to go in 4 years of university study. Depending on student goals, we pick a more or less intense regime of study. Regardless of eventual career

goals, all students have weekly scales, etudes, Unaccompanied Bach and concerto to prepare. This organizes the lessons and grading as well. I can calculate the grade for each lesson based on what improvements have occurred between lessons.

A huge influence on my teaching philosophy has been the Suzuki Method. I probably wouldn't have developed a good-humored, positive approach in the studio if I hadn't been immersed in Suzuki teacher training for many years. More likely, I wouldn't have pursued teaching at all. Dr. Suzuki purportedly found something positive to say in each lesson he taught. He genuinely cared for his students and aimed to create "noble hearts". I genuinely enjoy my students, especially once they have figured out my sense of humor. In my experience, having a sense of humor increases both teacher and student creativity.

At the nuts-and-bolts level, Dr. Suzuki advocated taking ever-smaller steps in solving big technical problems. Even at the collegiate level, this is how I solve students' issues with technique, musicality and memorization. Of course Ivan Galamian (and probably many other great teachers) used this approach as well.

Encouraging students to immerse themselves in great music is central to Suzuki Method and is no less crucial at the collegiate level. Often students' problems in vibrato or tone control are resolved by listening to great singers, cellists and violinists, live or recorded, then consciously or unconsciously choosing how one wants to sound. The student then has her own philosophy of sound.

Including singing in lessons has become a part of my approach, although not expressly a Suzuki Method tenet. Singing forces the student to feel pitches and rhythms in their bodies, internalizing it. Once internalized, it is much easier to produce correct pitches on one's instrument.

Using my own practice and performing to inform teaching becomes more crucial to my teaching philosophy the more experience I gain. The daily time I spend solving my own issues is always valuable in the teaching studio. It keeps me fired up and enthusiastic to hear from students how they are approaching their own issues. As well, I have more empathy for what they are up against. In fact, though raised in a musical family, my violin playing and studying was often unsuccessful. Seldom do students come to me with an issue I have not faced in my own playing.