

Information is Great – Inspiration is Better!

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You may have heard the saying: “Average teachers tell. Good teachers explain. Great teachers demonstrate. Exceptional teachers inspire.”

We can only inspire our students when we feel passionate about our craft of teaching and the art of music. It is important to remind ourselves why we chose our profession. I would suspect that in almost every instance it was because of our passion for music. Someone or some musical experience inspired us when we were young. At the end of the day the most important thing we can share with our students is our passion for music.

One of my favorite books about music is “What to LISTEN for in the WORLD” by Bruce Adolphe. It is not a book of rehearsal techniques or strategies for success. It is a book of poetry about music and musicians. I read and re-read it every year and it serves to remind me of why I do what I do. As the demands of a busy semester creep up on us it is easy to get lost in the daily grind, much of which has nothing to do with music or music making. We have countless responsibilities that draw us in every day: student issues, parent issues, logistics, budgets...the list goes on and on. Yes, these are important components to our job, but we must remember they are not why we became musicians or teachers.

In order for us to inspire others we must feel truly passionate. We must constantly be re-kindling our passion. For me, reading books such as “What to LISTEN for in the WORLD” helps to provide some of that inspirational fuel. Surrounding ourselves with people who inspire us, listening to great performers and ensembles, immersing ourselves in the world of great art, attending workshops, or viewing Ted Talks are just some of the ways we can stay passionate. There are countless ways to feed our musical souls. Just like our physical health, if we don’t make time for this, who will?

We must continue to remember that there are certain parts of our job that no one else can do. Only we

can make ourselves a better musician. Only we can study the scores for our ensembles and prepare masterful lesson plans. Only we can work to engage our students in conversations and rehearsals that are musically meaningful and inspiring. We must continue to ask ourselves, “What did my students learn about music today in my rehearsal?” “What did I bring to inspire them to be excited about music?”

By making time to focus on our passion for music and the ways we can inspire our students we will find that we bring more to each student and each rehearsal and perhaps remind ourselves why we love what we do.



Who is a true musician?

- A true musician hears before doing.**
- A true musician loves ideas better than systems.**
- A true musician feels before analyzing.**
- A true musician discovers patterns everywhere.**
- A true musician connects anything to anything else.**
- A true musician enjoys the feeling of sound and the sounds of feeling.**
- A true musician plays through silences.**
- A true musician can find pulse in a single tone.**
- A true musician listens to lilt, accent, vowels and consonants and not just words.**
- A true musician listens to the still inner voice.**

*From the book “What to LISTEN for in the WORLD”
by Bruce Adolphe*