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Teaching Statement

My teaching is guided by the belief that music education should cultivate both intellectual understanding and artistic growth. I want students to encounter music not simply as a collection of facts, works, or technical concepts, but as a meaningful human practice shaped by history, culture, creativity, and lived experience. Whether teaching music history, popular music, or music theory, my goal is to help students become thoughtful listeners who can ask meaningful questions, develop informed interpretations, and understand music within larger historical and cultural contexts.

Central to my teaching is active engagement with sound. I integrate listening with historical context, discussion, and analysis, sometimes inviting students to notice and describe what they hear before introducing new concepts, and at other times providing context to guide their listening. In both cases, students move between musical experience and the analytical or historical ideas that help them interpret it. Guided listening, discussion, collaborative activities, and analytical exercises allow students to test ideas and learn from one another rather than encounter course material only through lecture. In Rock Music History, for example, students listen closely to recordings, identify musical characteristics, compare performances and styles, and consider how musical choices intersect with historical circumstances, cultural values, and questions of identity. This process encourages students to move from observation toward interpretation and from receiving information toward constructing historically informed arguments of their own.

I also strive to make rigorous musical study accessible to students with widely varying levels of preparation. My teaching at universities and community colleges has included experienced musicians, non-majors, first-generation college students, and students encountering formal musical study for the first time. These experiences have taught me that confidence develops alongside competence. Clear explanations, scaffolded activities, repeated encounters with important ideas, and opportunities for discussion and reflection allow students to develop increasingly sophisticated skills without lowering academic expectations. I want students to experience intellectual challenge as an invitation to grow rather than a barrier to participation.

As a musicologist, I am especially interested in helping students understand relationships among musical sound, historical context, and cultural meaning. My scholarship on narrative, memory, and twentieth- and twenty-first-century music informs this approach, but I encourage students to develop interpretations that extend beyond my own research interests. Across courses in music history, popular music, and music theory, I encourage students to consider how musical works participate in changing aesthetic traditions, technologies, institutions, identities, and cultural conversations while developing the listening and analytical skills necessary to engage music critically.

I also understand teaching as extending beyond the communication of course content to the mentorship of students as developing musicians, scholars, and thinkers. I seek to recognize students' individual strengths and interests while providing the combination of support and challenge necessary for continued growth. Mentoring may involve helping a student gain confidence with unfamiliar musical concepts, guiding a developing research question, encouraging greater independence in analytical or creative work, or helping students recognize connections between their academic interests and future goals. Across these interactions, I aim to foster intellectual curiosity, responsibility, confidence, and an increasing capacity for independent thought.

Ultimately, I hope students leave my courses with greater confidence in their ability to listen closely, ask productive questions, evaluate evidence, and articulate their own interpretations. My goal is not simply to teach students what music has meant, but to give them the tools to investigate how and why music creates meaning across different historical moments and communities.