

# Teaching Philosophy

## Curtis Reynolds // M.F.A. // 2022

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As a young person in a small, rural community, any kind of musical ability was seen as an endowed, supernatural gift. I was raised on this (fixed) mindset that my identity was tied to an invariable "talent." It wasn't until I fell flat on my face while in college in The Big Apple that I started to see through this talent myth. Under the careful tutelage of nurturing yet firm teachers, I began to value process and the deliberate effort it takes to train artistry. Effort and practice replaced luck and technique prayers. My philosophy now stems from this belief that singing, much like any instrument, is a learnable, trainable skill that can also transcend to a supernatural, magical place.

### I believe in:

- **guiding** students holistically to discover their vocal, physical, and expressive potential.

Learning to sing means learning how to use the entire body and mind as an artist. I encourage students to actively seek out constructive discomfort to discover new facets of themselves.
- **training** singing through deliberate goal-setting, optimized focus, creative feedback, and informed risk-taking. Studio practices benefit from the many evidence-based principles found in expertise and motor learning literature, and these principles welcome students to be active participants in their learning process.
- **nurturing** psychological safety as a prerequisite to learning. Our brains can't physically encode new patterns and skills if we don't feel safe first in body and mind. I pair mindful practices with playful exploration to create a welcoming studio atmosphere.
- **prioritizing** learning goals and distinguishing them from performance goals. My responsibility as a teacher is to make sure students have sustainable and repeatable skills. This model values long-term process and sometimes leads to messy short-term performance. Mess is embraced.

- **modeling** a growth mindset through active curiosity and continuing education. Being transparent with my students about my continuous learning and performance journey encourages metacognition and demonstrates that I am walking with them.
- **preparing** singers to be efficient *practicers* of singing. Students must know how to succeed out of the studio, where they do 95% of their singing. Just as doctors and lawyers practice their profession, singers too must be professional practicers.
- **honoring** the student through specific and empathetic repertoire selection. Choosing a song for someone is like giving medicine. I assign students repertoire that sees them as complex humans and addresses their individual technical needs while also encouraging their agency to find material that speaks to their creative self.
- **filtering** all studio work through a progressive, transparent, and inclusive lens. All art is political. To be an artist is to have a voice. I encourage students to train their voices to have something to say. This includes supporting our BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and neurodiverse peers.