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### Teaching Statement

The study of voice is as rewarding as it is challenging. Unlike other instruments, the human voice is largely a hidden entity made up of complicated anatomical mechanisms that cannot always be accessed by deliberate manipulation. Thus, to teach someone to sing well, a teacher must help a student make sense of sounds, sensations, and physical effort. Furthermore, singing is by nature, multi-disciplinary, and requires knowledge on a broad range of subjects – language, poetry, anatomy, and technique to name a few. My goal as a professional teacher of singing has been to simplify the physical processes and approach adjacent subjects one at a time, until they are embodied enough to become simultaneous.

Though I have experience on a broad range of subjects, I specialize in the vocal literature of Spain and Latin America. I have been able to carve out a space for myself in the world of classical music by doing so and strive to help my students find what they are passionate about. I have found that treating a student as an individual, with interests and challenges outside of my classroom and discipline, has improved my instruction and fostered a healthy teacher-student relationship. For example, one of my current students is an actress and teacher who uses her voice daily, to project above a crowd. Together we have worked on practicing vocal hygiene and as a result she has been able to maintain her voice throughout a semester of student teaching and a lead role in a production of *Puffs* – all this despite a history of vocal misuse and injury. This semester I am teaching two instrumentalists who would like to apply what they learn in voice lessons to their primary instruments. I have made it my mission to learn about the technique for their primary instrument and incorporate it into their vocal technique and vice versa. These students have expressed that their breath control through a phrase has improved in the trumpet and saxophone as they have incorporated what they have learned about the vocal and respiratory mechanisms to their playing. I have also taught students interested in commercial music careers. With my mentorship they have been able to develop a personal brand and begin booking gigs. Letting students' goals guide my private instruction has made precious lesson time more efficient and productive.

During my teaching career I have had the pleasure of working with a variety of students. Some have been seasoned musicians while others were beginning singers. Some have been English language learners, non-traditional students, or students with disabilities. Differentiation has been integral in my approach. For students who are kinesthetically aware, we focus on sensations and reproducing these sensations with the aid of exercise bands, straw phonation, wine corks in the mouth for space, etc. For students who are visual learners, I often have them sing in front of a mirror, camera, or mirror their actions myself. For aural learners, I teach active listening, use modeling, and encourage them to audio record their lessons and practice sessions. It is a *mistake* however, to assume that all of us are only one kind of learner. Though I may rely heavily on certain kinds of exercises or methods based on a particular student's predilection, my methods in a single lesson will draw from all types of learning styles. At the end of each lesson, we talk about what proved useful in the lesson and what they might try in the practice room so that the student has a plan for what to do next.

Students from many different backgrounds have been able to succeed in my group voice class where in addition to the instruction being differentiated, the assessments are as well. Students are given the choice to demonstrate what they know through video recordings, audio recordings, or written assignments. This makes it possible for English language learners and students with disabilities to show their mastery of a skill without being graded on their ability to articulate it in perfect written

English. Students are also able to choose their own repertoire with guidance from me. As they have chosen some of their own repertoire, they have been able to develop their resonance tuning, breathing, and posture while being eased into the process through a familiar language or musical style. As they become more comfortable with learning new music and incorporating vocal technique, I have introduced classical repertoire that is well suited to their ability level, vocal timbre, and interests. I believe that classical music is for everyone! My interest and affinity for repertoire from underrepresented groups has allowed me to find repertoire that excites all my students, but specifically those students who are people of color or feel like outsiders to the classical music world. One such student was pleasantly surprised the first time she sang repertoire from Florence Price, a composer whose identity mirrored her own. The experience of singing her music has been a gateway to art song literature.

As any musician knows, a single, minutes-long performance is the culmination of hours of practice. In my group voice class and private lessons, I have prepared students to meet the challenges of a live juried or assessed performance by scaffolding this monumental undertaking. Each of my students keeps a practice log which helps them maintain consistent daily practice routines. For class voice students, smaller assignments that focus on a single topic such as memorization, resonance, or breathing are also designed to help them add all the components, one at a time, for a successful single performance. It is also imperative that students have opportunities practicing “performance” in studio class, where they can receive constructive feedback and get comfortable being uncomfortable. Together, we approach performance in a multi-disciplinary way - using what we understand about both performance psychology and classical theatre education. In my lessons, students become familiar with the physiology of performance anxiety and utilize tools like breathing exercises, visualization, and journaling to address it. My private and class voice students create characters for each of their pieces with clear acting objectives, audience, and setting which they rehearse visualizing. During a recent lesson where I was working with a private voice student, I noticed that the performance, though beautifully sung, was dramatically “one-note.” We went through the usual routine of figuring out to whom she was singing. She decided she was talking to herself. When I asked her what she wanted, she said that she wanted her character to stop feeling sorry for herself. But when I asked her how she and the audience would know that her character had stopped feeling sorry for herself, she decided that she wanted her character to stand up taller and walk away self-assured. Going this extra step of having an objective that was observable made all the difference for this student. She was able to create a story arc in the song that led to this outcome and made the delivery that much more impactful.

At this time, I am prepared to teach private voice lessons, class voice, voice pedagogy, undergraduate song literature, undergraduate opera literature, undergraduate diction classes, acting for singing, and contemporary/commercial vocal methods. I would also be extremely interested in offering upper-level courses in Spanish and Latin American song literature. I believe that each of these courses reflect both the broad and specialized skills which I have to offer. However, the work is never done! I hope to both improve the skills I have and develop new ones. One such skill I am hoping to improve, is my pedagogy of the adult-male singing voice. Most of my work up until this point has been with the treble voice. This semester I have five men in my studio, and I am researching methods for smoothing register shifts and increasing range. I also actively seek out student feedback through course and midterm evaluations. It is my goal, that in doing so, I can design instructional time to be as useful, personalized, and supportive as possible.