



TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Ultimately learning is about discovering who you are as an individual and finding truth. As a teacher of the arts I believe we must learn the rules that man-kind has established only to break them in the name of expressing our deepest selves with an eye (or ear as it were) towards expressing the universal.

As an educator I am interested in providing many view points on a particular concept, be it one in regard to a socio-political outlook or be it about how to play a particular set of chord changes or groove. The learning process is at first a difficult and many times dry intellectual activity but I want my students to take their learning to the point where it sinks down into their core being and becomes charged with deep personal meaning.

A good deal of my time teaching is spent helping students develop technique and style on keyboard instruments: piano, Hammond organ and synthesizers. I specialize in teaching Reggae, Afro-Cuban, Jazz, Blues and Rock, including learning improvisation in these styles. Perhaps my deepest passion is working with the discipline and joy of groove playing in an ensemble where the team work involved in layering static rhythmic and harmonic parts with the goal of unleashing an ecstatic communication with spiritual forces is the goal. For this I provide a systematic and disciplined road map to follow with clearly defined goals. This approach helps mitigate the often times completely overwhelming feeling a student will experience when learning a new concept or style. As a student, which I always have been and always will be, I have paid close attention to my own learning process and as a result I can effectively explain the inner workings of the concept and/or task at hand.

I believe that the learning process should be a lot of fun! Because I am excited about what I teach, when I have students who are also excited, sparks fly. At the same time, and perhaps this comes from my back-ground in high level athletics, I maintain a serious focus on disciplined achievement of the goal at hand. When you partake in one of my classes the energy is high and the vibe is spirited with plenty of laughs but everyone knows when it's time to PLAY you need to be prepared.

My style of teaching comes from a core belief that the student is an equal on this planet and has a unique voice. By definition a musician is someone who is in the realm of looking inward, daring to plumb the tender depths of self-discovery. In the competitive atmosphere found in a music school and, on a larger level, in a society that does not support artists very well, it is important to create an inclusive and supportive atmosphere where confidence can be built so that one can effectively deal with the difficulties that face the life of a musician.

In the end, great music and art is much more about a committed and aware life than it is about technical achievement and hollow material success. In a society that is so centered around corporate gain, unhealthy competition (yes, there is such a thing as healthy competition!), and acceptance based solely on external cues, we now find the human race and the earth upon which we live at a spiritual and environmental cross roads. More than profit, domination and the winning of wars, the true power of the human race resides in our creative abilities, precisely the abilities which we musicians commit our lives to developing. It is the creative people, the rule breakers in society that pave the way to finding and actualizing a more enlightened definition of respectful human relationships, demand a deeper mobilization of freedom, and understand that humble co-existence with our brothers and sisters and the planet we live on is critical.

We human beings are capable of such beautiful dreams and yet create such terrible nightmares. In my teaching I want to spark ideas and connections where, embedded in our work, we both help to create new, beautiful dreams.

