

DR. LISABETH MILLER KETTLEDON TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

As an artist and a scholar, I have always been fascinated by stories. From complex opera characters to the anonymous narrators of countless art songs, I believe that connection to text, character, history, and style is essential to a successful performance. Whether I'm teaching a private voice lesson, or in the classroom, I believe that seeking out the stories behind the music is both important and exciting. My favorite moments in teaching happen when there is an opportunity to delve into the stories of characters, composers and the historical eras in which they lived and worked, and discover how those stories influenced musical style, pedagogy, and interpretation.

As an experienced teacher, I have found that there is no one-size-fits-all method, but rather that by understanding and respecting my students' perspectives and backgrounds, I am able to tailor my approach to teaching based on the needs of both individual students and groups. Customizing my approach has been both a pleasure and a necessity during my teaching career as I have taught both private lessons at courses at both the community college level as well as in more traditional four year undergraduate programs. I have found working with students at all levels to be rewarding, and the opportunity to use my skills to make music accessible and compelling across a diverse cross-section of the universities' populations to be both challenging and fulfilling.

The study of voice is a rich, rewarding, and multi-faceted discipline. Each student's instrument is unique and the journey requires close collaboration between teacher and student. In my teaching I focus not only on the physical placement and technique required to produce beautiful sound, but also on the intellectual and emotional connection to the work. As a teacher, it is my job to give each student the tools they need to cultivate their best possible singing technique, to help them hone and shape those tools to reveal and refine their individual artistry, and to encourage them to confidently use these tools change enrich our world through skilled artistic creation.

In the private studio, the core components of my teaching, and thus the tools that I endeavor to help my students develop are as follows: *A balanced, well-aligned, and tension free posture* because an open, attractive, and clear sound begins with physical freedom. I often begin lessons with a stretching routine designed to free the body of physical tensions, recognize specific obstacles the student may be facing on a given day, and help establish mental and emotional focus for the lesson. *Breath management and support* because breathing for singing is perhaps the most important, yet most misunderstood element of studying voice. I combine a thorough explanation of the specific physiology of inhalation and expiration with demonstrations, and use of descriptive imagery to help students understand how to best breathe for singing. *An open throat and lifted palatal placement* because in order to achieve a unified vocal registration, consistent resonance, and a healthy technique, a student must learn to sing with a consistently open throat and lowered laryngeal position that relieves the vocal cords of tension. This also helps with the correction of many common vocal faults by

eliminating some of the chief causes of intonation issues, nasality, and inconsistent presence between vocal registers.

Finally, I endeavor to create a respectful, positive, and encouraging environment so that I may foster trust with my students and give them space to explore and try new things. Likewise in the classroom I strive to cultivate an upbeat, safe, and supportive atmosphere where students can feel free to make bold choices, ask important questions, and learn from each other's stories as well as my own. Art cannot be created when students feel judged, stifled, and tense. My goal is to excite students about repertoire, music history, and pedagogy. Most of all, I hope that students will leave my classroom with an understanding of technical tools, and an appreciation for stories at they've learned as well as the courage to apply them in their own practice and performances.