

# THIAGO ANCELMO DE SOUZA, CLARINET

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## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

I enjoy guiding students to achieve their goals and overcome their barriers. It is the most satisfying part of being an educator. I have seen students grow as artists and individuals throughout my career. Teaching also helps me grow both as a performer and as a person. Breaking down a concept to explain it to inexperienced students has helped me to explore new ways of approaching problems. Interaction with people from lots of different backgrounds has helped me learn to better facilitate the learning process for each individual student.

Transitioning to the independence of college life can lead to challenges that interfere with a student's development as a musician. Students need a mentor who is sensitive to this problem. It is therefore mandatory to provide a safe environment where students feel welcome and supported regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation or skill level. I create this environment in my classroom by treating students with respect. I encourage open dialogue in the studio by identifying learning barriers and working together with the student to find the best solution for them. To this end, I have always been proactive and flexible about office hours. A level of support is necessary to facilitate the learning process, as are individualized lesson plans.

Everyone can improve and achieve success if they are provided the opportunities. It is important to provide materials that are interesting to individual students, allowing them to explore what they are passionate about, while meeting a student's needs and capacity. I encourage students to be proactive and curious about music, especially when they are working on their repertoire. I suggest that they explore other disciplines in the arts, like painting, literature and architecture, or even other fields such as science, sports, or pop culture. Music is never written in a vacuum; there is a sociohistorical context to every piece. Students must be well-rounded in order to understand concepts, historical periods, styles and culture. Students in this kind of environment are more self-sufficient, enthusiastic, engaged and eager to continue growing and succeeding.

In the Fall of 2015, I was asked to teach the clarinet studio at the University of Iowa, teaching 10 undergraduates and directing weekly seminars. A hard-working student was having difficulty with her clarinet embouchure. She did not have the endurance to play longer than 30 minutes, which caused her serious frustration. I sat down with her and listened to her goals, and together we developed a plan of study. I changed her repertoire and *étude* books to better match her needs, which her previous teacher refused to do. By changing the repertoire, I automatically removed the failure stigma that she constantly experienced during her lessons. I chose a repertoire that was below college level, but I knew it would touch the concepts she needed to work on. I kept her motivated during lessons, doing activities together

such as playing duets and improvisations. At the end of the Fall semester, her clarinet embouchure was fixed. She had mastered the required repertoire and covered the *études* and concepts I had planned for the semester. At the undergraduate final juries, she was chosen by the woodwind faculty as the winner for the outstanding clarinet jury performance. I treat each student this way, as an individual with individual strengths and weaknesses that need to be addressed.

Although it is important to meet a student's needs, the student must be willing to put in the hard work. I push myself to be a better musician and educator, and I remain eager to learn and evolve. I try to inspire my students to pursue excellence as well, independent of their skill level or specific aspirations in music. I tell my students that I am available to support, guide and lead them but that they must take responsibility for their own careers. There are many paths to a career in music, be it teaching, performing or managing. I discuss career development goals with each of my students, highlighting the steps to take to make their dreams a reality. I never want a student to leave my studio without a clear picture of their path to success.

I see my students as capable individuals. I do not hesitate to make unconventional decisions if those decisions will result in student improvement. I love to teach and love to see my students succeed. I work diligently to make this happen.