



# THE STUDIO OF JOSEPH HELINSKI

OFFERING VOICE & PIANO LESSONS

Thank you for your interest in taking music lessons from me! Choosing a music teacher is a very important decision and it is my hope that your musical education be an enriching one. Please look through the information below and let me know about any questions you may have concerning my teaching methods, philosophies, or expectations.

## **About Me**

My name is Joseph (please feel free to call me that-no need to be as formal as Mr. Helinski!) and I am a graduate of the Pennsylvania State University where I earned my Bachelors of Music in Vocal Performance. I began teaching private voice lessons while I was in high school and absolutely love teaching voice and piano. I have had the opportunity to perform quite a bit with the Pittsburgh Opera, Pittsburgh Symphony, and summer of 2017 I performed at the world renown Aspen Music Festival and School. I am a chorister with the Pittsburgh Opera and director of music at South Hills Catholic Academy.

## **My Teaching Philosophy**

My philosophy on music education is quite simple. The ultimate goal is to empower my students to their fullest potential through the vehicle of exceptional music making. I believe it is important to point out that not all of my students will become music majors or build a career in music. Building musical stars is not my goal and never will be. A quality music education is valuable no matter what my students may end up doing in life. This quality education begins with challenging but appropriate repertoire and a healthy singing technique. If there is one thing I insist on of my singers it is that they sing with a healthy technique. From this healthy technique, we can begin to discover the music on a deeper level and learn transferable skills that will flow over into all aspects of your life.

## **My Expectations**

As your teacher, I learn just as much from you as I hope you learn from me. To help aid in the educational process I have expectations for both myself and you. I like to be clear from the beginning what they are so that we can get started on the right foot. What you should expect from me

- That I will challenge you...I will never ask you to do anything that I believe you cannot do. I am a reasonable man but at the same time you should expect me to challenge you. If a song or exercise I assign seems too difficult just let me know and we can discuss from there.
- That I will communicate with you...we may do some exercises or warm ups that seem quite odd to you. I will always do my best to explain to you why we are doing what we are doing and how this will benefit you.
- That I will question you...I like to ask questions. It is my belief that too often students are worried about the “right” or “wrong” answers. Singing is an art-there is no such thing as a “right” or “wrong” answer! I will question you and challenge you to think outside of the box. I don’t care what you say-I just like to hear your thoughts!
- That I be reasonable with you...life is busy, I get it. I will never assign busy work just because. I will ask you to practice outside of our lesson time (you can’t improve from just one hour a week!) however, anything I assign will be only for your own good. I will only give you things that will benefit you in your growth as a vocal student.

What I expect of you

- That you be prepared...being prepared takes on many forms. I know that life has a million things going on but when you work with me I expect that you be mentally present for our 60 minutes together. This includes doing all assignments and exercises outside of our lesson time, voice recording our lessons if this aids you in your practice, not checking your cell phone, and having a pencil on your stand ready to take notes that I give you.
- That you communicate with me...if you plan on missing a lesson I expect that you let me know. You have my cell phone and email and I expect that you notify me as soon as possible. I will do the same to you if I ever need to cancel. If during your practice over the course of the week something doesn’t feel right or you are confused I also expect that you communicate with me right away so that I can help you and bad habits do not form.
- That you try your best...As stated above-I don’t expect you to be Beethoven. You are going to make mistakes and so am I. We are only human. However, I ask that you try your best in all that you do whether it be learning a new song, or maybe some new exercises. I will never be upset if you try and don’t succeed. I do get upset however when some students don’t even try. It is a waste of my time and yours.

## **Lessons**

Lessons will usually begin with some warm-ups or vocal exercises. These serve two purposes-to physically warm up the voice and to practice and reinforce healthy singing technique. In the first half of the lesson I will also integrate some musicianship exercises in the form of sight-reading or ear training. These concepts that we work on in our warm ups carry over into the second half of the lesson where we will work on literature. I will assign appropriate literature and will invite you to bring in anything you are interested in or are singing elsewhere to work on. I will most of the time be able to provide a hard copy or PDF of the pieces that we will be working on.

During your first lesson I am happy for you to invite parents or guardians to sit in so that they can see and get a feel for how I work. After that first lesson I ask that we keep to the student and me one on one as this is most effective for the learning process. If parents or guardians are eager to see what the student has been working on, I am more than happy every so often to invite them in for the last 5 minutes so that they can see what concepts we have been learning.

## **Scheduling**

Each fall and spring I will send out a Google Spreadsheet with lesson slots on it. It will be your responsibility to sign up for a weekly lesson time. The time and day you select will be your lesson time for the semester. At the beginning of each month we will compare calendars to make sure that we are set for the month. This time can be used to reschedule around previously scheduled school related activities, sports, or family events. During this time, I will also communicate with you any need to reschedule your lesson based on my calendar. Occasionally, I will need to reschedule lessons due to my schedule at the opera or other commitments, however, I try to avoid moving your lesson time if at all possible. If you find that you must cancel your lesson for any other reason not discussed with me at the beginning of the month, you must notify me before noon on the day of your lesson. If you fail to notify me of your cancellation before noon on the day of your lesson you will be charged for that lesson time.

All of this boils down to one concept-Communication! I ask that you please let me know as soon as you know about any adjustments we need to make to the schedule. This is not just in fairness to me, but to the other students in the studio. All lessons will take place in my home studio, unless otherwise notified.

## **Payment**

I find that one 60-minute lesson a week is most effective for my students. I charge \$60 for each 60-minute lesson. You will find that this is extremely competitive pricing for the Pittsburgh area. You may pay one lesson at a time, or prepay for the entire month of lessons. Payment is cash only.

**If you as a student or parent have any questions at all please feel free to contact me.**

**I look forward to working with you!**