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Instrumental Pedagogy
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Kohut Chapter 1

Basic Concepts of Perceptual-Motor Learning & NLP

Five desirable traits in teaching:

- Passion/enthusiasm/encouragement
- Patience
- Balance between technical & musical teaching
- Self-awareness
- Creativity

Five less-desirable traits in teaching:

- Aloofness (and a general lack of trying to relate)
- Assumption on an individual's background, circumstances
- Poor technique
- Close-minded/'my-way-or-the-highway' teaching
- Too much praise or too much critique

The Natural Learning Process can absolutely be applied to instrumental music learning. There are three main concepts of NLP: mental imagery, imitation, and trial-and-error practice. Mental imagery comes in many forms of music teaching and learning through listening to live or recorded performances, visually experiencing play on instruments by our peers and mentors, and playing with a community of instrumentalists in rehearsals and performances. I believe one of the strongest uses of mental imagery in teaching is teacher demonstration. The student learns, in detail (because the teacher is a few feet away!), the visual, kinesthetic, and aural expectations. We can strengthen this mental imagery in teaching by showing expectations in a variety of settings or

across many models. Examples not only from the teacher but from peers and other professionals in the field of study.

I have observed imitation in teaching mostly by call and response strategies in the lesson. The teacher plays and the student must match. Some other ways to incorporate imitation learning is by listening to recordings that represent a desired sound and having the student reproduce, watching movements and letting the student copy them in a mirror or video. I think many humans use words as a way to describe why, how, and what they do to achieve something. Kohut notes that verbal instruction can muddy the way to an end goal, but words in verbal instruction doesn't always have to be a sentence and words don't always have to be academic. One of my teaching mentors very masterfully uses words in teaching. She puts them into a sort of rhythm when instructing. I am not sure I will be able to write this out here, so I'll try to remember to demonstrate in our next class. I have also observed words as reminders, sort of anchors, in teaching. When I say "socks" that student is quickly reminded to get the playing feet together. Are there other ways to do this? Sure, but it beats me moving their feet for them. All in all, I do think words can be powerful and I also think they can be confusing. I guess that means, be intentional with they words you use in teaching!

Trail-and-error translates to me as learning what works and what does not. As far as using this process in teaching, I think it must be handled carefully. How do we get a chance to do trial-and-error from the start without creating bad habits or faulty expectations? We can provide scary performance opportunities where the student learns quickly through experience, but I think this process can be used for smaller concepts in the weekly lesson as well. I'd like to think a sense of exploration can facilitate this learning process. For example, if I want a student to find the desired contact point, we play with the "wrong" ones and the "right" ones. They get immediate feedback of what works and what does not. They can hear, see - even feel sometimes - what does not get them the desired sound, look, or feeling.

Coming from a Suzuki teaching experience, but not a Suzuki learning experience (I started my training about three and a half years ago and started playing in the schools in sixth grade), I feel a lot of validity in what Kohut is writing about as a teacher. However, I wonder how similar the learning processes that I experienced in the schools are compared to the NLP. Are there other

effective learning processes outside these three? I'll keep thinking back to my school experiences as a young student.