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# What do I Assume? An Applied Lesson Approach Integrating Critical Thinking and Student-Directed Learning

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What do I Assume? An Applied Lesson Approach Integrating Critical Thinking and  
Student-Directed Learning

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A document submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

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## **Dedication**

*With sincere gratefulness and love beyond all telling I dedicate this thesis to my family.*

## **Acknowledgments**

*I wish to acknowledge all the many brave souls who have helped me achieve his document, including my doctoral committee members Amadi Azikiwe, Dr. Pedro Aponte, Dr. Carl Donakowski for their useful encouragement during my years of study at James Madison University.*

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## Table of Contents

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
I. Introduction.....	1
II. Definitions.....	3
III. Assumptions.....	7
IV. Research.....	10
V. The Applied Lesson through Critical Thinking.....	33
Assumption 1.....	36
Assumption 2.....	37
Assumption 3.....	40
Assumption 4.....	44
Assumption 5.....	48
Assumption 6.....	56
Assumption 7.....	59
Assumption 8.....	62
VI. Discussion .....	71
VII. Bibliography .....	75

## **Abstract**

The applied music lesson remains a revered symbol of Western European tradition in American music education. Very little research exists assessing its continued viability as a method in its current form. This paper examines eight author observed assumptions about applied music lessons which flaw the learning process. Through available research, the assumptions demonstrate that the traditional applied lesson is teacher centered and difficult to assess. Exposing the resultant delusions of the eight assumptions reveals how a holistic approach in a studio can engage students in critical thinking and enhance student self-awareness. These primary goals place the educational emphasis on the process rather than the technically perfect performance as the terminal experience. Sample lesson techniques for undergraduate viola students will incorporate critical thinking methods to transform the weekly encounter into a student-centered experience which develops skills for continued self-directed study.

## **Introduction**

For almost thirty years, I have been a student of music. Despite a vast number of lessons and a variety of instructors with different teaching styles, each applied lesson followed the same format: an instructor selected repertoire designed to introduce at least one technique, a teacher-designed etude or scale review, a large section of time devoted to measures which the instructor deemed a particular place to focus that week and a final admonition to practice. After fifteen years of teaching violin and viola, I reached an epiphany about my university studio students and my own studies. My graduating students reported floundering when they studied on their own, returning for more lessons or questioning how to play a particular measure. Preparing for recitals, I sought the instructor crutch in my private work. We were not confident enough musicians capable of determining how to perform a piece without the pabulum of a private lesson. Was my method flawed? To answer this question, I began to examine assumptions made about private lessons. This paper is a dissection of the 60 minutes-a-week sessions designed to instruct students in the fine art of string playing. Exposing the delusions of eight assumptions about my traditional applied viola lessons will reveal how a holistic approach in a studio can incorporate critical thinking and enhance student self-awareness as the primary goals rather than the performance as the terminal experience. Responding to the erroneous beliefs, sample lesson techniques for undergraduate viola students will incorporate critical thinking methods to transform the weekly encounter into a student-centered experience which develops skills for continued self-directed study.

The paper will be divided into five sections. The definitions of critical thinking, mindfulness and holistic approach will be followed by a statement of my assumptions.

Afterward, research will be presented concerning the validity of the assumptions. The major part of the presentation will contain how I am transforming the applied lesson experience in light of the research. A discussion section will defend my perceived effectiveness of the transformations and the need for evaluation and research.



## Definitions

Applied music lessons is a term which is used commonly in course catalogs in universities and conservatories. The Oxford Dictionary of Music defines it as the “American term for a study course in perf. as opposed to theory.”<sup>1</sup> A more in depth definition appears in the Oxford English Dictionary: “Designating a discipline, or that part of a subject, concerned with the use of specialist or theoretical knowledge in practical or functional contexts. Also: designating an expert in or practitioner of such a subject.”<sup>2</sup> For this paper, applied music will refer to the one on one relationship between teacher and student in which both practical and creative experiences flow from student-directed learning.

Philosophers and educators continue to argue the definition and nature of critical thinking, slowing its application in all aspects of education.<sup>3</sup> When Socrates used questions to instruct his students, ancient Greeks mistrusted his arguments. In the early twentieth century, John Dewey recommended that curriculum promote students’ questioning, investigating and considering what they learned: the students should be active in their own education. Since his work appeared in 1922, educators have criticized

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1. "Applied Music," The Oxford Dictionary of Music, 2nd ed. rev., *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed April 17, 2015, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.its.virginia.edu/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e479>.

2. "applied, adj.", *OED Online*. March 2015, Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/9713?redirectedFrom=applied+> (accessed April 17, 2015).

3. Paul Woodford, “Developing Critical Thinkers in Music,” *Music Educators Journal* 83, no. 1 (1996): 27-33, EBSCOhost (accessed January 29, 2015).

the lack of student-directed learning in schools.<sup>4</sup> Critical thinking became the phrase describing the individualized activity of the mind faced with knowledge. In 1956, a group of researchers sought a way to create a common language for educators to create objectives and to assess skills by forming Benjamin S. Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. Three groups studied the psychomotor, affective and cognitive domains. In the cognitive domain, the taxonomy suggested a hierarchy of six thinking skills. With a new taxonomy in 2001, music educators acquired the benefits of the taxonomy because previously educators deemed music too subjective to assess.<sup>5</sup> Although music places in the three domains, this paper will concentrate more heavily on the cognitive domain characterizing the six processes of thinking: remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create, as a heavily weighted skill.<sup>6</sup> For this paper, I align with Paul's argument that Bloom's Taxonomy does not represent a hierarchy of cognitive skills: learners adopt fluidity between the skills to employ critical thinking.<sup>7</sup> Critical thinking cannot take place without a base of knowledge and this knowledge must be accepted by the learner not conferred as a rote assignment.

In examining educational styles, Ellen Langer contrasts two points of view: traditional and mindfulness. Traditional education defends absolute fact to be repeatedly

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4. Vicki R. Lind, "Into the Deep: Mindful Music Listening," *General Music Today* 27, no. 2 (2014): 18-21, doi:10.1177/1048371313496785.

5. Wendell Hanna, "The New Bloom's Taxonomy: Implications for Music Education," *Arts Education Policy Review* 108, no 4 (2007): 8, EBSCOhost (accessed February 3, 2015).

6. Ibid., 10.

7. Richard W. Paul, "Bloom's Taxonomy and Critical Thinking Instruction," *Educational Leadership* 42, no. 8 (1985): 36-39.

practiced to be learned. Langer asserts: “Learning occurs, as this view would have it, through repetitive study; accuracy increases with increasing vigilance, concentration, and unwavering focus; liking increases with “mere” exposure.”<sup>8</sup> She emphasizes that proponents of the traditional style view the struggle to regurgitate information as negative and leading to mistakes; and she advocates mindfulness encourages active participation by the learner, resulting in fun and appreciation of the effort to learn.<sup>9</sup> Langer defines Mindfulness: “...as a state of mind that results from drawing novel distinctions, examining information from new perspectives, and being sensitive to context.”<sup>10</sup> Mindfulness removes constancy from the learning environment. Instead of accepting facts without questioning, students learn by considering the context of the information and the possible resulting perspectives. The flexibility of mindfulness will permit students to adapt to a variety of circumstances and adjust their reactions without the rigidity of one perspective.<sup>11</sup> Mindfulness embraces critical thinking as one of its strategies. Research indicates a correlation between mindfulness and fun.<sup>12</sup>

My definition of a holistic approach is my awareness of the whole person registered as a viola student to my studio. Rather than attempt to manipulatively transform the student to adhere to a specific set of techniques, critiques of music, or

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8. Ellen J. Langer, “A Mindful Education,” *Educational Psychologist* 28, no. 1 (1993): 43, EBSCOhost (accessed January 29, 2015).

9. Ibid., 44.

10. Ibid., 44.

11. Shelley H. Carson and Ellen J. Langer, “Mindfulness and Self-Acceptance,” *Journal of Rational-Emotive & cognitive-Behavior Therapy* 24, no. 1 (2006): 29, doi:10.1007/s10942-006-0022-5.

12. Langer, “A Mindful Education,” 48-49.

methods to learn, I seek to create an open, comfortable environment in which the student can address, value, and evaluate all personal concerns not just performance issues without fear of negative criticism or disdain. I seek to recognize and value the physical, social, psychological, cultural, and moral makeup of each individual student. Through an open and nurturing lesson, my student can develop self-assurance and confidence to perform viola repertoire and to live a full life.

## **The Assumptions**

The following eight assumptions represent my experiences as a student in private music studios and those at conservatories, which I characterize as flawed. Rather than a critique of teaching strategies and methods and instructors, they characterize areas in my studies and now teaching style which I view as problematic. I have deliberately determined to alter my educational philosophy to create a satisfying and valuable experience of music which extends beyond the four years of undergraduate study for my students, especially the non-music majors. These assumptions are based on both my personal experiences and research.

**Assumption 1: The applied music lesson is a means to a successful career in music performance.**

A student has a better opportunity to secure employment when he or she receives instruction from an acclaimed instructor in a well-known institution of higher learning. This is flawed because the pursuit of fame and money cannot be the only reasons for studying.

**Assumption 2: The traditional structure of the applied lesson effectively prepares the student for performance.**

The teacher-centered, regimented lesson produces technically prepared musicians. This is flawed because the static nature of the structure of this type of lesson precludes flexibility and promotes disinterested student involvement.

**Assumption 3: There is only one accepted way to interpret a composition.**

Throughout their education, students anticipate that the teacher will provide precise instructions how to complete an assignment. In a private lesson, the student often waits for the teacher to interpret the music. This flawed because the student feels inadequate to even try to interpret the piece and thus does not experience full satisfaction.

**Assumption 4: The instructor forgoes asking open-ended questions preferring demonstration of repertoire and techniques.**

In the traditional structure of the lesson, modeling is often used to teach interpretation. This is flawed. While modeling is an acceptable technique, through research and their own perspectives, students can come to interpret the music on their own.

**Assumption 5: Researching a musical topic requires little effort.**

A student's initial research will yield basic facts. This is a flaw because a superficiality is created when the Internet provides quick answers of varying quality.

**Assumption 6: Research is an isolated event when studying a piece.**

Core curriculum is isolated into separate courses which rarely perceive to overlap. This is flawed. Through critical thinking, students will continue to ask questions to discover deeper perspectives and applications.

**Assumption 7: The student seeks affirmation from a good grade.**

Education is built upon evaluation. The student is being evaluated on a specific performance regardless of the process to achieve. This is flawed because when a student

develops personal goals, the realization of them increases self-confidence and satisfaction which is more significant than the grade.

**Assumption 8: The purpose of a semester of applied lessons is to produce a technically correct performance.**

Students do not look beyond the final performance and how their process of learning would apply to other pieces. The culmination of studying a work is the performance. This is flawed because when the requirement of being evaluated for one specific performance is devalued, the student can concentrate on creative interpretation, founded in research that builds a connectivity between repertoire selections.

## Research

The traditional applied music lesson serves as an intensive, primary tool used in the preparation of instrumentalists to perform repertoire. Historically, private music instruction in traditional Western music consisted of a student who sought an apprenticeship with a master performer.<sup>13</sup> In the United States, one of the ways the development of music education can be traced is as a response to poor congregational singing in the 1720s.<sup>14</sup> As churches identified with the philosophy that art projected congregations heavenward and music develops divine traits, Americans equated morality and music. The study of music focused on performance whether in church or school.<sup>15</sup> The widespread misinterpretation of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi's popular education theories at the beginning of the nineteenth century further mistakenly entrenched the performance as the ultimate goal of music education. Pestalozzi's methods included other components which were not considered, such as enough instruction time to learn or education with love rather than judgment and criticism.<sup>16</sup> As the country became aware of

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13. John M. Geringer and Clifford K. Madsen, "An Investigation of Transfer: Music Education Research and Applied Instruction," *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* 91 (1987): 46, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40318061>.

14. David J. Teachout, "Understanding the Ties that Bind and the Possibilities for Change," *Arts Education Policy Review* 108, no. 6 (2007) 19, EBSCOhost (accessed February 3, 2015).

15. Margaret A. Nash, "Cultivating Our 'Musical Bumps' while Fighting the Progress of Popery': The Rise of Art and Music Education in the Mid-Nineteenth Century United States," *Educational Studies* 49, no. 3 (2013): 193-212, doi:10.1080/00131946.2013.783837.

16. For a complete account of Pestalozzi's educational theories see: Fredalene B. Bowers and Thom Gehring, "John Heinrich Pestalozzi: 18th Century Swiss Educator and Correctional Reformer," *Journal of Correctional Education* 55, no. 4 (Dec 2004): 306-319.



its identity, proponents of music sought a sense of national refinement and equated music performance and education with a strong sense of morality.<sup>17</sup> Music became a subject addressed in public education, with its structure defined by teacher-dominated instruction, competition, discipline and evaluation, rather than the development of a rich life through art.<sup>18</sup>

The private lesson became a means to a successful career in music performance. A student's employment prospects improve when he/she receives instruction from a well-known institution of higher learning or acclaimed instructor. Yet, the pursuit of fame and money should not be the only reason for studying music. Pursuing the economic agenda of the twenty-first century, parents enroll their talented students in studios anticipating a lucrative career in performance. Demanding performance schedules, expectations to win concerto competitions, and anxiety to be technically perfect create a "psychic disorder" for the student, who has had little input into the decision of becoming a professional musician.<sup>19</sup> To avoid the resulting stress or total refusal to play an instrument Csikszentmihalyi declares that the student will experience happiness and enjoyment when involved in music making without the expectations of performance and authority

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17. Nash, "Cultivating Our Musical Bumps," 198.

18. David J. Teachout, "Understanding the Ties that Bind and the Possibilities for Change," *Arts Education Policy Review* 108, no. 6 (2007) 19, EBSCOhost (accessed February 3, 2015).

19. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1990), 112. ["Psychic disorder is the disruption of the happiness which results from total immersion in life. It is the meaningless and boring feeling consequent to losing control of the experiences of life.]

figures.<sup>20</sup> 19. In my own career as a violist, I experienced a sense of losing control of my life. My elementary school orchestra leader informed my parents I needed a private teacher to develop my skills and my rental instrument was inadequate. By eighth grade, my private teacher counseled me that the competition for violinists was extraordinary and I should begin studying viola. I consequently chose schools and institutions on economic factors: the employability, the need for health care benefits, and the cost of an education. This trail of decisions, not necessarily made by me, has often led me to question whether I want to continue pursuing a career as an instructor and performer. I realized that I had not made the decision to become a violist.

While he does not guarantee that a student will win competitions or play perfectly in tune, Csikszentmihalyi states that when the student's interest is invested in goals which are self-determined, realistic and attainable, he/she will experience an exhilaration or feeling of joy. This enjoyment requires eight elements: accomplishment of a task, ability to stay on task, clear goals, clear results, relaxed attitude toward every day anxiety, control over personal actions, fading of self-consciousness, and altered time perception.<sup>21</sup> Csikszentmihalyi observes that people recall this optimal experience in relaxation activities or work, regardless of the cost, when they reach a sense of enjoyment which leaves a lasting memory. This he defines as Flow.<sup>22</sup> In music, this exhilaration

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20. Ibid., 112.

21. Ibid., 49.

22. Ibid., 3-5.

leads to an analytic and creative study of music, intensifying the enjoyment and improvement of self.<sup>23</sup>

Further research demonstrates that one purpose of music instruction should be the improvement of the quality of life. Tracing Csikszentmihalyi's ideas of Flow to Abraham Maslow, Riggs determines that a person optimizes this sense of exhilaration through immersion in achieving a goal rather than on achieving a final product.<sup>24</sup> Ellen Langer interprets an educational achievement which is student-directed as fun, one which the student would wish to repeat.<sup>25</sup> Teachout promotes Dr. Charles Leonhard's philosophy that the job of music education is to improve the quality of life, to provide a creative outlet of expression.<sup>26</sup> Research indicates that the traditional lesson needs to be evaluated as the best approach to enrich the student's lives.

Although the advancement of research and methods are slowly being integrated into classroom music programs, little research exists concerning the effectiveness of methods and techniques employed in the applied music lesson.<sup>27</sup> Private instrumental

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23. Ibid., 111-113.

24. Please refer to the entire article for a complete explanation of the new model. Krista Riggs, "Foundations for Flow: A Philosophical Model for Studio Instruction," *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 14, no. 2 (2006): 175-191, EBSCOhost (accessed January 29, 2015).

25. Ellen J. Langer, "A Mindful Education." *Educational Psychologist* 28, no. 1 (1993): 49, EBSCOhost (accessed January 29, 2015).

26. Teachout, "Ties that Bind," 19.

27. Matthew L. Garrett, "An Examination of Critical Thinking Skills in High School Choral Rehearsals," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 61, no. 3 (2013): doi:10.1177/0022429413497219.

instructors continue to teach as they were taught.<sup>28</sup> Yet the assumption that the traditional structure of the applied lesson is successful remains flawed because its static nature precludes flexibility and promotes disinterested student involvement. The one-on-one student-teacher relationship is almost unique in an undergraduate university setting. To be accepted into an instructor's studio, a live audition, list of repertoire studied, recommendations and perhaps a professional recording are expected. The teacher's subjective assessment of the student's one audition, the number of qualified musicians applying for the studio position, the teacher's availability and determined size of his/her studio, as well as the student's previous accomplishments, particularly concerto competitions, awards and recommendations, determine if the student will be accepted into the studio. Fallin and Garrison observe that applied music instructors treasure students who are well-trained before entering the collegiate scene and who are likely to become professional musicians.<sup>29</sup> The entering student with little instrumental experience or the education major who seeks rudimentary knowledge of instruments of all instruments will not have the opportunity, as undergraduates, to participate in applied lessons.<sup>30</sup>

On the collegiate level, Riggs notes that instruction is likely teacher-directed yet suggests that student-based learning can increase the student's creativity and

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28. Riggs, "Foundations of Flow," 175-191.

29. Jana R. Fallin and Paul K. Garrison, "Answering NASM's Challenge: Are We Pulling Together?," *Music Educators Journal* 91, no. 4 (2005): 45-49, doi:10.2307/3400159.

30. Ibid., 45-49.

expressivity.<sup>31</sup> While an authoritative approach can be effective with young children, undergraduates seek a source of information, skill and encouragement from their instructors. If a teacher becomes a mentor, the undergraduate no longer experiences the stress and angst of performance perfection; creativity and development are nurtured.<sup>32</sup> Students are able to question, to problem solve, to experiment, and to evaluate in light of their instructor's encouragement and through their own research and experiences.<sup>33</sup> When each student's individual differences and skill levels serve as guides for studio instruction and when the teacher mentors, instead of directs, the conditions are optimal for students to experience flow, and enjoyment in learning can take place.<sup>34</sup>

Memories of my viola lessons generate anxiety. Beginning each lesson with the trepidation of a teacher-organized agenda frightened me. I remember suppressing my questions which arose during practice as the teacher ran me through the obligatory scale, etudes, and excerpts of my solo repertoire work. The routine never changed; and the instructor enacted rules that hindered my interest, such as forbidding reviewing orchestra music because it wasted valuable lesson time, or imposing outstanding participation in adjudications because of the reputability of the teacher. One teacher even hit me on the head with a bow if I did not perform correctly. I quickly learned that there is only one interpretation of a piece of music: the teacher's way who learned it from former teachers.

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31. Riggs, "Foundations of Flow," 179-191.

32. Ibid., 175-191.

33. Ibid., 175-191.

34. Ibid., 175-191.

The black and white nature of one answer: one question is modeled throughout society. In the classroom, students anticipate that the teacher will accept only one answer, the right one. Research suggests that this lower level questioning further indoctrinates students in lower level answers, excluding personal, creative responses. In his research of tutor-based poetry lessons, Gil Clifton discovered that students recalled negative experiences in interpretive assignments when the instructor was seeking a specific answer. They reported their joy in being asked their emotional response to art and being allowed to describe their impressions in their own words, after the tutor supplied a limited vocabulary to begin discussion.<sup>35</sup> In her studies Langer determined that the fewer conditions made during instruction, the more creative the students became.<sup>36</sup> She encouraged students to mindfully be involved in the learning process, to explore the world outside the rigid rules of a traditional classroom. The students reported pleasure in learning.<sup>37</sup> In a private music lesson, the student anticipates the teacher demonstrating how to interpret the music, assuming there is only one correct interpretation.

Besides anticipating single answers, students also expect the basic form of instruction to be a hierarchy of authority: the teacher provides facts and the student repeats them in some assessment, usually a test. In the traditional structure of a music lesson, the instructor forgoes asking open-ended questions preferring demonstration of repertoire and technique. A member of an all-city-orchestra I quickly learned that there

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35. Gil Clifton, "Supporting the Development of Critical Thinking: Lessons for Widening Participation," *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning* 14, no. 2 (2012), EBSCOhost (accessed January 29, 2015).

36. Langer, "A Mindful Education," 49.

37. *Ibid.*, 49.

was only one interpretation of a composition: the conductor's version. During a rehearsal, the conductor put down his baton and asked when we would ever learn a particularly difficult section. Pointing to the first chair, he ordered him to demonstrate how to play the phrase. Afterward, the conductor ordered us to do likewise. Throughout my tenure, I never asked a question or made a suggestion. I listened to the required CD of the concert material and performed a replica.

While modeling is an acceptable technique, through research, mindfulness of a musical selection, various perspectives and influential guidance from the instructor, students learn to interpret the music on their own. If the teacher deliberately relinquishes rigid control of the lesson, the students can become the principal directors of their own education and lives. As a mentor, the teacher serves to keep the students centered on their goals.<sup>38</sup> 45 As a facilitator, the teacher circumvents continual and unnecessary intervention in the process of critical thinking. Following two Latina students through their university experience, Laura Schreiner notes a marked difference in their meaningful processing of information. Although both at-risk students graduated, one "thrived" and the other "survived."<sup>39</sup> Schreiner concludes the differences in their educational experiences accounts for the disparity. One attended a first-year seminar which presented strategies to develop and attain personal goals; she applied mindfulness

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38. For an in-depth description of their research, please review: Peter Webster and Carol Richardson, "Asking Children to Think about Music." *Arts Education Policy Review* 94, no. 3 (1993): 7-12, EBSCOhost (accessed January 29, 2015).

39. Laurie A. Schreiner, "Thriving in the Classroom." *About Campus* 15, no 3 (July/Aug 2010): 9, doi:10.1002/abc.20022. (Note: Schreiner uses the term thriving refers to college students "who engaged intellectually, socially and emotionally." Those who are surviving learned "the path of least resistance to a bachelor degree." Both can graduate but only those who thrive are considered success.)

in her learning process; she received mentoring from her instructors; she followed advice on how to design goals and achieve them. Most importantly, she learned to seek assistance when she needed it. The other student floundered with an advisor who only considered credits and courses; she did not receive strategies for time management or study skills; she succumbed to the pressure of her culture-defined dorm mates who scorned help as a sign of weakness.<sup>40</sup> While students can achieve a degree in teacher-directed programs, their ability to ask questions, to establish personal goals, and to find enrichment in directing their lives diminishes without mindfulness training. Schreiner provides four considerations for educators to engage students in their learning: meaningful learning is not always observable during class; engagement of students can take place in all environments; both student and teacher are part of a meaningful and mindful learning experience; and a collaborative relationship must exist between the students and faculty to create a community to nurture growth in all aspects of students' lives.<sup>41</sup> How to engage students in their learning and to challenge their instructors to employ lessons with practical ways to affect their life choices requires complex answers in which institutions and faculty as well as students, design an equitable and viable solution.

Educational institutions value educators who are highly published or accomplished performers, employ scientists whose ground breaking research produces a saleable product, and laud cutting edge lectureships. Yet, change is distasteful to the

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40. Ibid., 9.

41. Ibid., 5-6.



teachers designated to alter their classroom content or revamp the current curriculum.<sup>42</sup> Making it resistant to modifications, the exclusiveness of a music education established by Western European musical hierarchy of education continues to exist despite the changing ethnic and social nature of the world. Both administrators and faculty can begin to alter the current philosophy of music education in two areas: establishing an amicable partnership between music education faculty and performance instructors and introducing critical thinking through mindfulness into applied lessons.

Demanding universities eradicate the term applied music, Ruth Douglass summarizes her argument that compartmentalizing music curriculum creates a rivalry between musicologists and performers which is ineffectual and detrimental to educational advancements. Musicologists perform the research which enhances the performers' ability to interpret the composer's ideas. The collaboration between music faculty can produce a successful music experience.<sup>43</sup> In their research, Ahuna, Tinnesz and Kiener emphasize the need for universities to educate students in critical thinking to meet the demands of the workplace, while lamenting educators' resistance to change. The increase in immediately accessible information requires critical thinkers who can evaluate and make high level decisions.<sup>44</sup> By educating students to apply critical thinking skills, that is, by reflecting on perspectives, using a logical format, evaluating information, realizing

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42. Carol Richardson, "Engaging the world: music education and the big ideas." *Music Education Research* 9, no. 2 (2007): 208, doi:10.1080/14613800701384318.

43. Ruth Douglass, "What about Applied Music?" *Improving College and University Teaching* 14, no. 3 (1966): 147, doi:10.1080/00193089.1966.10532528.

44. Kelly H. Ahuna, Christine Gray Tinnesz, and Michael Kiener, "A New Era of Critical Thinking in Professional Programs," *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching & Learning Journal* 7, no. 3 (2014): 2, EBSCOhost (accessed January 29, 2015).

results, developing new approaches, and synthesizing data, professional educational programs will create students able to compete for employment and ultimately to improve the quality of life for society and themselves.<sup>45</sup> Also recognizing critical thinking development begins in education programs for teachers, Teachout stresses that educational programs and the first years of employment as an educator represent an optimal time to assure teachers do not return to the way they were taught.<sup>46</sup> In the first year of music education classes, the students-seeking-to-be-educators should learn through experiences which direct the student to critically examine how to become an effective instructor, rather than just complete a list of required courses.<sup>47</sup> In the remaining years, the continual field and classroom activities should provide the student time for reflection to meld his/her traditional, preconceived methods of teaching with contemporary foundations of education.<sup>48</sup> The first years as an educator are challenging as they present teachers with issues other than skills and knowledge required in music courses. Curriculum, classroom management, administrator evaluations and expectations, student diversity, measurements and assessments can stymie fledgling professionals despite their conviction to teach. Coursework, which is designed for potential teachers to face real life problems, engages them in initial experiences of critical

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45. Ibid., 7.

46. Teachout, "Ties that Bind," 25.

47. Ibid., 27.

48. Ibid., 28.

thinking which will enable them to successfully undertake their future educational issues.<sup>49</sup>

Music education majors who develop as critical thinkers require courage to take chances, to define and defend their own position regardless of the status quo, and to decide on a course of action.<sup>50</sup> Research demonstrates that courage develops in education courses for music education majors when the education professor facilitates a pre-service confrontation of the assumptions that education majors have concerning their teaching. Courageous thinkers can examine these beliefs which could be fallacious, misleading and detrimental to students' learning because the teacher is not sensitive to the context in which the lessons take place.<sup>51</sup> Mindfulness generates the courage to self-evaluate and alter one's perspective.<sup>52</sup>

The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium determined that effective teachers can be successful through knowledge and teaching methods yet not be good teachers without the self-awareness or disposition of fundamental personal beliefs.<sup>53</sup> Critically thinking educators are capable of evaluating these dispositions and altering

49. For the entire review of the models, please see: Palmer C. Michael, "Intellectual Development and Preservice and Novice Music Educators: A review of Two Models and Their Use in the Literature," *Journal of Music Teacher Education* 22, no. 1 (October 2012): 50-62, doi:10.1177/1057083711422566.

50. Woodford, "Developing Critical Thinkers in Music," 27-33.

51. Deborah L. Schussler, Lisa M. Stooksberry, and Lynne A. Bercaw, "Understanding Teacher Candidate Dispositions: Reflecting to Build Self-Awareness," *Journal of Teacher Education* 61, no. 4 (2010): 350-351, doi:10.1177/0022487110371377.

52. Langer, "A Mindful Education," 44.

53. Schussler, "Understanding Teacher Candidate Dispositions," 350.

them. Schusser, Stooksberry and Bercaw's research determined teachers who demonstrate the greatest awareness of their propensities toward culture, intellect, and morals questioned their reasoning, appropriately managed their attention on students and themselves, and recognized various perspectives in their teaching.<sup>54</sup> Education programs which stress skills, knowledge and performance techniques fail to provide adequate coursework for individual discernment of intellectual dispositions. Without exercises of self-determination and examination, these future educators will teach as they have been taught.<sup>55</sup> Yet when educators employ critical thinking based on sophisticated research skills and advanced levels of knowledge their students perform at elevated levels of thinking.<sup>56</sup>

Representing an opposing view, Natalie Kuzmich decries the criticism of methods and techniques which do not directly teach critical thinking. She questions if traditional methods which insist on the perfection of skills and on the study of quality as opposed to popular music are being criticized because of the successful marketing for profit of critical thinking products.<sup>57</sup>

Also to consider is the curriculum for a performance major who is seeking a professional career. Currently conservatories are discouraging students from declaring a

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54. Ibid., 350.

55. Palmer, "Intellectual Development and Preservice and Novice Music Educators," 50-62.

56. Ahuna, "A New Era of Critical Thinking," 5-6.

57. To read Kuzmich's notes which contain sources to support her position, please refer to: Natalie Kuzmich, "Complaints Continue." *Canadian Music Educator* 54, no. 2 (2013): 13-14, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1426034775?accountid=14678>, (accessed February 1, 2015).

major until the second year. The initial year of study provides students with an intense experience of the rigors of becoming a professional. This precludes any education courses within the performance major's curriculum. Yet as a professional, the performance major will likely be asked to serve as an educator. Participating as an academic whether in master classes or a studio places an unrealistic expectation on a professional's teaching skills.<sup>58</sup> Even programs that instruct students concerning philosophical and educational foundations and methods and that stress performance do not devote enough instruction time to develop applied music teachers.<sup>59</sup> Frederickson's survey of university music majors' attitudes toward teaching applied lessons after graduation reveals that at least half of the undergraduate performance students anticipate being an applied music teacher as a means of supplementing their income, while focusing on securing an orchestral or solo career.<sup>60</sup> These performance majors anticipate being employed by a university and instruct only the advanced student. This goal is unrealistic given the limited number of university positions and the number of beginning students in the elementary and high school settings. Receiving some instruction in educational practices and envisioning oneself as a teacher positively impacts the professional's perception of teaching and learning.<sup>61</sup> Currently, this education takes place in the applied

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58. Fallin, "Answering NASM's Challenge," 45-49.

59. For details about Frederickson's research, please consult: William E. Frederickson, "Music Majors' Attitudes Toward Private Lesson Teaching After Graduation: A Replication and Extension," *Journal of Research I Music Education* 55, no. 4 (2007): 326-343, doi:10.1177/0022429408317514.

60. Ibid., 326-343.

61. Ibid., 326-343.

lesson studio as the performance major or professional instrumentalist becomes an instructor through the trial and error method of past lesson experiences.<sup>62</sup>

What is needed is a method of instructing performance majors how to teach an applied lesson and music educators how adequately to perform a variety of instruments within the constructs of a four-year degree program. Several factors work against the conjoining of applied music and music education programs. The coursework for performance majors and music education majors requires intensive study which can exclude a combination of performance and pedagogical courses. Parkes suggest a model in which mutual sharing and equitable consideration of pedagogy and performance begin with faculty designed strategies.<sup>63</sup> As Douglass laments, a concern about the mutual sharing of techniques by performance and music education degree programs is the non-collaborative stance between the faculties in the various departments on the university level.<sup>64</sup> By adhering to the traditional approaches to the applied music studio and the lack of educational training for performance majors, formally-trained professionals graduate lacking appropriate instruction to be effective applied music instructors. They become excellent modelers of techniques but not facilitators of learning. Another consideration results from the undergraduate students' perception of the ensemble and applied music instructors as performers while the education professors as merely teachers without

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62. Kelly Parkes, "College Applied Faculty: The Disjunction of Performer, Teacher, and Educator." *College Music Society* 49/50 (2009-2010): 65, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41225232>.

63. *Ibid.*, 68-71.

64. Fallin, "Answering NASM's Challenge," 45-49.

performance experience.<sup>65</sup> The complexity of the issue does not discount that the ensemble and applied music teacher exert much influence on the education of musicians and their influence should be tempered with training in planning, executing and assessing instruction in the undergraduate degree and the applied music studio.<sup>66</sup> With adequate training the college instructor can influence future musicians to not only be good performers but excellent educators.

The traditional applied lesson and subsequent pressure to perform to perfection develops a student who depends on teacher approval and critique.<sup>67</sup> This reliance can stifle creative music-making and relegates the student to a self-image of an unaccomplished want-to-be. In examining a high school athlete and music student's self-concept, Teachout observed that as a soccer player, she considers herself an athlete because on the field she does not rely on the coach to make decisions. While playing soccer, she uses her knowledge of the game and her skills to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize how to respond when the ball is in play. As an ensemble member, the student responds to the teacher's determinations how to perform.<sup>68</sup> Extending the argument, Teachout declares that students do not even consider themselves musicians. Musicianship is perfection, something which only a few professionals attain, yet every culture has its

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65. William I. Bauer, and Margaret Berg, "Influences on Instrumental Music Teaching" *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* No. 150 (Fall 2001): 62, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.its.virginia.edu/stable/40319099>.

66. *Ibid.*, 65.

67. Riggs, "Foundations of Flow," 175-191.

68. Teachout, "Ties that Bind," 20.

own music, performed in all aspects of its society, by the amateur and the highly professional.<sup>69</sup>

Integrating critical thinking techniques in the classroom invites educators to reimagine the existing structures and to yield their authoritative voice to student's ideas. Recognizing the discussion on incorporating critical thinking in the educational process, Ryan D. Shaw summarizes the positions. Opponents of critical thinking resist these changes with arguments of a decrease in the performance level, time management issues, and the overlapping of issue awareness which is a purview of other fields of study. Conversely, proponents argue that critical thinking increases the student's engagement in music. Varying the class venues, hosting student interpretations, becoming vocal about social issues, and challenging the methods of their education create students prepared to cope with the challenges of their futures.<sup>70</sup> In this thought process, the student is open to several points of view and can move between these perspectives to create a satisfying and self-gratifying experience.<sup>71</sup> One effective component of critical thinking is collaborative learning. When students experience different perspectives from other members of a group, they become a better team member and employ a higher level of crucial thinking from the different perspectives.<sup>72</sup> When applied to weekly studio classes, collaborative

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69. Ibid., 21.

70. Ryan D. Shaw, "How Critical is Critical Thinking?" *Music Educators Journal* 101, no. 2 (2014): 65-70, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?irect=true&db=ehh&AN=99825440&site=ehost-live>.

71. Carson, "Mindfulness and Self-Acceptance," 30.

72. Geringer, "An Investigation of Transfer," 45-49.



learning offers new interpretations increasing performance effectiveness, a sense of community, and self-gratification.

Critical thinking entails a great deal of background knowledge.<sup>73</sup> Without the historical perspective, vocabulary and understanding of music production acquired in obligatory music theory and history courses, students will flounder while expressing their thoughts. Besides established coursework, manuscript notations, and textbooks, library research illuminates and facilitates questioning and seeking solutions. Researching a musical topic requires time and effort, more than a student's initial research yielding basic facts. I learned that research is not easy when I audited a music history class at the University of Virginia. Towards the end of the semester, the teacher announced that the students would apply their research skills to prepare an essay on a topic of choice. The following class, he exasperatedly announced he had received many emails in which students complained they could not find any information. I will never forget his response: "If you have not used more than twenty-four hours and one thousand different ways to research, you have not even begun. The Internet does not read your minds. You must use a wide range of keywords and phrases to achieve great results." So instead of easy to find three quick references for a thesis, music research requires time, ingenuity, and experience to be fulfilling, rewarding and beneficial to performance.

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73. Robert Ennis, "Critical Thinking and Subject Specificity: Clarification and Needed Research," *Educational Researcher* 18, no. 3 (April 1989): 6, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1174885>.

My experience also exemplifies that students require assistance in assessing musical databases, locating recordings, or uncovering historical references.<sup>74</sup> Integrating music curriculum and library research, a program at St. Olaf College addresses the difficulties that students face when researching by disavowing preconceived notions about knowledge, a prerequisite to initiate critical thinking.<sup>75</sup> Initially, students accept all written materials as truth. In what Christensen labels transitional knowing, students discover corrupted information which leads to independent knowing or their uncertainty of all knowledge. Ultimately, the students experience contextual knowing in which given the context of the information, they can determine its validity.<sup>76</sup> This process of knowing through access of information provides a framework for future investigations into music and other fields of study in college and in business. The students must first critically consider their question to discern the source of the information they are seeking. By determining the validity of their sources, they can assess the value of the information to answer their question. Students direct their search to other sources which will enhance their knowledge and continue the cyclic process of analyzing and evaluating, leading to further questioning. Through this activity, students realize the length of time involved in researching, the possibility of information being unavailable, the need to continue questioning and the invalidity of their thesis or argument. They experience many types of

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74. A complete account of the library research program please see: Beth Christensen, "Warp, Weft and Waffle: Weaving Information Literacy into an Undergraduate Music Curriculum," *Notes—Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 60, no. 3 (March 2004): 616-631, EBSCOhost (accessed January 29, 2015).

75. Ibid., 616-631.

76. Ibid., 616-631.

sources whether online, in archived texts, on compact discs or through personal interviews.<sup>77</sup> At St. Olaf College this learning process entails four years and the collaboration of library staff and music department faculty.<sup>78</sup>

Although music appears static stored on compact discs and in manuscripts, it is a living body of sound whose interpretation continues to change even within a performance. Research is an on-going process. Performing with the Pro Musica Chamber Orchestra of Columbus was an exhilarating experience for me. Most of the performers were faculty members so we frequently discussed educational topics in music. The repertoire was generally modern, highlighting up and coming composers and rising stars; however one particular concert series featured Baroque repertoire. A discussion ensued regarding the historically-informed manner the orchestra would perform. In particular, we discussed the amount of vibrato used in a specific section. As a college student, I was astounded that people were still studying how a Baroque orchestra performed.

Instead of supplying historical evidence or relating current theories of interpretation in the applied lesson, educators must facilitate a student's continuing search and revision of the student's personal musical beliefs by guiding thorough research, modeling critical thinking habits, and challenging confident, independent decision making. To be a successful program, an undergraduate applied lesson series must ensure

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77. Further description of the program can be found: Amanda Maple, Beth Christensen, and Kathleen A. Abromeit, "Information Literacy for Undergraduate Music Students: A Conceptual Framework," *Notes – Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 53, no. 3 (March 1996): 744-53, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/898618>.

78. *Ibid.*, 744-53.

that the student graduates as a self-reliant agent for music expression and appreciation.<sup>79</sup> This experience is possible through all skill levels although each student might not reach the same performance level.

The inclusion of critical thinking into the private music lesson is not the end either. Research is needed to evaluate the teacher's ability to infuse the lesson with critical thinking, to determine if critical thinking methods increase psychomotor skills and to measure the student's use of critical thinking skills in future lessons and independent study after graduation.<sup>80</sup> A large part of the educational system involves evaluation, including new teaching methods, the feasibility of specific areas of study to receive funds, teacher productivity, and the students' intellectual abilities and skills. Students anticipate exams, standardized assessments, and grades. The applied music lesson, as a course at the university level, is not immune to the testing process. Students expect to receive a letter grade after a terminal performance a grade on how he/she performs in one moment in time, just as one exam determines the amount of information students remember. A concerto competition winner returns home a hero. The band that plays for the state champions glow in their teams' success. This perspective is subjective. When teachers accept critical thinking in their educational approach, assessments must be created which appraise how successful students articulate and interpret sound following their own creative ideas.<sup>81</sup> Students create their own goals and achievement of them.

One year, my school activities were particularly onerous and I was unable to prepare adequately for the all-city-orchestra seating auditions. As a result, I was an older

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79. Woodford, "Developing Critical Thinkers," 27-33.

80. Ennis, "Critical Thinking and Subject Specificity," 7-9.

81. Webster, "asking Children About Music," 7-12.

student placed toward the rear of the section. The verbal and social treatment by students, parents, and management as a result of my seating was brutal. The lower class citizen status taught me that seating made a difference. Through a turn of events, I was selected to perform in a quartet to represent the orchestra. Afterwards, the conductor and director remarked to me that they never knew I played so well. They had always assumed I was a poor performer based on my seating.

In the traditional setting of performance-based evaluation, a performance major receives a grade on how he/she performs in one moment in time, just as one exam determines the amount of information students remember. A concerto competition winner returns home a hero. The band that plays for the state champions glow in their team's success. One year, my school activities were particularly onerous and I was unable to prepare adequately for the all city orchestra seating auditions. As a result, I was an older student placed toward the rear of the section. The verbal and social treatment by students, parents, and management as a result of my seating was brutal. The lower class citizen status taught me that seating made a difference. Through a turn of events, I was selected to perform in a quartet to represent the orchestra. Afterwards, the conductor and director remarked to me that they never knew I played so well. They had always assumed I was a poor performer based on my seating.

In the applied lesson engaged in critical thinking, measurements are more effective when for example the student must control the tone while seeking and accepting different ways to interpret it.<sup>82</sup> A well-designed applied lesson should develop the student's physical and intellectual abilities to create music through performance,

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82. Ibid., 7.

composing, and improvising; should enhance the student's expression of music appreciation, critical analysis, description, and appraisal; and should increase the student's knowledge through historical and cultural perspectives. In the student-directed studio, the student will not require a teacher-imposed letter grade.

Thus, the final performance is not the end of studying a certain composition or the promise of potential employment. Ultimately the goal of private lessons is the development of an individual who can collaboratively solve problems through discussion, shared ideas and openness to change. The college experience must offer guidance to set goals, to develop healthy relationships, to respect differences, and to motivate continued inquiry.<sup>83</sup> Students who participate in a team learning experience problem solve on a higher level.<sup>84</sup> For example, this process became a subtle, effective experience during the performance of the opening of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Each member of the orchestra surprisingly and deliberately played *pianissimo* creating an unexpected teamwork experience. This created a perfect contrast to the following *fortissimo* section, enhancing the dramatic intention of Beethoven and the musicians' enjoyment. By opening themselves to all possibilities in music, continually transform their musicality, personalize their musical convictions, and intellectually share their ideas.<sup>85</sup> In their research, Geringer and Madsen demonstrated that students who enrolled in a music

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83. Schreiner, "Thriving in the Classroom," 2.

84. For a discussion on the research of collaborative learning, please see: Anuradha A. Gokhale, "Collaborative Learning Enhances Critical Thinking." *Journal of Technology Education* 7, no 1 (1995): <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JTE/v7n1/gokhale.jte-v7n1.html>.

85. Ibid.

education research techniques course developed more questions for continued research than those students who received no instruction.<sup>86</sup> This experience will guide a student in the future while a technically correct terminal performance will become a memory.

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86. Geringer, "An Investigation of Transfer," 45-49.

### **The Applied Lesson through Critical Thinking**

The applied music lesson will appear very different than the traditional method when students are engaged by well-trained educators proficient in critical thinking philosophy. Some instructors choose to employ a limited definition of critical thinking in a more traditional studio setting: a problem solving method, an analytical tool, or a means of evaluation. There is a radical alteration of the entire applied music experience when a more inclusive definition, including Bloom's Taxonomy in which time, space, methods, and focus change to create a student-centered instructional unit. Sometimes the surroundings will look the same: a classroom. Other times even the instrument will not be visible. With less emphasis placed on an end result of technical perfection, the student will experience music and become a more confident individual enjoying a better quality of life (Csikszentmihalyi, 113).<sup>87</sup>

The following depiction of my enhanced applied music lesson is designed for undergraduate students at the University of Virginia (UVA) who register for my viola or violin studio: however, several references exploit my private studio of middle and high school students' experiences. Extensive research will be required to demonstrate the effectiveness of implementing mindfulness and critical thinking in a student-directed applied lesson: however, the basic methods and techniques are not revolutionary, only the perspectives of who asks questions, what role the instructor plays in the applied lesson, and how that affects the student's approach to education and his/her future.

Thomas Jefferson, the founder of UVA who valued the arts as an important method to instruct and enlighten, did not have the funds to include its study when the

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87. Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow*, 113.



University began. Yet today it is estimated that almost all UVA students experience music at the McIntire Department of Music at some point during the year, through classes, lessons, lectures, or concerts. The department touches more students than any other on Grounds. UVA has been ranked second as the top public school in the United States by the *US News and World Report* while the *Princeton Review* named UVA the top public school for affordability, academics and career prospects.

Students at the University of Virginia (UVA), admitted due to their high intellectual ability, academic achievement and aptitude to enhance community life, have the option of registering for classes in the McIntire Department of Music, one of the leading music departments in the country. The Department offers diversity in performance, academic classes, and private instruction to students at all levels of musical expertise. Courses in the 100 to 300 level generally do not have prerequisites to allow the students to tailor their major or suit their interests. Also, it is an active program with a variety of featured guest artists, masterclasses, concerts, and concert series, designed to involve the students and community.

Ranging from future chemical engineers to lawyers, from physicists to economic experts, the majority of the students in my studio are double majors. Either major might not be music. They report selecting private lessons on the instrument they studied in high school as a means to relieve stress from their other academic responsibilities, an elective which would award them a grade to boost their GPA, an opportunity to include more activities on their resume more activities such as education majors as well as continued interest in improving their skills and augmenting their pleasure.

On average, eight students per semester register for my studio. Their skills range from beginning to advanced musicians. Students are required to attend two studio classes and prepare a final in-studio recital each semester. Students design their lessons to include: an etude, scale, research and repertoire.

Another feature of my studio is the Viola Bank. Containing articles for referencing the repertoire of the students, usually from my studies, the Viola Bank offers examples of quality resources, such as databases and books. Students may access the Viola Bank and add their research to it for other students to use in the future. A future project for me is to utilize Collab as a teaching research and resource tool as well.

From the beginning of my career at UVA, I followed the traditional model for a studio. The expectations for instrumental instructors for a private lesson at UVA assumed a broad view. Syllabi are required and faculty evaluations occur every three years. The looser structure was a wakeup call for me from my conservatory experience. I anticipated many academic responsibilities and the students to be focused solely on viola. Each year, I sensed a growing dissatisfaction in myself as each student's progress was mixed and musical interpretation and enthusiasm was limited. I felt overburdened by the need to make applied lessons interesting and stimulating for the student. Believing in my holistic approach to teaching, I thought their involvement would grow their interest. Questioning the validity of my work, I began by reviewing my applied viola lessons experiences and determining if my assumptions about the characteristics of a lesson should be rejected. While I found little research about effective methods for the applied music lesson, I did discover that the implementation of a student-directed program resulted in self-confident, fulfilled students who were capable of interpreting, analyzing, evaluating, and creating

music. The following rebuttal to my initial assumptions outlines the methods and experiences I have employed for several years.

**Assumption 1: The applied music lesson is a means to a successful career in music performance.**

The applied music lesson should be more than the beginning of successful careers for both students and instructors. On the university level, the selection of instructors is based on performance histories or how the musician would increase the standing of the department.<sup>88</sup> At UVA, there are five string faculty members. Our contracts require ten hours of private teaching with added ensembles, chamber coaching and orchestral responsibilities. Each professor determines the criteria for accepting students into their studio. Often lack of studio space and the number of students who apply enables certain faculty to be more selective. Others accept all students who register for lessons. Accomplished artists, the instructors have received very little formal music education degrees or training. With only one teacher per instrument available, students have no choice of instructors.

In reorganizing my teaching efforts to assist my students to achieve Csikszentmihalyi's optimal experience of Flow, I chose to allow them to determine their own goals. No longer would I be creating the challenges to stimulate their creativity, determining when they had attained their best, or making them correspond to my one-size-fits-all lesson and performance model. Removing the emphasis on performance and future profit, I created a challenge for them to make their personal growth and continued development of music appreciation paramount. In other words, instead of considering the

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88. Riggs, "Foundations of Flow," 175-191.

final product a performance, I focused on the process of learning. I decided to engage students in learning rather than conducting lessons. Students were to bring their questions, their resulting research, and their ideas how to interpret their compositions through theoretical and historical examinations to their lessons. The studio recital performance would be a marking point in their musical exploration.

**Assumption 2: The traditional structure of the applied lesson works. There is no reason for change.**

As a student in a traditional applied lesson, the physical appearance was basically the same. Each of my lessons took place in a very small room, sometimes only seven feet by nine feet larger in college since it was the instructor's office. Frequently, only artificial light was available. The routine of the lesson rarely altered. After tuning, I played the week's assigned scale and some etudes. Comments were made and I was to address the critique at home. As I progressed in my studies of the repertoire, my instructor did not wish to hear all of the assigned music, claiming there was not enough time. The remainder of the lesson focused on certain solo repertoire selections which were determined by the teacher, who explained and modeled them for me, addressing technical and musical ideas. I repeated them several times. Throughout my entire experience, time played a dominant third member in the room. The fourth powerful and all-telling member was my practice. It would quickly inform my teacher of my diligence in learning the composition. This was the basic structure I began my career as a private teacher. Eventually, I repressed my creativity and inquisitiveness. I enjoyed the routine of the lesson but not the static nature of the information sharing: from the instructor to me. I

approached teaching in the same manner. A student or an instructor, I wanted change. And I had the suspicion my students felt the same.

A defender of teachers with great adaptability, Virginia Richardson writes passionately concerning the unfairness of the view that teachers resist change. Instead, she contends they resist the imposition of change when it is forced on them. Seeking autonomy, teachers change constantly, attempting new methods or altering tactics which will be appropriate for their particular students.<sup>89</sup> What Richardson fails to address is that change is imposed from outside forces, whether by a doctor suggesting exercise, an administrator demanding ethics be taught or a red light causing drivers to brake. If I wanted to cause a change in how my applied lessons flowed, I would have to consider the largest outside force on me: the student.

The dynamics of curiosity and sense of awe and wonder in classrooms that Richardson describes was not my experience in my applied music lessons but I sought to incorporate into my lessons. What I discovered from my initial commitment to provide a more student-centered lesson was that change must be deliberate, thoughtful, and carefully prepared. Necessary ingredients to my redesign would be time, knowledge and experience. Beginning to gather information, I realized I was developing critical thinking skills, which made the soul-searching journey enjoyable and satisfying and change less challenging. It provided me the enthusiastic spirit I would need to incorporate critical thinking skills into my private studio.

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89. Virginia Richardson, "How Teachers Change: What Will Lead to Change that Most Benefits Student Learning?," *Focus on Basics* 2, C (Sept 1998): <http://www.ncsall.net/?id=395>.

Langer's research demonstrates that when mindfulness is part of the educational process and the stringent requirements of practice and performance are removed, learning can be fun. I can provide a valuable lesson to my students when I helped them discover that learning is enjoyable.<sup>90</sup> One place to begin for me was recognizing what type of music students prefer.

In his research, Robert H. Woody notes that college music majors reported spending 24.1 hours per week listening to their choice of music and 9.1 hours a week practicing their instrument for applied music lessons. Devoid of classical music choices, their out-of-the-classroom selections contained styles of music from hip hop to alternative. For collegiate studies, the students would analytically listen to performances yet they chose music from their iPhones for affective reasons. Concluding, Woody asserts that both experiences should coincide. Including student preferred choices of music in the collegiate experience would enhance their learning, while musicianship would increase if students listened to classical music outside the classroom.<sup>91</sup>

I have not fully explored this aspect of my students' music appreciation. Experimenting with music forms in my studio classes, I have introduced holiday music and a variety of contemporary music while exposing students to different methods of expression and flow: Alexander technique, eurhythmics, jazz improvisation, bluegrass, chamber and orchestral music. I began to understand that I could lead my students out of

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90. Langer, "A Mindful Education," 49.

91. Woody, Robert H, "Music Listening in the Personal and Professional Lives of University Music Majors." *Contributions to Music Education* 38, no 2 (2011): 11-28, EBSCOhost (accessed January 29, 2015).

the small, stuffy practice room which served as my studio into the world as our classroom.

The intimidating traditional structure of a master teacher modeling and critiquing a student's work quickly transformed into other methods of learning through questions such as: How would you perform your composition if it were written for a mariachi band? How would the composition sound if the composer performed it and then how would your modern ear expect it to be performed? How would you critique a rap song of your choosing if you were a television critic in the 1950s? Students saw me at a variety of university performances, outside of lessons. In the spring, I joined the softball team and I attended student sporting events and lectures. My iTunes selections included music with questionable lyrics and unimaginable sensitivity. Getting out of the studio, I visibly and deliberately left the premises to discover what students considered fun. These are ways students can encounter faculty as a part of the community not merely their instructors.

**Assumption 3: Students assume there is always a right answer or only one way to perform a composition.**

A viola student arrived fifteen minutes late for his lesson, he dropped his bag, walked out after explaining he had just had an important physics exam and needed five minutes. Returning, he placed bow on string. "What do you want to hear?" He later remarked: "Just let me play." The rest of the lesson was pointless and painful for both of us. Although he proceeded to play, it was obvious he had not practiced. He wanted to learn the mechanics of a skill but not think about it; and he did not experience any enjoyment in the lesson due to exhaustion. At that moment, he sought the comfort of a

teacher-centered lesson: he was not prepared to listen to my enthusiastic endorsement of critical thinking.

Frustrated, another student in the struggle to understand how to proceed in his research exclaimed: “Can you just tell me the answer?” For me, his remark demonstrated his comfort with understanding and knowledge but frustration with the skills of analyzing and creating as defined in Bloom’s Taxonomy. After experiencing the struggles of extended research, the student had few perceived results and he lost sight of the process. Until the student asks the questions to lead to interpretations about the composition, he will not be open to how the notes on the page can be performed. Although frustration can be part of the journey and worth a good grade, the research adventure should provide a deeper satisfaction.

Introducing critical thinking to my students has been more successful when I do not label it. In spite of the students arriving on time, instrument, pencil and music in hand as expected by teacher-centered lessons, my first lesson remains unstructured in a classical sense. We meet outside the music studios and briefly discuss the type of music the student has played, would like to play and listens for enjoyment. Besides eliciting a list of possible repertoire, I seek the reasons behind the choices. How does the music make you feel? What does the music motivate you to do? Relate a personal experience which the music evokes. How do you use music in your life? Would you like to play a work of your choosing? What does it mean to you?

Slowly, I begin to explain that during the subsequent music lessons I will be a guide on the student’s personal journey of self-awareness, self-fulfillment, and enjoyment. Lessons might lack the traditional format of weeks of study and preparation



for a culminating performance. I have modified my lesson approach to give the students the responsibility and independence to learn. In her research, Langer determined that the fewer conditions made during instruction, the more creative the students became. She encouraged students to explore the world outside the rigid rules of a traditional classroom and concluded that mindfully learning was fun. She also encourages educators to discover and employ what is fun for students and admonishes learning will follow.<sup>92</sup> This aspect of mindfulness can be attractive to undergraduate students who are tasting freedom, some for the first time in their lives. They seek an enjoyable experience as they test their independence in their lifestyles and classroom. My purpose is to prepare students for their future, to be confident in their decisions, and to make them in a critical manner, mindful of all perspectives. A result of mindfulness, fun is a valuable incentive.

Injecting fun in a small basement room can be difficult. After about four weeks in school, students have exams and become homesick. That is when I usually invite my studio on a field trip. In the fall, we go apple picking and return to my house for dinner and a pie making contest. Instruments are usually left in the school lockers but music invariably becomes a topic. Together they sprawl on the living room floor and begin to analyze a concert last night or complain about the lack of practice rooms. They have fun while learning and teaching each other. I feel successful.

By discovering what interest students, I can tailor my instruction and focus their attention to learning in a meaningful way. An ACC accredited university, UVA sports plays a large part of the students' life. When the UVA baseball team sought groups to perform the *Star Spangled Banner* at a home game, the students displayed interest.

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92. Langer, "A Mindful Education," 44.

Attendance for the first rehearsal was very strong. Afterward, all the students asked if I was going to sponsor more events like this. They expressed the desire to see the value of what they were doing receiving tangible acknowledgement outside their chosen field.

Rather than offering the typical university orchestra experience of a totally student-based group, UVA partners with the community to create a semi-professional orchestra which performs a popular concert series. Performance faculty serve as principals, leading their students and community members. They sit side-by-side sharing musical experiences and interests. Although voluntary, entrance to the orchestra is through an audition process. Partnering with the community which is culturally active and creating an open environment which values differences enriches the instrumental experience for my viola students. To promote a convivial atmosphere, I offer refreshments on a rehearsal night before a concert. The students are hungry and the community members happily converse. In an open, friendly manner, the musicians typically discuss last minute adjustments to the music, share stories, or support what each is doing outside of music. The students are involved in a top-tiered organization and appreciate knowing their efforts are worthwhile and acknowledged.

By connecting with my students through the student-directed private studio lessons and discovering activities outside of the studio which they enjoy, I engage my students in learning and they become motivated to be involved in their learning, collaborate with other musicians, and have fun.<sup>93</sup> These experiences demonstrate the process to become a viable contributor in the future rather than learning to play one piece of music how I instructed.

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93. Schreiner, "Thriving in the Classroom," 3.

**Assumption 4: The music instructor forgoes asking open-ended questions in exchange for demonstrating repertoire and techniques.**

The close proximity of student to teacher in the applied music lesson encourages a relationship which can be detrimental or healthy. When the instructor's method is continuous modeling of techniques, the student can experience frustration and a withering of confidence. The student compares his/her attempt to model the teacher with the instructor's, instead of evaluating his/her performance. An applied music teacher increases a student's self-esteem by acknowledging ideas, accepting limitations, and listening very carefully: being mindful during the entire lesson. In this warm, enthusiastic reception of personal ideas and perceived limited skills, the student can test and experience significant differences in personal and professional aspects of life.<sup>94</sup>

Heralded as an assessment tool and a new means to standardize music objectives, the 2001 revised Bloom's Taxonomy provided a means to defend music as a viable subject to those who would eliminate it for budgetary concerns. Previously other academic areas were able to demonstrate proficiency in the cognitive domains without addressing the affective or psychomotor components, guaranteeing their viability in the budget yet music was considered too subjective to be assessed.<sup>95</sup> Research appears to only consider the effect of the Taxonomy on educators and administrators. I began to

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94. Jo Clemmons, "The Private Studio: Rapport and Motivation in the Applied Studio." *Journal of Singing – The Official Journal of the National Association of Teachers of Singing* 63, no. 2 (November 2006): 205-210, EBSCOhost (accessed January 29, 2015).

95. Hanna, "The New Bloom's Taxonomy," 7.

wonder why this instructive instrument could not be given to the students in my applied music lessons.

Implementation of the Taxonomy as a strategy for students to use would not be easy. Burdened by high expectations and taxing workloads in other classes, my non-music majors were not seeking a hierarchy of thinking or promises of great satisfaction in their performances. After years of drilling and perfecting, attending lecture-based classes and hoping for an easy grade, my undergraduates would require guidance to accept what might appear as more work. I would need a well-devised plan to remain dedicated to my search for a self-directed, holistic viola studio.

An advantage to the one-on-one class is that students come and often unburden themselves of the week's incidents. While I work to keep this session short except for serious matters, I realized it could be a transition to higher levels of thinking in music. Shifting to the cognitive and psychomotor domains is easier through affective inquiry. One session morphed into an impromptu jazz concert, when a student expressed exuberance while practicing Brahms' *Two Hungarian Dances*. She moved from her affective descriptions of delight to understanding of the actual rhythm which inspired her feelings to applying the isolated rhythm and ultimately creating an improvisation in the jazz genre: the end of the activity resulted in a cognitive domain destination. That was the learnable moment for her. Slightly moving away from the music, I questioned her feelings about the last few minutes of the lesson and began to point out the enjoyment of the activity came from her use of higher level thinking. She responded she would like to do more of this type of lesson. Facilitating higher level thinking through example rather

than a chart and lecture incorporated the Taxonomy into a satisfying experience, which the student began to replicate in and out of the lesson.

A holistic approach to applied lessons involves dealing with the entire musician, who is operating in all three domains. While the psychomotor domain comprises the manipulative skills necessary to perform and the affective embraces the emotional responses, the cognitive domain speaks to the knowledge of music and of self which is necessary to perform with great skill. Each musician experiences performance in a personal manner.<sup>96</sup> When a student self-learns, the student incorporates unique strategies to improve performance, to recognize questionable performance areas, to determine which type of music provides personal enjoyment. These are not new methods or strategies to the educational process. What is unique is the student tailors the strategy to himself/ herself. One of my students discovered he learns a difficult passage through continuous repetition of a smaller passage while rehearsing in one of UVA's practice modules. Another student seeks a darkened room to listen to a recording until he "understands" the passage. A third likes to compare troublesome measures to a culinary experience while she practices. Remembering the exceptionally personal aspect of playing an instrument is an invaluable insight, keeping the students directing their education without the unsatisfying imposition of my personal techniques.

As a student, I remember walking and talking with viola pedagogue Karen Tuttle during the Banff Music Festival. She reflected on her experiences as a solo performer with Primrose and Casals and queried me about my aspirations. That summer, she created a duo of equal partners: me and my viola. Until then, I had always considered myself the

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96. Ibid., 14.

weak member: the viola with all its potential and me with all my imperfections. And, she did this by recognizing me as a whole person, rather than an extension of my viola.

Prompting me, she quietly prodded and gestured me about my musical goals, rather than lectured. She moved the experience from the classroom to the outdoors. She spoke gently and comforting, with a killer sense of humor. Through her holistic approach to students, she guided me to consider myself a musician not a want-to-be violist while teasing me and cheating at cards. She was physically active in my lesson, a sign of her mindfulness. For me, her holistic approach was a distinctive perspective, definitely one which I am trying to emulate for all my students.

Debunking the oft-perceived notion that a student who seeks help is a poor student, Schreiner advocates the student is an engaged learner. She further asserts that students can become victims of trying to live up to others expectations. Teachers determine the quantity of material to know and apply a grade. Students make value judgments by how many times a student answers in class or how much time a student devotes to research.<sup>97</sup> In my holistic approach, I attempt to remove the public analysis and focus on the students' personal goals and hopes. Encouraging students to consider other perspectives through mindfulness can replace the burden of external criticism with a greater interest in self-regulation in their education. Divorcing competition, comparisons and corrupt personal criticism, my method seeks to engage students in higher levels of learning by motivating and energizing them to determine their goals.

Currently, it is my experience that there must be some intervention in the critical thinking process to assure that it is occurring and developing and to insure the student can

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97. Schreiner, "Thriving in the Classroom," 9.

graduate with the self-confidence and reliance to continue playing independently. The instructor need not be the only guide in this process. Collaborative discussions with other students, mentors, guest lecturers, music reference librarians and masterclasses offer increased skill in critical thinking. But each student must direct, search and ultimately create the questions and personal meaning.

**Assumption 5: Researching a musical topic is easy.**

While research is seldom necessary in a traditional lesson setting, knowledge is the beginning step in a student-directed lesson. Besides vocabulary to express ideas and emotions, knowledge begins the questioning process. Once the student formulates questions, research is necessary to make informed decisions about the interpretation and performance of the composition. A journal offers the student a recording device for questions, perspectives, opinions, emotional responses, goals and constructive criticism.

In my studio class, students may create their own formats for their journals. Another means of incorporating the students' experiences into the lesson is to introduce social media and technology into the process. Students are free to use their iPad or laptops to record their journey, their research, their questions, their feelings and their successes. Other options to record affective learning could be through poetry, an illustration, or perhaps a series of letters to the composer: the single requirement is that the student is developing and expressing the feelings in a comfortable medium. In addition, they may blog their thoughts, contact other musicians concerning their inquiries, or post on YouTube. In my studio, the journal belongs to the student. I do not place any external limitations or requirements, other than those in the Honor Code. I have found as Beverly Lapp reports that journal entries demonstrate that our students engage in high

level thinking between lessons and come to lessons enthused. She assigns journals for affective measurements while I suggest mine for cognitive, affective and psychomotor observations. Although little research exists connecting journaling and a student's mindfulness, the journal offers the student a tangible record of accomplishment rather than the typical notebook which records practice times and assignments.<sup>98</sup>

The following outline is offered as an example of journal entries and a student's design for the 14 week term:

Student Journal:

1. Before beginning what do you know about the piece and yourself? Have you experienced a performance of the work? How does the music make you feel? What initial questions occur to you? Have you considered any goals for your study of this composition?
2. Define your knowledge. Examine the musical composition for notation which is unfamiliar, its form, and its length. What is your sensual, not aural, impression of the composition on the written page?
3. Reference the work in terms of genre, composer, and observations within the three main categories of history, theory, and performance.

Composer Name:

Title of Composition:

History:

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98. Beverly Lapp, "The Art of Reflection in Music Learning," *American Music Teacher* 62, no. 1 (August/September 2012): 32, EBSCOhost (accessed January 29, 2015).



Theory:

Performance:

4. Continue weekly entries concerning the research and your affective experience. Include all the questions which the research suggests to you and the avenues you explored in your research. What did you do immediately after your journaling, practice or lesson? How did you immediately execute your knowledge into your repertoire work?

Teacher Journal:

Not to be misconstrued as a measurement tool, the instructor should keep a journal, sharing the entries with the student. Besides demonstrating that the student's learning is important, the journal can become a reference source for students who will study the piece at a later time.

1. Record questions.
2. Follow-up with your own questions to facilitate the student's questioning. Avoid offering an answer to the question but rephrase the question: "Is this what you are saying?"
3. When a student appears to find answers, lead the student to find another perspective. Try to lead every answer to a question until the student is satisfied.
4. Be certain the student feels you are a cooperative partner in the learning process, not an encyclopedic resource.
5. Remember the basic questions: who, what, when, where, why and how.

Lesson Schedule:

Please note that my students are mainly non-music majors so some of the initial work is rudimentary as they are not acquainted with music theory or history. I may be educating superior audience members more than musicians, as in a conservatory. The journal response should not take a long time in the lesson. It is a tool to assist the student to perform the composition in an informed manner, not a written assignment to be checked.

**Lesson 1:** Student provides initial knowledge and thoughts regarding piece while constructing questions to verify and clearly define what knowledge is known.

*Teacher Follow Up:* Demonstrating enthusiasm, the teacher asks the initial, probing questions about the big picture concepts of theory, history and performance.

*Assignment:* Student determines assignment of learning the notes, looking through the score, listening with the score, and identifying specific areas to practice. Student will be finding answers to the questions using the music reference librarian, databases, and the teacher as resources.

**Lesson 2-3:** Student brings journal with research results, informal bibliography, and keywords which proved useful during the search.

*Teacher Follow Up:* Teacher guides the student to play the music as the student interprets it, applying the research. Also, the teacher further induces questions from the student and provides guidance in research techniques, if needed.

*Assignment:* Student leaves lesson with more questions and challenges to find ways to implement information while learning the notes and basic ideas of the work.

**Lesson 4-7:** Student returns with more ideas and potential dead ends in research.

Performing with more intent and starting to draw conclusions, the student continues to

pose question and to consider the perspective of several interpretations. The technical and musical interpretations become practical considerations as the student is familiar with the notes and rhythm from three weeks of practice. The journal entries, which up to now contain affective and cognitive domain skills will include psychomotor entries, illuminated with measure numbers and manipulative ideas. In higher level considerations domains will cross paths: for example m 34-43 is a focus for motivic development requiring a darker tone and better control while playing in the lower register.

*Teacher Follow Up:* As the student progresses, the teacher will experience a greater desire to grab the viola and demonstrate skills. Instead, the teacher must remain a facilitator helping to develop a student's idea, notice areas to consider, guide a student how to play technique or ask questions which focus the student on other ways to look at the information and note relationship. By the end of the seventh week, the student has completed the initial overview of the piece and the teacher assesses that the large picture ideas of form, keys, motives, phrases, colors and character are understood.

*Assignment:* Student leaves the lesson with an idea of what questions or areas will be developed and what the goal for the next lesson. With a better idea of form, keys, motives, phrases, colors and character, the student will dissect smaller areas and discuss the ways the work can be developed using information acquired over the previous weeks.

**Lesson 8-10:** Student now limits the amount of new research but continues referencing ideas from previous weeks. After weeks of concentrating on practicing smaller sections, the student begins to construct the piece into larger sections, using research and perspectives to create viable transitions. The questioning continues. Lastly, the student decides in consultation with the instructor how to demonstrate what has been learned: a

performance, a concert, a studio presentation. This is the student's decision because the grade will be measured by the evidence of work contained in the journal, which will be found in the student's level of satisfaction. The final performance is not the only grade determination.

*Teacher Follow Up:* Teacher carefully ascertains that the student is aware of certain areas that may need polishing. Consulting with the student on self-directed goals, the teacher will offer guidance to give the student the confidence for a performance. Now, the teacher makes a final check of the technical aspects including intonation and style production.

*Assignment:* The student will continue to modify the measures that appear weak. By week 10, the student will be prepared to run through the work as in a rehearsal.

**Lesson 11-12:** Student performs the work with or without the pianist where applicable and prepares the final presentation of the composition.

*Teacher Follow Up:* Teacher asks the student to define what made the performance successful and which sections require more attention. Teacher, studio or selected audience members share their opinions using the student's research and perspectives as the criterion.

*Assignment:* Student leaves lesson continuing to polish the work, questioning how specific areas can be more interesting, clearly defined, expressive, or in tune. Next week, the student will experience the full performance again with a collaborating artist. In addition, the student will construct "what can I share" list highlighting the information which has personally influenced the work and information which will connect the listener to the work.

**Performances:** Student performs the work. The valuable information gathered in the journal will be organized into the student's own personal program notes. These will both be the student's personalized interpretation and a fact based interpretation of the work.

*Teacher Follow Up:* Congratulations for the student. During the following lesson, the student, instructor, or others can share what proved to be most useful in terms of databases, books, resources, practice ideas, or techniques. The student can note what knowledge could be used in future repertoire by the same composer and also share the personal experience of learning the composition.

*Assignment:* Student will either continue to use the same journal/file/paper or begin a new area with the next piece to be studied. All information will be stored in one place while being gathered, organized, and finally coalesced for future performances. The shift focuses to another piece.

At UVA, the music department has a dedicated music library with a reference librarian who facilitates student research. Next year, my studio will attend a resource class with this research librarian to receive an introduction to the information that can be accessed. The librarian and I will prepare a packet of information containing some of the basic information to begin research. Once the research begins, the it should continue throughout the semester. Facilitated and encouraged by the instructor or librarian, the student will become fully immerse into critical thinking. For example: A first-year student was studying the *Fantasie for Viola and Orchestra* by H. N. Hummel. He is a non-music major, studying applied viola as well as participating in the orchestra. He was just beginning to work on his journal. In his research, he had done a great job analyzing the work for key areas, places of tempo changes, phrase lengths, and technical

challenges. Although very basic, he has questioned how to implement this knowledge into the work. From a research viewpoint, very limited personal knowledge exists of Hummel when he composed this piece. When the student became frustrated by the research, I inquired about his knowledge of opera, especially *recitative* in Classical opera when Hummel was composing. He became befuddled but acquiesced leaving with questions such as: How does opera play a role in the *Fantasia*? Who are some of Hummel's contemporaries? Considering a seemingly opposite musical genre than his solo work, the student began to think creatively, to seek other perspectives. Now the student is more musical, confidently expressing himself more than before this experience.

The study of a work seems to have a limited life expectancy in the students' understanding of school work. During the course of four years, the expectations modify based on the core music curriculum, requirements and maturity. With research and performance experience, the students accelerate their development of interpretative perspectives. They demonstrate an anxious enthusiasm to examine a composition independently.

**Assumption 6: When research is complete, focus can be turned toward the music.**

One way to express their enthusiasm developed in researching by sharing the information. In my studio, the students have access to a Viola Bank of articles and technique materials. They are also encouraged to supplement the Viola Bank with their research. An excellent system to store and reference discoveries and questions, the Viola Bank will hopefully prove to be another resource for viola performance in the future as its entries grow.

What follows is a sample of studio expectations for each semester and year of study. The suggestions are fluid depending on student experience and knowledge. Music majors will be able to perform at this rigorous pace but non-music majors might encounter difficulties.

**1<sup>st</sup> Year Fall Term:** Recognize and isolate concepts in current repertoire. Identify basic structure and form of composition.

*Theory:* Student will demonstrate skill in basic scales and simple chords, as well use vocabulary commensurate with knowledge. Through the music librarian, the student will be acquainted with resources and researching techniques.

*Historical:* Student will access basic resources for research and begin asking higher level questions arising from immersion in composition. When available, the student will investigate performance practices.

**1<sup>st</sup> Year Spring Term:** Start formulating questions to implement research and interpret key information into useable and practical applications.

*Theory:* Student will demonstrate confidence in recognizing chord progressions and basic form and isolating motives and themes. Student will identify rhythmic ideas and compositional tendencies of composers being studied.

*Historical:* The student will use different authoritative resources in research and develop specific questions leading to a perspective based on a reasonable argument.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Year Fall Term:** The student will refresh concepts from last term adding layers of critics from various, previous centuries, when possible. The goal would be to acquire knowledge and perspectives appropriate for program notes and performance.

*Theory:* The student will demonstrate increased knowledge through discussion, performing, improvising, composing or comparing to other compositions. The student will begin analyzing more than the basic elements, touching on more unusual forms and complex key structures, while reviewing last year's concepts.

*Historical:* The student will use the acquired information regarding the composer's culture and life to delineate the composer's development and idiomatic language.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Year Spring Term:** The student will continue solidifying the ideas of first semester, adding personal expression and practice experience. The student will present program notes to studio.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Year:** Revealing independent thought and initiative, the student will prepare a recital program through research and performance of the work supported with journal entries including reasoned questions and organized responses. The final performance will feature a written version of program notes.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Year Fall Term:** The student will prepare a half recital in the Spring, including twentieth and twenty-first century compositions, employing higher level thinking and research techniques.

*Theory:* The student will begin to navigate the world of twentieth and twenty-first century composers by illustrating how knowledge of construction affects stylistic ideas like phrasing, tempo, and dynamics.

*History:* The student will investigate the historical role of later compositions. Some concepts and questions may apply with further addendums.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Year Spring Term:** The student will concentrate on the final recital or presentation preparation. Student will connect with affective domain issues to explore performance



issues of nervousness, anxiety, practice strategies, memorization techniques and physical details of performance. At this point, there is no distinction between theory, history, and performance skills. The student is totally immersed mindfully in the recital pieces. The program notes are polished.

**4<sup>th</sup> Year:** The student will independently devise and prepare a recital or a creative presentation of research and performance of multiple pieces. Collaborative programming, including and not limited to the student's extra-musical interests, technology-based music, other instrumentalists, and community outreach, should be included in the project. Beside collaborative discussions, attendance at studio and masterclasses, and community involvement, the student will arrange weekly appointments with the instructor and bi-weekly meetings working with the music reference librarian.

**And beyond:** Now, the student is prepared to independently and confidently research a music selection of choice and using the perspectives gained through research analyze and evaluate, perform and appreciate it. For some of my students, this process will be as a well-informed, discerning member of the audience.

**Assumption 7: The student seeks affirmation from a good grade.**

In a university setting, evaluation in the form of term grades is a reality. When I first began teaching at UVA, I adhered to the terminal performance as the final determination of grades. I instructed the students and had them prepare a composition to perform in the variety of settings UVA offers: intimate chapels, social rooms, a master concert hall or historical gardens. Yet this organization of 14 weeks of lessons and a final performance became a daunting task for me. The weeks went much too fast to prepare

anything so I was suggesting learning movements. Organizing the students and encouraging them to be prepared became an onerous task. Then, arranging the performance site balancing conflicting schedules, unavailable dates, and university politics was frustrating for me. Another teacher-centered evaluation, the intimidating jury procedure is a requirement for scholarships. Rather than an opportunity for a confident, self-instructed student to demonstrate musical achievement, juries became frightening for the student, concerned about playing for master teachers. For me, I thought the other judges were adjudicating my teaching.

Willing to accept the assessment-based performances as common practice for a university music program, I was standing backstage in Old Cabell Hall wondering if my violist performing a technically enchanting piece by Bartok really enjoyed the experience. I was wondering if she was she just accurately reproducing my models, or demonstrating her sight-reading ability. I realized I did not have a full understanding of what the student was feeling about the composition. Her response as she exited the stage was my answer: “Whew! That’s done. Now I can study for my calculus exam.”

Music was to be appreciated. I thought I was teaching higher level skills and self-confidence to students, not to finish the performance and shift to another subject. Personal reflection yielded that long before I ever began a private lesson with my violist, she had been indoctrinated into the teacher-weighted evaluation process. Beginning his article with an answer to a parent’s question how the child is doing, Richard Cangro describes the educational process as one in which the teacher eloquently departs

knowledge so that the student learns how to apply the knowledge to future activities.<sup>99</sup> Having the students consider the end product before beginning to study, Cangro suggests will enable the students to learn to assess themselves. Several checklists and rubrics to be employed by the student with the teacher's assistance will keep students informed about their progress and areas of improvement.<sup>100</sup> Courtney Crappell seeks to answer how to make music lessons attractive by seeking advice from marketing websites: what makes people spend money? His research yielded that people respond positively when they feel like the person they want to be.<sup>101</sup> Applying this axiom, Crappell suggests creating a challenging environment through carefully selected, skill-appropriate repertoire, including improvisation in lessons, and offering preparatory opportunities for performance.<sup>102</sup> Whatever the thesis, these articles illustrate that music instructors need to adapt their strategies. Cangro seeks to demonstrate improvement through evaluation and assessment, shifting the job of evaluator from teacher to student. And Crappell looks to sell music through rejuvenating lessons to enroll more students in music instruction. Each author obviously cares about music and his students as well as seeks to make a student's study of music meaningful and successful. Yet for all the good intentions of

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99. Richard Cangro, "How's My Kids Doing? Solid Answers for a Data-Driven Society," *American Music Teacher* 63, no 4 (February/March 2014): 17, EBSCOhost (accessed January 29, 2015).

100. Ibid., 21.

101. Courtney Crappell, "Making Music Lessons Attractive Again," *American Music Teacher* 63, no. 3 (December 2013/January 2014):10, EBSCOhost (accessed January 29, 2015).

102. Ibid., 10-11.

myself and so many other professionals, my student viewed music-making as another course to get a grade.

That was not the reason I became a music teacher or what I wanted my student to achieve through a course of music study or how I felt about any musical experience. I realized that everything I just said was I-based. With minimal student input, I choose the music, I illustrated how to play the composition for performance, I determined the method of evaluation, I even selected the time and place for lessons. The student did not have anything invested in the learning process.

Yet, the traditional performance for a grade was a comfort zone. If I was to give up my hegemony as an applied teacher in a music department with a majority of non-performance majors, I would have to require critical thinking, creative projects, a journal, and research. My students registered for applied viola lessons to demonstrate they could create something unique. In addition, over half of my lessons are credit/no credit. Although I am not requiring a super amount of research or writing, the work load is commensurate with the number of hours of study required by one credit hour and remains aligned with the department policy of six hours of practice for every one hour of instruction. But the real proof comes from the students. Accepting the responsibility of self-directed learning, one student demonstrated the proof of educational research concerning critical thinking. He reported to me that after beginning research into his composition, he became highly interested in theory and tries to make connections in his current repertoire with his theory. As a history major, he identifies with the history of music theory. He is currently registered for theory courses.

Critical thinking and learning on both the student and teacher's parts evaporate the hierarchy of grades and tests. They are a reality. Schools must schedule classes in a timely fashion, guaranteeing that students absorb a required amount of information. Through grades, institutions offer evidence of this achievement. However, my arbitrary score is not the only or most important reason for playing a viola. As Cangro indicated, if my student was to play well, she had to become responsible for how, what, and where she played.<sup>103</sup> And as Capprell suggested, he/she has to discover ways to become the musician he/she really wants to be.<sup>104</sup> But my focus must shift from authority figure to facilitator and mentor. Everything must be he/she not I.

**Assumption 8: The performance is the final goal.**

At the beginning of our unit on *Hamlet*, my English professor announced the drama could never be understood or appreciated unless the theater was frigid, damp and filled with horrific aromas. The drama was an experience, not merely an opportunity to hear actors repeat words. Music also is an experience, much more than just a technically perfect performance and one that has unlimited possibilities of expression. This does not suggest that viola music can be analyzed, discussed and eventually mastered without bow on string. In a critically thinking lesson, technically perfect performances should not be the sole reason for studying viola. Performance is only one method to experience a composition. Performances enhanced through a critical thinking approach will be vastly improved, delivered by a student who has chosen its interpretation, analyzed it and has

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103. Cangro, "How's My Kid Doing?," 18.

104. Capprell, "Making Music Lessons Attractive Again," 10-11.

experienced a full understanding of the composition.<sup>105</sup> They provide a unique exhilarating experience demonstrating musical apprehension in light of a student's interests, abilities, and purposes for playing the viola.

In the university setting, the semester timeframe provides a perfect schedule for the performance-based lesson. As in ensembles or classes, applied lessons focus on learning a composition to perform at the end of the semester and a grade is given. The stress of time constraints is minimized because the teacher-modeled techniques guarantee success if the student maintains disciplined practice routines. Although etudes and basic instruction texts provide neatly packaged repertoire which fit the time constraints of a lesson or semester, composers of the repertoire my undergraduates study create music of varying lengths. The performance becomes a measure of the instructor's modeling abilities and strict adherence to a syllabus instead of an appraisal of the increased quality of life of the student.

Rather than eliminating the end performance, I am suggesting students should creatively focus on music learning with performance as a tool for the application of musical ideas through interpretation and appreciation. The final performance can occur in many venues and before various audiences other than the expected lesson, studio class and lecture hall at the end of the semester. In my undergraduate studio, initial performances take place in the private lesson in which the student routinely poses questions concerning musicality. With the understanding that the performance is a learning experience rather than a technically perfect assignment, the options to perform are endless. In studio class, a violist interprets a certain passage, presents personal

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105. Teachout, "Understanding the Ties that Bind," 21.

questions and anticipates other students' contribution of their ideas which create more questions. Recording a student performing in a small site and then in Old Cabell Hall provides the student aural evidence to question the interpretation of space and sound. One student determined that Handel was best performed in one of the many gardens with friends sitting on blankets enjoying a picnic. Another student preferred the recording studio where a colleague added improvisational flourishes to the performance.

The recital does not need to be with bow on string. Students can tailor their presentation. As in a dance studio, a student could creatively interpret the rhythm by dancing to a recording of her piece, using her dance steps to keep the beat, ala eurhythmics. This method can be incorporated anywhere such as into a student's daily exercise routine with an iPod. A student might chose to compose an improvisation of the composition and perform it to a group of preschoolers who know little about musical techniques but are expressive about the music they like.

The previous examples illustrate that critically learning leads a student to move from the confines of a small practice room. The world becomes the classroom. Facilitating opportunities for private students to act on their interpretation and analysis demands some creative methods because the applied music lesson is literally a team of two. I have swelled these participatory numbers and engaged other students in another student's repertoire with some success through studio class meetings, suggestions of research projects by students with similar interests, outreach activities, and facilitating rather than organizing activities with varying degrees of success.

To provide an even greater opportunity to learn collaboratively, I would like to increase studio classes to once a month for my UVA students. These more frequent

classes would be informal. And not all students would attend each class. My experience indicates that alternating and blending the students in small groups facilitates discussion. Currently, the studio gathers twice a semester to share the progress made on repertoire. Each student prepares a question and answer from their research. The usual five-to-ten minute presentation is student-designed and directed. During these colloquia, students have demonstrated various interpretations of a particular passage asking for a consensus, have surveyed their studio mates about a research source, and have disclosed new research about the composer or the work they are studying. In response, the other students contribute their ideas, include their experience with similar issues, and create more questions. If the dialogue is fruitful, the group guides each student to possible performance choices. During the discussion, each student respects their colleague's ideas and concerns, frequently offering positive encouragement. Thus the collaborative learning exercise engages students in critical thinking. During this process, I limit my intervention, but the students definitely need a facilitator. What is accomplished in studio class will not need to be repeated in a lesson.

As at most universities, students are encouraged to become involved in the community. In the McIntire Department of Music outreach opportunities abound. Yet, going to play at a middle school or a nursing facility fails to engage the student in the type of action prescribed by critical thinking. My interpretation of action is threefold: collaborative learning, social action, and performance.

To encourage an effective application of the thought process, I facilitate discussion of outreach ideas with limited success. For example, several studio members were engaged in research concerning the long term influence the compositions they were



studying exerted on contemporary musical preferences. At UVA, the Jefferson Trust provides grants to students who design and implement research involving the university and the community. Little money has been awarded to the music department so I encouraged three students to apply and test their theory that beginning string instrument instruction sooner than fifth grade would increase the elementary students' success in school. Initially my students had marvelous discussions, identifying their research goals and designing the methodology for their research. Their ideas were accepted in the initial review but when they were requested to redesign certain aspects, develop a budget and realistic timeline, and acquire the necessary school board permission the project stalled and has not been pursued. Even with my intervention through critical questioning, only one student continued.

The outreach programs which are less overt and respond to a student's observations or questions have been the most beneficial and sustained. For example, during one of our studio meetings one student asked the group if they thought that the Holiday Concert really engaged the younger members of the audience. My students became animated. They brainstormed how to enhance the concert to include the children. Questions and possible solutions were written on the blackboard. Ultimately, the studio determined that they would form a viola choir to perform holiday music in the midst of the audience during intermission. During moments between pieces, the students would engage the children in discussions about the music and their instruments. We have performed for four years. It is a popular holiday tradition for families and the studio.

Still, these examples closely resemble outreach programs where there is little engagement of the musicians except to perform. Composers have used music to create

cultural awareness, such as Ma Rainey and lesbianism, Pete Seeger and the Progressive Movement or Jean Sibelius and Finnish nationalism. Conductors have performed music to make a political statement, such as Israeli Daniel Barenboim who conducted Wagner in Israel or collaborated with Edward Said, born a Palestinian, to produce a workshop for all talented young Middle East musicians, demonstrating that music could bring about peaceful discussions between opponents. Instructing increasingly diverse enrollment, brave high school teachers boldly introduce their students to music of the barrio or the East or Africa despite school boards insisting that traditional Western music must be mastered. Educators of music must creatively tap this energy and conviction in the applied lesson studio.

To enact at least an awareness of social justice issues in music and inequality in applied music lessons, I propose listening activities, student/guest master classes, traditional master classes and extensions of student's involvement in social justice issues. When I engage the speakers or groups, I discourage lectures and request brief concerts or demonstrations of their music or social issues followed by a discussion. Examples of my methods follow:

*Listening activities:*

One opportunity to discover exploitable time in a lesson occurs during transitions. These query-making moments transpire when students remove their coats, recover their instruments from their cases or wait for other students before studio. My iPod contains music from other genres and cultures which I can quickly retrieve to fill the moments. Seldom background noise, the novel music experience leads to critical thinking

questions, such as comparison of rhythms from various genres or a desire to play an instrument or the decision to attend an event featuring the music.

*Student/guest masterclasses:*

Student/guest masterclasses can incorporate student-directed activities and create awareness of social justice issues in the studio. At UVA, international students establish student organizations from the Mahogany Dance Troupe to the Persian Cultural Society. When invited, these students present a brief demonstration of their cultural music and lead discussions concerning issues in their homeland presented in the music. This provides the typically American news fed student with an international perspective of issues through music.

*Traditional master classes and lectures:*

I engage experts who can demonstrate how they have applied music to social issues. A eurhythmic instructor demonstrates Dalcroze's method of interpreting music through body movements. While in comfortable clothes and bare feet, the group is guided through a representation of music without notation or vocabulary, and instructed that eurhythmics is a common language in underprivileged, under musically served neighborhoods and countries. A music therapist, instructing students how to avoid injuries during their performances, opens for discussion the possibilities of employing music in non-traditional ways for health and well-being. Each master class is a hands-on experience which stimulates interest in the subject and illustrates where musicians can affect a change or begin a dialogue.

*Student involvement in social issues:*

With every break most of my students perform some type of outreach from teaching English in Haiti to building cisterns in Africa. Even those who remain in the United States perform some type of public service. Prior to their trip, I facilitate a brief discussion of places they are going and their expectations of the music scene. I challenge them to journal, returning to relate their experiences in a brief, creative manner: storytelling, a composition imitating the music they heard, a photographic/aural account of the musicality of the people.

Lastly, students who enrich their lessons through their own music learning reach out for more learning encounters outside the applied music lesson. These experiences include but are not limited to attending concerts of music they do not usually enjoy, incorporating music into their history methods class, hosting an impromptu music and art symposium for younger cousins after Thanksgiving dinner, or designing a congregation involved Lenten service at their place of worship. They become aware of other outlets for their research techniques. For example, UVA recently hosted a portion of the Berlin Wall featuring graffiti art by West German Dennis Kaun. Undergraduate students were invited to use their critical thinking skills to discover the significance of the taking down of the Wall and then creatively depict the challenges we confront today. At the request of the Kluge-Ruhe Museum of Aboriginal Art at the University of Virginia, string students formed the McIntire String Quartet to perform with dijeridu player William Barton, who performs his own works based on the ideas and cultures of the aboriginal people. Through some challenging rehearsals, the students became an instructor-independent, self-regulating group from deciding how to perform the music to determining when to rehearse, from what to wear for the concerts to how to discipline the members who did

not appear on time for performances. Even if this project or any future designs do not reach fruition, it is a learning process directed by the students which develops critical thinking skills and skills needed for the workplace. The students increase their quality of life and touch the lives of others.

In my studio, the performance is not the end of study. It is the beginning of more questioning, more researching, more defining the person who is the musician and discerning what the musician's place and value is in society. For example, using the skills of critical thinking from my student-directed studio, my two students with double majors -music and environment- will be successful in combining their studies for a bright future. I am confident their work will be unique and assured because they are mindful, students of critical thinking.

## Discussion

The applied music lesson has defied modification for centuries. As educational budgets become leaner and social awareness identifies music as an elite pursuit, music educators seek tangible evidence that music education should remain a valuable part of the curriculum. Historically, music has been a member of the academic standards at all levels of education. By the 1980s, advancements in assessment instruments refuted the argument that music is too subjective and affective to evaluate. Mechanisms, such as the revised Bloom's Taxonomy, now provide the language to establish standardized curriculum and assessments in music. Studies examining the creative process of learning music emphasize the significance of student-directed learning; the need to incorporate all aspects of music, from composing to improvising, in the curriculum; the genuine value of music education; and the importance of mindfulness and critical thinking in the learning process. And as technology, economics, and migration of social/cultural groups brings the world in view, Western European music traditions prejudice the availability of world music to American students.

The lack of a universally accepted definition of critical thinking has not deterred educators from applying methods to engage students in the arts. This exciting and innovative process requires exploration and experimentation to judge what will work to engage the students in critical thinking. The philosophies and assessments can be formed retrospectively. Examining eight assumptions I considered about my music development, this paper asserts that a reinvented applied music lesson should, like the music curriculum in the classroom, include self-directed learning enabled by the application of critical thinking. Critical thinking involves questioning skills which through mindfulness indicate

a variety of perspectives as potential answers and which enable the thinker to select the most credible perspective and act on the interpretation.

In yielding their authoritative approach to teaching and designing new curriculum, instructors must become critical thinkers. Teachers will need to be taught critical thinking techniques. Since changes and modifications become difficult obstacles to the alteration process, the obvious place to start is to educate music educators and performance majors in ways which they can avoid teaching as they were taught. By encouraging collegiality and collaborative enterprises between and within the departments of music and education, music schools can develop methods and measures for the applied music student to employ in a private music studio. Destined to be a private music teacher in some fashion, the performance major will receive the tools to provide quality music and life lessons. The future music teachers will be armed with the valuable tools to face the rigors of academic life: the disgruntled parent, the administrator, the bored student. Teacher-directed is past and student-directed is the future.

Frustrated by the lack of enthusiasm, assuredness, and improvement in my music students' musicality, I devised methods to engage my students to actively question, challenge and analyze their work in the private studio. This work resulted in their pursuit of self-tailored learning experiences that valued the process of learning more than the final performance. The methods and techniques of study were not new. That they were suggested and implemented by the student is unique. The perspective of encouraging applied music students to determine and direct their educational experience was at the least novel.

The most important aspect of this overhaul of my studio is researching and journaling. Obligated to ask questions regarding the interpretation of the compositions they have selected to study/perform, the students seek the answers through research. To begin researching, the students receive guidelines and support from the instructor and music reference librarian concerning the available sources of information. Ultimately, they record their struggles, triumphs and future questions in a journal format of their choosing. This written record enables them to determine the methods of research that were successful and to view the quality of their work which may or may not terminate in a typical end-of-the-semester performance. The students can make their knowledge and perspectives available to other students during studio class, in the studio Viola Bank, and in program notes or informal discussions before a performance. Through these exercises, the students direct the process of learning. The performance becomes another experience of learning rather than a teacher assessment.

Besides acting as a facilitator to learn a composition, I also endorse a holistic approach to my private studio. Unlike other disciplines, I personally meet with a student once a week in a one-on-one lesson. This unique teaching environment offers the opportunity to establish a relationship of trust which can lead to a deeper knowledge and understanding of music. Rather than the student succumbing to evaluations through peer pressure, parental expectations or professor criteria, I encourage the students to focus on their own expectations for themselves. The process of setting personal goals and realizing them equips the students with lifelong skills. Being mindful of each student in and outside the lesson, I offer witness to the student's success. It is important to acknowledge that this does not totally eradicate a student's possible poor self-image, but the process



gives tools to suppress negativity. These skills could lead to positive lifelong personal habits that the student might not have considered without intervention.

As all things innovative, pioneering or modern my ideas must be demonstrated to be valuable and successful; I am beginning to consider assessments of my applied music teaching strategy. After four years of slowly adjusting my methods and navigating the critical thinking aspect of being a teacher, I have students who are reaching the end of their undergraduate degree program. Now I can evaluate the success of their lessons outside the confines of the university. With the body of research on critical thinking in the music curriculum and the effect of self-directing strategies in the applied music lesson still limited, I would like to design measurable assessments of the journaling and research experiences. More than anecdotal remarks, assessments will encourage other instructors to examine the traditional applied lesson strategy.

Based on my experiences in altering my private lessons, I would like to establish a criterion for critical thinking in music which considers the private lesson as a unique environment to develop, to empower students, and to enjoy. I have derived satisfaction in the struggle to adopt and adapt critical thinking in my studio. Yet, teaching requires slow, deliberate, calculated steps into change. If the modifications are done with mindfulness, the applied music lesson will have a healthy, long term renovation.

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