Alison d'Amato

TEACHING PRINCIPLES

I believe that song and chamber repertoires are essential components of a well-rounded and vibrant musical education. In my work with students and faculty, my goal is to energize the relationships and communication inherent in music and bring students' love for their music to the forefront of their projects.

In addition to individual lessons, I teach classes in chamber repertoire and the skills of collaboration. My teaching approach is based on three key elements: expose students to the widest possible breadth of repertoire, complement that exposure with a thorough understanding of style and technical possibilities, and provide steadfast guidance in exploring those possibilities in an atmosphere of encouragement and curiosity.

A distinguishing feature of my teaching is my ability to draw from a wide range of genres in order to challenge students' musicianship. I have always maintained a balance of activities in vocal and instrumental chamber music, and I firmly believe that these activities refresh and inform each other. Composers work in all genres, and students can often learn about the sound palette for a particular work by exploring other examples of that composer's work and influences. Furthermore, I maintain that musicians learn more about their own instruments by closely collaborating with others, experiencing a variety of sonic qualities, interpretive ideas, and technical approaches.

Some examples of specific messages that govern my teaching are:

- Every time we open a musical score, a collaboration with the composer begins. This is true whether it is a song by Debussy, a sonata by Beethoven, or a piece written by your friend next door. As performers, we are responsible for understanding the indications of tempi, articulation, and phrasing in a score as solidly as we learn the notes. It is through the composer's entire notation that a work's musical intention becomes clear, thereby enabling us to communicate an expressive experience with knowledge and integrity.

- Poetry is a unique language, governed by rhythm and sounds. Since an art song is based first on a poem or text that inspired a musical setting, we will get the most of the piece by understand the original construction and meaning of the words. I introduce my students to how poetry is made, and help them enjoy the full force of expression and color in the text and music together.

- Listen to everything you can. Go to every live performance that you can. There is nothing more valuable than watching accomplished musicians in concert. YouTube is not the same!