

GENE RYMAN

CHOIR DIRECTOR/THEORY AND COMPOSITION TEACHER

Port Jefferson Station, NY

gene.ryman@gmail.com – 516.459.6257 – [linkedin](#)

Philosophy of Music Education

It has been my intention since I first began teaching to not only teach music, but to enrich the lives of my students through music. This must be achieved by teaching open-mindedness and respect for themselves and others through word and through deed. The educator must respect the student just as much as the student respects the educator.

I believe that each child is unique, having their own individual needs, desires, and fears. It is my intention to create a secure, comfortable learning environment in which these students may be able to flourish. It is my opinion that this environment can be created through the use of student-centered learning and through character education.

In my opinion, it is important that students feel like they have a vote in classroom activities. The authoritarian, teacher-centered learning structure can only bring a classroom so far. The learning must be centered on the students if they are to truly learn. The educator must understand who the students are in order to properly teach them; Understanding their strengths, weaknesses, and passions is key to making the classroom relevant and accessible.

At the beginning of every year in my classes, I have my students fill out a short survey, discussing their favorite groups/genres, their own perceived strengths and weaknesses as a musician, and most importantly, what they hope to gain from my class. My intention in doing this is to find out what is important to them as students and teach from that standpoint as well as to make them feel, right on the first day, that what they want matters.

In terms of teaching music itself, and the reasons for doing so, I owe much of my way of thinking to the somewhat opposed philosophies of Bennett Reimer and David Elliot. Reimer's idea of music education for music's sake, in other words removing music from its social and historical context, is important. In today's pop music dominated culture, so much of the music is ignored for the sake of lyrics. Music is more than just words, and the students need to understand what that means.

However, as I have stated, my goal as an educator, beyond teaching students about music, is to create within students a passion for music, a desire to make music an important part of the rest of their lives, and to give them the intellectual tools to do so. It is here that Elliot's paraxial philosophy of music education is relevant. To do this, a music educator must give context and meaning to this musical knowledge, be it social, historic, or religious. Students should understand why music matters, both in an overall cultural context, and in a more personal, individual context. It is the educator's job to impart upon students, through both words and actions, the importance of music.