

Statement of Teaching Philosophy Parker Smith

Learning is a two way street and a lifelong process. In my ideal teaching environment, both teacher and student will always be learning. The quest for improvement will never end. If a teacher were to simply rest on his chops, not practice, perform or improve, then he/she has no business teaching.

My teaching philosophy is similar to my playing philosophy. Always “play up”, play with people that are more experienced than you any chance you get. That way you will always be learning. I also push myself to “teach up” and seek out students that will be a challenge for me.

Fortunately, there are plenty of pedagogical materials available. It is the teacher’s responsibility to sift through the available materials and find the methods that are most appropriate. Since music is constantly evolving, the methods that I have previously used may or may not be most effective for one of my students. I believe it is the teacher’s duty to stay up to date with current trends and developments within the idiom without falling prey to passing musical fads.

Guitar can be a confusing landscape and I believe that by introducing material that is within or just above a student’s abilities the teacher can achieve the greatest results; too much information can overwhelm and confuse the student. The music teacher and more specifically, a guitar teacher has great responsibility not only to uphold the tradition of the art form, but also to push it forward and encourage the next generation. With so much information available it is even more important now that the material is presented in a truthful manner. Composing, performing and being actively involved in the guitar community can achieve this.

My greatest teachers weren’t the ones that showed me a simple solution. They were the ones that would give me a concept or the tools I needed to learn it on my own. Every individual is unique and learning concepts that may work for one individual may not be applicable to another. I try and tailor my teaching to the level of experience and personality of each student.

With so many distractions these days, students can have a tough time getting motivated to practice. With so many recordings available at their fingertips, students are faced with the question of “what do I have to say that is meaningful?” It is important to encourage your students to help them find their voice. This can be a real challenge and something every musician struggles with. We learn to speak by imitating the voices we hear around us, but eventually with enough practice we find our own. This is the end goal in music and while imitation is necessary initially, it is my ultimate goal to help students develop their own unique voice.