

**STOKING THE FLAMES:  
TEACHING TIPS TO ENSURE EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT**

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- I. The importance of emotional investment and engagement in performance
  - A. The most obvious difference between music lessons and the academic classes our students take is that performing requires deep and constant emotional investment.
  - B. The driving force behind convincing, communicative music making is passionate personal involvement in every sound produced.
  - C. Emotional involvement must be taught and nurtured from a young age, and from the earliest stages of learning each new piece of music.
- II. Emotional outpouring doesn't come naturally to most students
  - A. Teachers must find imaginative ways to "light a fire" inside each student.
  - B. Regardless of students' innate personalities, they must be like actors in portraying the full range of emotions the music requires.
  - C. Wrenching students out of their "comfort zones" may be necessary.
  - D. We should encourage "socially unacceptable" emotional extremes.
  - E. Students may strive to please their teachers with "correctness," while we must aim to inspire more moving and profound musicianship.
- III. Teaching tactics to promote greater emotional involvement
  - A. Utilize bodily movement, such as a broad sweeping gesture to encourage flowing through phrases with conviction.
  - B. Sing (in full voice!) to help create melodic lines with dynamic shape and natural vocal character.
  - C. Clap the pulse and dance, even in a rudimentary way, through rhythmically energized music.
  - D. Remind and reinforce that weekly lessons are a template for daily practice, always *modeling* the sustained emotional involvement we ask of our students.
  - E. In practice and even in performance, students needing to stoke their internal fire may close their eyes and visualize their teachers' methods and tactics listed above.
- IV. Some final thoughts
  - A. Remember that progress may be slow, especially with those who are particularly introverted.

- B. Students will eventually understand that we expect them to do far more than simply following all score indications - they must tap into what is *implied* by the score, and bear in mind the composers' fundamental need to express something that couldn't be expressed in mere words.
- C. Passionate involvement in music making will eventually become a permanent ingrained habit, similar to those students develop to address various technical issues, fingerings, rhythmic exactitude, etc.
- D. Artistic passion is contagious, and it cannot be faked.
- E. This is an essential element of what I call "virtuoso" teaching, directly analogous to the virtuoso performing we all acknowledge.

V. Q and A