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Ruth Ellis, D.M.A
Peer Review

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Reviewer

Syllabus:

The hallmark of a good syllabus in any course is that it outlines the terms of the contract between student and instructor. That contract should lay out what will be taught, how it will be taught, and how students will be assessed. The challenge of an Applied Voice syllabus is to succinctly present all of the different skill building activities necessary to develop a singer, a musician, and an artist. In all areas, Dr. Ellis provides her students with an exceptional syllabus. The aims of the course clearly speak to the development of the total student through the course specific material. This allows a student to always connect the work they are doing in individual courses to their overall development as people providing multiple pathways of inspiration toward full engagement in the course.

There are clearly presented activities in the syllabus and a clear schedule that will lead students to the stated outcomes depending on how they choose to engage. The course activities include ample self-reflection offering students agency in assessing their own successes and areas where more attention is needed. The syllabus makes explicit that the learning is not confined to the time period of the course thereby providing a pathway to the development of independent learners who continually seek growth beyond the confines of the course or their formal education.

Assessment:

Assessment is crucial to the educational process for both student and instructor. Assessment tools allow both to as objectively as possible discern the level of achievement. The student identifies areas that need attention and the instructor can identify areas where the application of pedagogy may not be progressing satisfactorily and decide if a course correction is necessary. Dr. Ellis' assessment tools accomplish two very important goals: regular self-assessment on the student's part through observation of lessons and journaling, as well as regular numeric assessment from the instructor. Dr. Ellis' course and assessment design provides a framework for all parties to always be accountable to the work. The "Weekly Lesson Grade Assignment" Dr. Ellis provides could easily be industry standard in Applied Voice. When applied, the document helps to avoid the ambiguities and subjectivity of the vocal development process by engaging in regular appraisal of how a student is doing week to week. The document is specific in addressing what was done in the lesson, the assignments for future lessons, a

numeric scoring, and a space to reflect on how the work in the lesson connects to a bigger vision of the impact of the arts on their spiritual formation.

Lesson Instruction:

Every voice teacher offers a unique experience to students bringing various gifts and experiential knowledge to their teaching. Dr. Ellis' presents a well-organized and attentive lesson that is particularly good at giving students a context for their individual practice throughout the week. Given that voice teachers and students spend so little time together and the student's practice time is where the real learning takes place, this approach is particularly useful in giving students a clear framework to prepare for the next lesson and ultimately the performance. Dr. Ellis is also quite gifted at offering multiple pathways to technical, musical and artistic achievement while providing a positive learning environment where students can feel comfortable exploring the full spectrum of their vocal capabilities. While I might suggest more time and attention be spent on technical exercises, this is not always possible when there is a significant amount of repertoire to be addressed in preparation for jury examinations. Dr. Ellis is excellent in presenting information in digestible fragments as not to overwhelm students with more information than they can process. Dr. Ellis is a skilled, attentive, and knowledgeable vocal pedagogue.