

## **Teaching Philosophy**

### **Jacob Shipley**

The voice is an integral part of our identity as performers, but also as people. I have had my own voice journey as a musical theatre actor leading the First National Tour of a Broadway musical, recording and performing my original Folk-Rock music, performing in wedding bands, and even singing baby music classes in public parks. But the part of my journey that brought me to teaching voice was an injury I sustained in 2021.

While at a final callback for a production of *Rock of Ages*, I suddenly lost my voice and believe, in retrospect, that I may have experienced a vocal hemorrhage. It was terrifying and while I received excellent care and support from my ENT, Voice Therapist, and my own voice teacher, I was determined to understand the inner intricacies of how injury really happens and what we as singers can do to prevent it. I received my Certificate in Vocology from NYU with the intent of sharing the knowledge of how the voice functions with my students and train them for long and vibrant careers.

The musical theatre world has a tendency of, unintentionally, putting performers into boxes or “types” that they then feel like they must conform to. However, every body, mind, and voice is unique and conformity can lead to issues like vocal injury and loss of identity. While I have had a successful career as a musical theatre actor, I mostly sing contemporary music like Rock, Pop, Folk, and Blues. Through teaching contemporary styles, I help both new and experienced singers alike to find the way that their voices naturally want to operate. In doing so, my students not only have a healthier emotional connection to their voices, but they also understand how their voices work on a deeper physical level. This makes them strong, confident, and flexible performers.

My lessons often start with a check in and then getting into the body with stretching and some meditative breathing. After settling, we warm up with easy vocalizations, some mild resonance work, establishing strength in both our lower and upper registers, and mixing through the passaggio. However, not every lesson with every student is like this. It’s important to adapt my approach for the voice right in front of me rather than applying some template that I’ve decided works best for everyone.

When working on repertoire, I prioritize materials that my students want to sing, often encouraging them to bring in their own suggestions. A common phrase you will hear in my lessons is “what do you feel about that?” Students are encouraged to figure out what they do or don’t like about their voices or a performance. It’s necessary for me as a teacher because my goal is to always help my students achieve their goals. If I like the way a student sounds and think it’s sustainable, but they say it’s not right, then I have not done my job. Only when a student likes the way they sound, feels like it’s sustainable, and believes that it’s right for their audience have we found success.

In addition to my Certificate in Vocology from NYU, I also have a BFA in Musical Theatre from Ithaca College, and a Certificate in Vocal Pedagogy from the CCM Institute at Shenandoah University. I have studied aspects of Bel Canto, Linklater, Speech Level Singing, and more. I am a member of NATS, PAVA, and AEA.