

## Statement of Teaching Philosophy

“Each student is a different world.” This statement, shared by world-renowned flutist and pedagogue Jeanne Baxtresser, has become the foundation of my approach to teaching. To me, it means that when a student walks into a lesson, I am entering their world. They are not entering mine simply because the lesson takes place in my office. Each student brings a unique combination of experiences, goals, strengths, and challenges, and it is my responsibility as a teacher to recognize this and meet them where they are. This perspective allows me to shift the role of teacher from an authority figure and someone who is all-knowing to a collaborator and model a commitment to lifelong learning. Rather than expecting students to conform to a particular method of playing or learning, I guide them in discovering strategies and approaches that allow them to grow in a way that is most beneficial to them.

At the same time, individualized teaching does not mean the absence of structure. In my studio, I balance flexibility with a structured framework through four areas of focus: tone production, technical development, orchestral excerpts, and solo repertoire. This structure allows students to build the necessary skill set and is broad enough to account for their unique needs and goals. In areas such as tone and technique, I emphasize consistency over quantity. By focusing on a small number of carefully chosen exercises and approaching them with the intention of reaching a particular goal, students learn to engage deeply with fundamental aspects of playing rather than simply playing through exercises. The purpose is to build confidence and reveal how fundamental skills transfer to performance repertoire.

When choosing orchestral excerpts and solo repertoire to study, it is crucial to understand where the student currently is, where their interests lie, and what their goals are. From there, we can work together to fill in gaps. Gaps could refer to repertoire from a certain time period or composer, historical context, a specific style of playing, or a piece that will challenge a fundamental aspect of their playing. This may include Baroque flute sonatas by German, French, and Italian composers for an understanding of stylistic differences; core orchestral excerpts; foundational method books and repertoire from the French Flute School; and twentieth- and twenty-first-century repertoire incorporating extended techniques and engaging with historically underrepresented composers.

My teaching centers around cultivating investigative learning within a non-judgmental environment. I view lessons as opportunities for analysis and exploration, rather than spaces solely for critique. I aim to identify underlying issues and develop strategies to address them collaboratively. This shift in mindset allows students to move away from fear of making mistakes and towards an open, investigative approach to learning that can also be applied outside of music.

Curiosity is an important aspect of this process. I aim to model this by asking questions and letting the student try for themselves, rather than providing a solution right away. Examples include: What happens if you adjust your embouchure this way? What do you notice when you change your air direction or articulation? These moments of experimentation are crucial for building a skill, even when they produce sounds the student might perceive as “bad.” It builds tolerance to the difficulties that arise while practicing, and creates the understanding that practice

is for exploring possibilities, pushing past comfort zones, and gradually building to refined playing.

Another important component of teaching is teaching students how to practice. My approach is to isolate issues and break them down to their most manageable level. Once the student identifies an area of improvement, we connect the issue back to fundamental skills, working through specific exercises that address the root of the problem, not just the problem in the context of the repertoire. Eventually, students build the confidence and ability to diagnose and solve problems independently.

A central goal of mine as a teacher is to guide students towards becoming independent musicians. One of the most meaningful moments I have experienced as a teacher came from a non-music major student working on developing a more resonant and supported sound in the high register. After several weeks, the student came into a lesson excited to share a breakthrough in their personal practice. They were practicing late at night in an apartment with roommates and turned the headjoint upside down to minimize volume. The student noticed they were using much less air than they thought, and they began applying this discovery to their playing, resulting in improved resonance in the high register. This moment reflected my ultimate goal: equipping students with tools to listen analytically and develop their own problem-solving skills. It also reinforced that, as educators, students are also our teachers.

Fostering individuality in the studio is the foundation for helping students see and be empowered by their strengths, while also building independence and confidence to face challenges. When students understand how they learn and experience practice as a dynamic process, they take ownership of their musical growth, leading to more fulfillment and motivation.

This philosophy extends to my work with students of varying backgrounds and experience. My goals remain the same whether I am working with music majors, music education students, or students pursuing careers in other fields. I provide students with a comprehensive skill set to play their instrument at a high level through structure, high expectations, and consistency. Beyond flute playing, I aim to equip students with skills they can apply to other areas of life, including discipline, critical thinking, curiosity, and investigative learning.

By maintaining high standards and a structured framework with built-in flexibility, I strive to create an environment where all students feel challenged, supported, and excited to explore their own artistry. In this way, “each student is a different world” means that teaching is not about forcing students into a method or style of flute playing, but about engaging with them as individuals and helping reveal their innate potential. By fostering curiosity, providing structure, and creating space where experimentation and imperfection are encouraged, I strive to support students not only in their development as flutists but as lifelong learners and musicians.