

***Dr. Stephanie R. Thorpe, Vocologist***

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Teaching Philosophy

The voice is like a fingerprint. There are no two voices exactly alike in existence. The complex and mysterious nature of the voice makes the practice, performance, and teaching of singing a challenging and rewarding vocation. I teach students of all ages from a variety of disciplines and social environments. This diversity requires that I customize my teaching style to each student, particularly when instruction occurs on an individual basis.

In my studio and classroom, I strive to provide a positive and enjoyable environment in which the students may cultivate their talent. Constructive feedback, not criticism, is a crucial component of teaching. I encourage each student to improve their critical thinking skills and embrace all forms of music, theatre, poetry/literature, culture, visual art, and the arts in general. In turn, this inspires each student to become a well-rounded musician, performer, and human being.

One of my teaching objectives is for each student to leave my studio or classroom enriched and to truly enjoy the lesson or class as much as I relish the process of teaching. Each student begins his or her classroom journey with an A, and it is his or her responsibility to maintain that grade. My viewpoint regarding classroom assignments is to inspire each student to learn and grow as musicians and to provide the impetus for further educational exploration. I strive to assign music challenging to the student, as well as music they enjoy singing. This further motivates the student to learn and take pleasure in performing.

A well-rounded singer-performer is an excellent musician, actor, and athlete. The beautiful voice is built upon a stable technique and begins with a solid foundation. I assist each student in becoming familiar with the structure of his or her body through techniques such as Body Mapping, Alexander Technique, or the Feldenkrais Method. Once the student is aware of their posture, breath management, and vocal mechanism, they are able to focus on the production of resonant and aesthetically pleasing sound in a consistent alignment.

As a teacher who is also an experienced performer, I am able to assist my students in their theatrical and literary connections to the music. It is our job as a singer-performer to take the text and music that was so thoughtfully constructed and tell a story. Through master classes and vocal seminars, I provide each student with the tools necessary to flourish as performers. Teaching is a continual learning process, one that must be flexible in its method. The ability to admit mistakes, learn from them, and consistently improve, are some of the qualities that assist me to excel as an educator. I provide a high level of instructional quality and expect to receive the same high level of interest and involvement from my students both academically and musically. When one expects excellence, most students will strive to achieve it and often exceed expectations.

Vocal pedagogy, art song, opera, and musical theatre literature, as well as foreign language diction continue to develop, requiring research to stay current with new innovations. New technologies, such as Voce Vista, continue to become more readily available to the vocal teacher, allowing for everyday use in the studio and classroom. Non-traditional languages, particularly my interest areas in Mandarin, Russian, and Swedish, now supplement the traditional languages in vocal music. Contemporary art song, opera, and musical theatre flourish in the musical landscape of today requiring constant exploration to discover these vocal compositions. My pedagogical studies began at the University of Iowa with Dr. Ingo Titze and continue to be a significant source of interest. Recently, my research has focused on the field of vocology, in which I was certified in 2014.

With my education, personal research goals, and desire to continue learning, I am confident in my ability to teach courses such as: applied voice, vocal pedagogy, vocal literature, music history, including song literature and opera history, music fundamentals, opera and musical theatre workshop and production, and foreign language diction. In addition to my pedagogical knowledge, my considerable performance experience and familiarity with the many facets of opera and musical theatre production provides me with the strong background necessary to be a successful addition to any music department.