

Becoming Our Own Best Teachers as Artists

IDRS 2024

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Introduction

My theme in teaching is to help each student become their own Best Teacher as an Artist, as I too am in the pursuit of this.

- At the beginning of every fall semester, I present a series of classes for my Jacobs students to cover the main points of my philosophy, so my students have the tools they need to become their own Best Teacher.
- These classes are entitled the Good Basic Foundation Series.
 - The classes cover various aspects needed for playing with excellence and being successful in our field.
- Today's lecture is a condensed version of some of these classes to share with you, my IDRS family, for inspiration and exploration!

Links located in the [Teaching Section](#) of lindaastrommen.com

The Theme of Becoming Our Own Best Teachers as Artists

What does it mean “to become our own best teacher”?

- To gain the tools to teach oneself.
- To become independent in our work.
- To take responsibility for our own talent and growth.

Why is it important?

- For students, to reach their greatest potential.
- For professionals, to sustain our jobs!

The Four Needs of Playing

To be successful and excellent in our field!

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Command of the Instrument | Musical Maturity as an Artist |
| Become a Great Reed Maker | Personal Qualities |

1. Command of the Instrument

What does it mean to have “command” of something?

- Mastery of; to be knowledgeable about; skilled at a particular thing

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Control | 3. Efficiency |
| 2. Technique | 4. Ease |
| The Five T's: Tone Tuning Technique/Facility Tonguing Timing | Goal:  |

- Musical Vision as the motivation for command of the instrument.
- Fastest way to develop command of the instrument → Establish a daily warm up

2a. Musical Maturity as an Artist*

What does an artist do?

- Expresses
- Creates
- Re-creates (interprets)
- Connects
- Transforms
- Teaches

What does it mean to be an Artist as a Musician? And to be Musically Mature?

*To become a great interpreter to tell the composer's story.

- With Integrity to the Composer as Re-Creators
- With Continuity and Cohesiveness
- With Confidence, Authority, Sincerity, and Love
- With Excellence
- Through use of dynamics, colors, articulation, vibrato, inflection, and expression – all to serve the musical message.

**The goal of the other three needs of playing*

2b. Musical Maturity as an Artist

How to Become Our Own Best Teacher with Musical Maturity?

And Learn to be a Great Artist Interpreter?

- To have a system of Approach: Intuition, Inform, Informed Intuition with Performing (GSG)
- Use the Six Questions of Interpretation to Develop Tools as Our Own Best Artist Interpreter; See [Becoming Your Own Best Teacher In Artistry and Interpretation](#)
- Explore Repertoire in Layers; See [Recital Success](#)

3. Become a Great Reed Maker

- Sustain a lifetime/career
- Important tools:
 - Musical vision should be the inspiration and motivation for reed needs
 - Keep the end result in mind
 - Practice an hour before finishing reeds
 - Use a set of objective tests to be objective!
 - Keep a log to learn, explore, experiment, and develop consistency
 - Understand the 8 Needs to Become a Great Reed Maker
 - Choose one or two for Growth.

**Never take no for an answer from an inanimate object!* - John Mack*

See *Understanding the Oboe Reed* by Graham Salter, Chapter 3 by Elaine Douvas and Linda Strommen

8 Needs to be a Great Reed Maker:

1. Knowledge

2. Vision

3. Analysis

4. Skill – (Eye, Hand, Knife)

5. Good Equipment

6. Planning, Patience, Perseverance

7. Time

8. Speed

4. Personal Qualities for Success

What qualities are important to be a successful musician?

- Passion
- Perseverance/Resilience/Patience
- Hard/Smart Work
- Intrinsic Motivation
- Personal Integrity
- Being a Good Colleague/People Skills
- Valuing Excellence
- Others?

Choose a quality!

Reviewing the Four Needs of Playing

To be successful and excellent in our field!

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Command of the Instrument | Musical Maturity as an Artist |
| Become a Great Reed Maker | Personal Qualities |

Planning Session Growth Grid

The Ten Magical Tools
for
Becoming Our Own Best Teachers as Artists

1. Listen to Lots of Music!

Why?

- To build a musical vision.
- To ignite our imagination and inspire our hearts.
- To open our ears to new ways to learn from the more experienced.
- To give us something to imitate

Considerations:

- Two ways to listen: Active/Passive
- Internalize what we hear

2. Sing Our Repertoire and Then Sing Internally

Why?

- Great way to explore interpretive ideas.
- Trains our ear to become more sensitive.
- Simplifies production.
- Will sound more vocal.
- To be able to listen ahead.
- If we sing internally the audience will too!

Considerations:

- Our voice can be Our Own Best Teacher to imitate!

3a. Establish a Good Daily Warm-Up

Why?

- The best tool to develop command of the instrument.
- To build and hone skills for a lifetime.

Benefits:

- Fluidity in any key to learn music faster.
- Confidence with skills.
- Understanding the body to sustain healthy production.
- Endurance.
- Overcome the technical challenges to focus on the music.
- Allows imagination to have the tools to freely express the music.

3b. Establish a Good Daily Warm-Up

Considerations:

- Explore physical building blocks of technique.
 - Posture/Hand position
 - Breathing/Air Use/Support
 - Embouchure
 - Tongue (Articulation)
- Explore musical building blocks in a systematic routine.
 - Long tones
 - Scales
 - Slur shapes/arpeggios
 - Articulation
- Early in the day – to remind the body.
- Adapt according to the repertoire needs.

Refer to: [Components of a Good Basic Warm-Up](#) and [Mini Warm-Up Plan](#)

4. Transfer Concepts to Similar Scenarios

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Musically | Example: Mozart Quartet Style -> Mozart Concerto, Mozart Symphonies, Other Classical Works |
| Technically | Example: Warm-up principles transferred to repertoire |
| Reeds | Example: Learn from successes and failures |

5. Use an Oboe and Reed Journal

- To track concepts of growth.
- Lesson notes, lesson plans.*
- Masterclass Notes.
- Quotes and Inspirations.
- Summary of Concepts.*

- Create a reed journal to track reeds and learn from the results.

6. Enjoy and Learn from Colleagues

- Half the fun of our profession!
- Live life together as we develop our craft and art.
- Celebrate our individual special purpose in the world and help others to find theirs!

7. Study Repertoire as an Artist

- Study the Composer, Style, and Background of the Work.
- Wrestle with the music.
- Dig deep for recreating with Integrity, Empathy, Imagination, and Conviction.
- Perform with Authority from the Informed Intuitive.

8. Record Ourselves

- To hear what we are really doing!

- Listen back in layers*:

Musicality

Rhythm

Sound

Intonation

Technique

**Credit to Nathan Hughes*

9. Memorize and Transpose

- To free the ear.
- To really know a piece.
- To develop fluidity in any key.

10. Read about Music, Artists, and Composers

- To be Inspired and Learn from the Best!
- To gain multiple perspectives.

Review The Ten Magical Tools

The Magic Ten “Own Best Teacher/Artist Tools”

1. Listen to Lots of Music!
2. Sing Our Repertoire and Then Sing Internally
3. Establish a Good Daily Warm-Up
 - a. To develop Command of the Instrument
 - b. To explore Physical Building Blocks of Technique
 - c. To explore Musical Building Blocks
4. Transfer Concepts to Similar Scenarios
5. Use an Oboe and Reed Journal
6. Enjoy and Learn from Colleagues
7. Study Repertoire as an Artist
 - a. To develop tools as your own Best Artist/Interpreter
8. Record
9. Memorize and Transpose
10. Read about Music, Artists, and Composers- Be inspired and learn from the best!

Choose a Tool for Inspiration!

Practical Planning and Application

- Weekly planning time as an artist
 - Set goals in each area
 - Set up week's practice log and reed journal
 - Re-plan before each practice session or the end of the previous session
- Career and Personal Development
 - Refer to: [Career Planning \(Dreams, Aspirations, and Timeline\)](#)

Final Thoughts

- Questions?
- Best Wishes as we join in our quests to Become Our Own Best Teachers as Artists!
- Thank you for the opportunity to share my tools with you. They continue to re-inspire me and my students!

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