

DR. VON HANSEN

ADJUNCT PROFESSOR OF PERCUSSION
FRIENDS UNIVERSITY

10611 W NANTUCKET
WICHITA, KS 67212
VONHANSEN413@GMAIL.COM
785-766-4647

Teaching Philosophy

As organized sound, music possesses the ability to represent the ineffable, resulting in its profoundly deep impact on the human experience. Cultures are defined by it, socialization is accompanied by it, and individual identities are shaped by it. As the only purely aural medium, music develops in us a unique understanding of the world. Through music we develop an appreciation of aesthetic beauty. We embrace our creativity as bestowed upon us by the subjectivity of music. Though the interpretation of sound is personal, music is a shared experience. To study music is to learn to communicate through sound.

The goal of music education is to help students develop the ability to communicate through music. Achieving this goal requires the teacher and students to hone the technical skills that will help them develop the vocabulary needed to be fluent communicators of music. Students cultivate these skills through practice and successful practice habits, which in turn develop focus, organization, and task analysis. Though technique is essential to music performance, a music educator must also foster creativity, musicality and individual interpretation in their students. The students own experiences and influences are what make their musical voice unique. Music is often performed in groups; therefore, an educator must instill the essential ensemble skills of responsibility, respect, communication and compromise in their students. Education is not only acquiring knowledge about specific subjects but also understanding oneself and how to interact with others. Music allows students to develop not only the techniques for communicating through music but skills that will help them be successful in life.

My goals for my students include:

1. Demonstrating a technical proficiency on core percussion instruments and by doing so developing mastery on unfamiliar instruments.
2. Breaking tasks down into smaller defining components.
3. Exhibiting knowledge of percussion repertoire and pedagogy.

Percussion is unique in the sense that it requires the mastery of several instruments, each requiring specific techniques and methods of tone production. The core percussion instruments include snare drum, keyboards, timpani and common orchestral instruments, such as bass drum, cymbals, tambourine and triangle. Students will be required to demonstrate proper playing techniques and grips required to create the ideal sounds on each of these instruments. Assignment of challenging studies and repertoire will expose students to the distinctive techniques for each of these instruments, and the analysis of recordings will guide tone production. By focusing on developing the

two main components of an instrument, tone and technique, one can create a system for learning any new instrument quickly and efficiently.

The process of analyzing the defining characteristics of a task is essential to creating effective practice habits. A snare drum etude, for example, is comprised of several technical requirements, such as flams, rolls, and soft playing. In order to perform the etude a student must first isolate and develop these basic technical components. Then students must analyze their music and discern the especially difficult aspects of the work. One way of accomplishing this task is by developing exercises or warm up routines that incorporate these technical flaws, creating a means for accomplishing the larger goal of performing the etude. This process of task analysis allows for more efficient focused practicing.

Educated musicians must be well versed in the repertoire that defines their instrument. Students will be exposed to important orchestral excerpts and solo repertoire as well as composers such as Edgard Varese, John Cage, Steve Reich and Iannis Xenakis who were responsible for shaping percussion music. Along with knowledge of the history of percussion music, students will also be encouraged to seek out, listen to, and perform music by active composers. Percussion is unique because it is among the most recent instruments to be developed; therefore, percussion as an art form is still evolving. Contemporary percussionists should take on the challenge of advancing percussion music by exploring and expanding the current boundaries of the medium.

Sharing knowledge with future generations involves an understanding of pedagogy. Students must be able to pass on their knowledge in a clear and concise manner. I will require my students to engage in musical conversations with me in lessons as well as with their classmates. Discussing music verbally allows students to form opinions about music and learn to share these opinions in ways that make sense to other people. To practice this skill students will perform for each other and engage in critical analysis of their peer's performance. As a teacher I am ultimately responsible for helping students present feedback in a clear, helpful and pedagogically sound way.

Students under my direction will develop the technical vocabulary and creative interpretation necessary to communicate through music. They will be well versed in the defining characteristics of essential percussion instruments, task analysis, and percussion repertoire and pedagogy. These skills enhance student's ability to have deep connections with audience members but they also apply to the successful analysis and completion of any task. Students leaving my program will not only be highly trained musicians but they will have learned the essential techniques for success in any career.