

Teaching Philosophy | Deonté Warren

*“There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.”*

-Edith Wharton

I learned early in life the importance of joy. I am the son of a teenaged, single mother who never had much by way of comforts or material things, but we did share a deep love of music. Whether we were sitting at bus stops or walking the miles between home and our daily destinations we always had music. That music was our source of joy and it carried us through some unbelievable challenges. Through these experiences, I have learned the things that are most important to me: hard work, discipline, respect, and most of all joy. These are the things I strive to leave with every student I teach. Whether I am teaching a group musical theatre course or private voice lessons, the goal is always to give students a combination of technical, artistic, and collaborative tools.

I believe the greatest area for growth in our industry is in accessibility, diversity, and inclusion. Many diversity initiatives revolve around making our stages and screens more diverse, which is vital and necessary work. But I am constantly seeking ways to extend our efforts of inclusion and creation of opportunity beyond the stage and into our creative teams, technical teams, craftspeople, and producers. How do we create opportunity industry wide? I think the answer to that question is ever evolving and differs for every community. But it is important to me to be always seeking answers to this all-important question.

My absolute favorite thing about being a teacher is watching students discover their power as artists. My first voice student was an actress tasked to be the Effie alternate in *Dreamgirls, The Musical* on tour. In addition to performing the role when the lead actress called in sick, she was also slated to perform the role for every matinee of the run. Together we worked on basic alignment, breath coordination, and acoustics which helped her soar through the show. Watching this young actress use those tools to discover the power her voice already possessed was absolutely thrilling. Everything she needed to succeed at her job was already within her. There was no magic spell, secret formula, or neat trick to get her there. She only needed hard work, dedication, a willingness to learn, and absolute joy in the process to achieve her goals.

Students in my care will find themselves working harder than ever, with passion and fervor to reach their goals. To me, that is joy. With this joy intact, my students learn more than the best strategies for singing, acting, and dancing, they learn that through hard work, discipline, respect, and most of all joy they already possess everything necessary to reach their goals both as artists and in life.

