TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

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In September 2014, I was thrown into a whirlwind project at the Metropolitan Opera, writing down every single one of over 2,000 camera shots in preparation for a live broadcast. This intense workout for my musicianship muscles, as I followed along in the score and scribbled hurried instructions for the cameramen through the quickest of tempi, provided a valuable parallel for something else in my life as well. I had just finished teaching a UCLA summer session course on J.S. Bach, and acquainting an intimate group of incredibly diverse students with such a prolific agent in music history reminded me precisely of switching from one camera angle to another, day after day of class.

My own draw to music history has always come from wanting to situate the musical figures I knew and loved so well within some sort of historical context. Who was Bach the man? How did his experiences as a human being reflect and influence his music-making? What was his music FOR when he wrote it, and how has that shifted in subsequent centuries? These were some of the questions we tackled in my undergraduate summer seminar. My intent – particularly in teaching General Education classes – is always to construct a plurality of multi-faceted narratives (from different camera angles, perhaps even through different lenses!), through which students can simultaneously experience the fluidity of historical analysis as well as explore areas of particular interest or resonance to them. This multiplicity of approaches crosses over into selecting different activities for different learning styles as well; I firmly believe in a range of classroom activities varying from discussions led by the students themselves to active listening exercises, such as identifying and documenting subjective phenomenological experiences which can then lead to more objective musical analysis.

If I had to define my pedagogical style in terms of current models, I would align myself with the idea of flipped pedagogy, which entails handling information transfer (i.e. readings, listenings, even some lecture materials) in a space outside of the classroom in order to preserve more classroom time for active student work. One of my favorite exercises is to split a classroom

into two groups and stage a debate, encouraging students to play devil's advocate for and against positions they may not necessarily personally agree with. I agree with Benjamin Bloom's theory that certain learning domains demand higher-level cognitive engagement than others, and I believe those should be reserved exclusively for classroom time in order to draw on the support of peers and instructors. Another favorite technique is the conceptual workshop – a focused group activity that presents students with a concept or problem and guides them through a progressive set of questions that helps them to learn about the issue at hand. This kind of approach can deliver the same information as would have been presented through lecture, but has the added bonus of participation and a sense of self-discovery as students work through various problems or concepts.

Through my five years of teaching experience at UCLA, I have constantly encouraged students to question absolutism claims, develop sustainable ways of doing their own research, and articulate their own thoughts – whether for Blues in American Music, History of Baroque Opera, or Music & the Internet. My biggest rewards have been the "ah-ha!" moments inherent in exposing an entire spectrum of greys between the black and white of any given topic, particularly when it comes to music – frequently ineffable, yet unarguably expressive. I greatly enjoy introducing students to a new vocabulary and way of thinking about something which is usually important to them yet so often unarticulated. In short, I love my role as a curator for what unfolds in music history courses, unveiling and analyzing each new camera angle, and training students not to be passive recipients, but curators themselves.