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00:00:00,580 --> 00:00:04,600
That's a really great point for us to be aware that for the students,

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00:00:04,600 --> 00:00:10,780
this is a really important period of evolution for them as they're
transitioning into careers and

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00:00:10,780 --> 00:00:25,210
this level of study and and supporting that evolving and talking about it
as a process in itself.

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00:00:25,210 --> 00:00:34,120
Hi, everyone, and welcome to the staff lounge, a place to unwind, reflect
and connect with the faculty at Hunter College in Toronto, Canada.

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00:00:34,120 --> 00:00:40,480
In each episode, we'll be having casual chats, interviews and tips from
our teaching and learning support team.

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00:00:40,480 --> 00:00:48,880
I'm your host, Shirantha Beddage.. I'm a saxophonist, composer and
faculty in The Bachelor of Music Program.

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00:00:48,880 --> 00:00:52,840
Well, welcome to everybody in the beginning of this new school year,

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00:00:52,840 --> 00:00:59,620
and I'm very excited to continue this podcast journey with all of you at
Hunter College and beyond.

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00:00:59,620 --> 00:01:07,180
We're starting off the school year, right, and talking about strategies
for a great first day of class on this episode.

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00:01:07,180 --> 00:01:12,850
And it is my wonderful pleasure to be able to share the air today with
three of my

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00:01:12,850 --> 00:01:17,320
very favorite people and three of my colleagues from the Bachelor of
Music Faculty,

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00:01:17,320 --> 00:01:24,910

Marc from Maine, Kathy Mitro and Dave Neal. We're going to start off this episode with an interview with Kathy, Dave and myself.

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00:01:24,910 --> 00:01:29,320

Dave Neal is a saxophonist, composer and educator who teaches courses in music,

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00:01:29,320 --> 00:01:33,700

business and creative development and private lessons in The Bachelor of Music Program.

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00:01:33,700 --> 00:01:35,590

Also joining us is Kathy Metro.

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00:01:35,590 --> 00:01:43,570

Kathy is the recently retired head of the Community Music School at Humber, as well as the one year certificate program in music.

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00:01:43,570 --> 00:01:51,970

And we are having the great pleasure of talking to her at the end of her 43 year career as a humble faculty member.

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00:01:51,970 --> 00:01:59,300

And this interview was recorded just before we went on summer holidays in June 2021.

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00:01:59,300 --> 00:02:04,870

Well, hi, Dave. Hi, Cathy. So nice to be chatting with you today.

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00:02:04,870 --> 00:02:11,300

I have the pleasure of being able to have had many, many chats with both of you over the years,

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00:02:11,300 --> 00:02:18,380

and I know the two of you have known each other for a long time and I've had the pleasure of knowing both of you for,

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00:02:18,380 --> 00:02:22,520

I want to say, at least 10 years, I'm sure.

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00:02:22,520 --> 00:02:27,230

My first question is, you know, for both of you, how do you approach the first day of class?

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00:02:27,230 --> 00:02:32,750

And are there any strategies in particular that you found helpful on day one?

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00:02:32,750 --> 00:02:36,680

Cathy, do you want to start? Sure. Thanks. Wrentham Yeah.

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00:02:36,680 --> 00:02:45,620

For me, the first day, what's really important is the idea of connections, and I want to facilitate people making connections.

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00:02:45,620 --> 00:02:52,910

So, you know, there's a standard approach that a lot of teachers use about having students say where they're from, what's going on.

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00:02:52,910 --> 00:02:57,380

And that's that's all fantastic. That's a really great thing to do.

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00:02:57,380 --> 00:03:06,380

I look then for the common things within that or the differences I look to point out, you know, sometimes it's especially in music.

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00:03:06,380 --> 00:03:12,320

It can be that students are from many different places across the country, even internationally,

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00:03:12,320 --> 00:03:17,960

and sort of drawing those things out and having some conversation and bringing that into

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00:03:17,960 --> 00:03:23,870

the conversation to explore the things that are the same and different about the cohort.

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00:03:23,870 --> 00:03:26,600

So that's connecting the students with the students.

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00:03:26,600 --> 00:03:32,120

I try to connect the students with me, so there's a little talk about me and some of these contexts,

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00:03:32,120 --> 00:03:41,060

especially if something comes up in the group discussion that relates to me that I can share from that so that they get a sense of who I am.

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00:03:41,060 --> 00:03:48,380

And I think that's really important just as a human being that they have some sense of me and then students with the curriculum.

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00:03:48,380 --> 00:03:52,220

So some talk about that, you know, there's the standard course outlines,

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00:03:52,220 --> 00:03:59,660

but I try to even talk about the curriculum in a little more open and and again, from my perspective.

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00:03:59,660 --> 00:04:05,420

And then students with themselves. So there's a and I'll come back to this maybe a little bit later,

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00:04:05,420 --> 00:04:15,810

but there's a little thing I do that is really about having them think about who they are in that classroom and in the program they're in.

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00:04:15,810 --> 00:04:27,270

Great, you're you're so long already getting the first day of podcasts, Dave, and those are awesome, awesome points.

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00:04:27,270 --> 00:04:32,070

I'm right on the same page with you in how I attack it as well and getting

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00:04:32,070 --> 00:04:35,280

to know the students and some people where you're going with the curriculum.

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00:04:35,280 --> 00:04:40,830

That's one thing I'll ask them is for music specifically, what type of music do they are they into?

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00:04:40,830 --> 00:04:44,880

But also what type of careers are they looking forward to? What? What do they want to get of the program?

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00:04:44,880 --> 00:04:50,130

What do they want to go to the course and start to tease that together with the types of things that we're learning and where they're going,

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00:04:50,130 --> 00:04:53,460

so we can kind of park it, big picture those ways as well.

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00:04:53,460 --> 00:04:57,990

I know that's what you're getting at with all those things yourself.

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00:04:57,990 --> 00:05:02,880

But certainly that part is really helpful on day one just to give them a sense of who else

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00:05:02,880 --> 00:05:06,960

is in the room and the types of things and not limiting that to the answers they're, you know, welcome to school.

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00:05:06,960 --> 00:05:09,840

That's how you feel today. If it changes along the way, that's fantastic.

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00:05:09,840 --> 00:05:13,140

You're welcome to learn and grow and evolve, and that's part of the whole point.

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00:05:13,140 --> 00:05:19,680

That's why we're here is to get a sense of that and feel our way through it together and.

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00:05:19,680 --> 00:05:29,610

Yeah, I think that's a really great point, Dave, about the I mean, all really great points, the the evolving for us to be aware that for the students,

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00:05:29,610 --> 00:05:35,790

this is a really important period of evolution for them as they're transitioning into careers and

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00:05:35,790 --> 00:05:42,060

this level of study and and supporting that evolving and talking about it as a process in itself.

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00:05:42,060 --> 00:05:47,130

And then there's always your humor. I know that you have a great sense of humor and you bring that in.

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00:05:47,130 --> 00:05:53,700

I bring the abbreviation the first day as a way to engage. You know, I like to talk my words, friends that are familiar with me.

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00:05:53,700 --> 00:05:58,290

Yeah, yeah. Most my students are always telling me, How come you're not as funny as Dave Neal?

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00:05:58,290 --> 00:06:06,840

You know that sweet, sweet for me as a as a young teacher who who hadn't been out of school very long,

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00:06:06,840 --> 00:06:10,700

you know, before I actually was tasked with teaching for the first time?

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00:06:10,700 --> 00:06:19,290

It was it was a little easier for me to kind of put myself directly into the students shoes because it hadn't been very long since I've been there.

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00:06:19,290 --> 00:06:24,300

I mean, I mean, for for both of you, I mean, is, is it?

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00:06:24,300 --> 00:06:27,700

Is that something that you you have to kind of think about?

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00:06:27,700 --> 00:06:30,030

I'm sure that you remember the experience of being a student,

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00:06:30,030 --> 00:06:37,610

but is that is that something that is helpful to kind of visualize or conceptualize when you're in front of them on on day one?

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00:06:37,610 --> 00:06:42,680

For sure, as someone I went to music school and I draw from that often as a teacher and trying to think, OK,

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00:06:42,680 --> 00:06:46,400

if I was sitting in the class, how would I feel today and what would I want to know or what I want to know from this class?

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00:06:46,400 --> 00:06:51,860

And how would I be engaging with the process? And where am I at? And is this teacher going to challenge me?

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00:06:51,860 --> 00:06:58,640

Or what am I going to learn in this class? And so aside from the normal course outline or learning outcomes for the audience for these assessments,

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00:06:58,640 --> 00:07:01,370

although that's important, they want, what's the vibe?

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00:07:01,370 --> 00:07:06,530

And so that's kind of one of the things that I'm aware of and I think to try to draw them in that way,

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00:07:06,530 --> 00:07:13,250

I make sure that in almost any class, we're doing some content on day one and some content, not just content.

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00:07:13,250 --> 00:07:17,270

What's the first item on the checklist, but something that will draw them in and some little surprise.

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00:07:17,270 --> 00:07:22,610

And so even the strongest students, something as long as there's some angle that they might not have thought about.

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00:07:22,610 --> 00:07:26,840

I'll dig a little bit deeper on day one just to make sure that they're coming in.

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00:07:26,840 --> 00:07:31,640

And when they leave, they can be excited about something. We're thinking about something or teach them for the next week.

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00:07:31,640 --> 00:07:44,070

Fun material. One of the things I do as someone who started teaching in nineteen seventy eight or thereabouts, I'm I recognize I'm not in their shoes.

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00:07:44,070 --> 00:07:48,600

Very much so, I'm not in their shoes, and that's not a barrier.

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00:07:48,600 --> 00:07:54,870

If I'm recognizing it because really what I want to do is I want to be open to what their shoes are.

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00:07:54,870 --> 00:07:59,970

So one of the things that I do in the very first three classes,

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00:07:59,970 --> 00:08:05,820

I put something right on the table and that's what I know to be a controversy in music.

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00:08:05,820 --> 00:08:14,220

And that is theory itself, that there are some students who have studied theory and found it very difficult or very frustrating.

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00:08:14,220 --> 00:08:21,330

And there are other students who this or I should say, a lot of students don't think they don't like theory,

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00:08:21,330 --> 00:08:24,630

and sometimes it's because they've found it difficult in their studies.

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00:08:24,630 --> 00:08:33,330

Other times, it's it's students who might be very strong ear players and so they can get further faster, especially in the early stages,

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00:08:33,330 --> 00:08:39,660

by using their ears than by looking at written material or thinking about the structures of things so much.

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00:08:39,660 --> 00:08:41,580

So I put that right on the table.

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00:08:41,580 --> 00:08:49,440

Honestly, folks, if you don't like theory or you think this is not going to be your favorite course, put up your hand.

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00:08:49,440 --> 00:08:55,620

And reluctantly, I'll see hands, you know, probably two thirds to three quarters of the class, the hands come up.

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00:08:55,620 --> 00:09:00,450

And then it's which what's your reason for not liking theory?

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00:09:00,450 --> 00:09:02,640

And then we have something to talk about.

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00:09:02,640 --> 00:09:10,830

And then and very often you have students who are at different levels, but you still have to start someplace that's common to everyone.

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00:09:10,830 --> 00:09:19,350

So I have an approach that I use that I think levels the playing field by taking it to a whole new angle and

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00:09:19,350 --> 00:09:25,950

presenting the first class with an angle that pretty much none of them have thought about in terms of theory.

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00:09:25,950 --> 00:09:30,570

And now we're all on the same page. Awesome. Yeah, that's cool.

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00:09:30,570 --> 00:09:39,210

I mean it. It also seems to indicate I mean, your openness to them, which is also important and also acknowledging it,

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00:09:39,210 --> 00:09:47,130

their opinions and their their experiences are really valid in terms of creating a sense of community in the class and your

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00:09:47,130 --> 00:09:55,170

willingness to engage with them on their fears or preconceived ideas about the course that your teacher is really valuable.

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00:09:55,170 --> 00:10:00,090

It's all about connections. Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

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00:10:00,090 --> 00:10:12,020

So do you either of you have a really memorable first day moment from any one of your many years of teaching at this institution or others?

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00:10:12,020 --> 00:10:17,960

Well, I mean, certainly getting a chance to meet the characters and get a sense of who they are.

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00:10:17,960 --> 00:10:24,170

I do remember many years ago when email was relatively new and we were sort of it was before it

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00:10:24,170 --> 00:10:30,150

was all in the system to collect student emails along the way and and make your email lists.

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00:10:30,150 --> 00:10:38,210

And maybe at that point they had them, as I would know, something in the list and students would have their own personal emails, but from childhood.

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00:10:38,210 --> 00:10:40,940

And so there were often have sort of more childish references.

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00:10:40,940 --> 00:10:46,970

And so that was one of the slick tricks was rather than getting them to say their emails or which we wouldn't do it now at all,

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00:10:46,970 --> 00:10:53,750

either with privacy or you those things, you've never seen it. So even back then, for better or worse and have an open thought through yet and.

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00:10:53,750 --> 00:10:59,960

And so I would preemptively say, Oh, are you using your Hotmail and be like, Yes, I'm using my thank you.

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00:10:59,960 --> 00:11:11,010

Yes, yes, my Hotmail. And avoiding the embarrassment of upsetting their their childhood email in front of their new peers at the age of 19.

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00:11:11,010 --> 00:11:27,950

So that was a fun one. I was very I still remember one of the months that had to do with rainbow bright, very 80s reference, if I've ever heard one.

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00:11:27,950 --> 00:11:36,320

Yes. Cathy, any any moments that stick out for you?

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00:11:36,320 --> 00:11:46,730

No, I can't say that any one moment in particular. So instead of that, I'm going to share a moment that I do every class or every startup class.

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00:11:46,730 --> 00:11:53,480

And Dave will know this well. This is my highway to life, highway to a career.

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00:11:53,480 --> 00:12:02,780

And so I tell them a story that or a metaphor that you go to post-secondary education and certain careers.

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00:12:02,780 --> 00:12:07,910

It's like here you've got an on ramp into your school and you get into a school and you're on the highway.

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00:12:07,910 --> 00:12:17,030

And as long as you don't crash and burn, at some point there's an exit ramp and you graduate and you the ramp takes you out into your career.

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00:12:17,030 --> 00:12:22,190

And that music is very different and particularly jazz performances quite different.

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00:12:22,190 --> 00:12:29,660

There's no on ramp, there's no highway, there's no exit ramp, there's just a path and the path leads you into a forest and the forest gets really

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00:12:29,660 --> 00:12:33,980

thick and there's brambles and bushes and you have to cut your way through them.

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00:12:33,980 --> 00:12:40,700

And there's goblins and gremlins, and they fall out of the trees and jump out from behind the bushes and climb on your back.

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00:12:40,700 --> 00:12:44,930

And you have to carry them around for a while and figure out how to deal with them.

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00:12:44,930 --> 00:12:50,480

And sooner or later, or you start to realize that you keep running into the same people.

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00:12:50,480 --> 00:12:53,930

And are you going in circles or are they going in circles?

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00:12:53,930 --> 00:13:00,470

And finally, hopefully you come to the edge of the forest on the other side and you start to find your way out.

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00:13:00,470 --> 00:13:11,990

And really, the point of the story is, again, back to connections. I'm I'm trying to give the metaphor for how their experience of studying in music,

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00:13:11,990 --> 00:13:19,820

and we talk about how the goblins and or I talk about how the goblins and gremlins are their own goblins and gremlins that I have.

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00:13:19,820 --> 00:13:24,590

Mine and mine are different than theirs, or there might be some that are the same,

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00:13:24,590 --> 00:13:32,870

but we each have to wrestle with those and we have to work our way through carrying those around for a while and figuring out how to negotiate them.

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00:13:32,870 --> 00:13:40,490

And the number of times, sometimes a year or two years, sometimes 15 years later, that I'll have students.

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00:13:40,490 --> 00:13:44,420

When I when I announced my retirement and that that was posted on Facebook,

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00:13:44,420 --> 00:13:54,320

I actually had at least two students writing in to say that the story of the goblins and gremlins has stayed with them their whole lives.

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00:13:54,320 --> 00:14:03,050

And I think that's a that's one that I feel really good about in setting students up for realizing there'll be challenges that they have to deal with,

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00:14:03,050 --> 00:14:08,210

and it's OK to have challenges. That story needs a soundtrack.

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00:14:08,210 --> 00:14:16,370

I could hear one in my head writer to ensure that, you know, we belong to with lots of different sections.

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00:14:16,370 --> 00:14:22,690

One final question for both of you what advice would you give to your rookie teacher

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00:14:22,690 --> 00:14:26,750

herself if you had one thing to say to yourself when you were starting off as a teacher,

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00:14:26,750 --> 00:14:31,970

what would that be? Yeah, you know, that's something I've been thinking about,

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00:14:31,970 --> 00:14:44,870

and I think I'm going to start my comment on something I've observed over the years, and that is every time a rookie teacher has entered,

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00:14:44,870 --> 00:14:49,280

whether it's the community music school or whether it's the post-secondary program,

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00:14:49,280 --> 00:14:56,810

it's like they wear a sign on their forehead that says, I am a rookie teacher beat me up.

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00:14:56,810 --> 00:15:03,680

Students have an uncanny ability to sense when we're new, when we're standing in front of them,

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00:15:03,680 --> 00:15:09,590

and I don't know what it is that they can even sense really.

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00:15:09,590 --> 00:15:16,190

So it in in that sense. I want to turn to the philosopher Hannah Arendt,

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00:15:16,190 --> 00:15:21,440
and Hannah has a concept of education that's about educators having the

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00:15:21,440 --> 00:15:28,490
responsibility to maintain the traditions that have been in place while
creating

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00:15:28,490 --> 00:15:40,580
openings for the newness of new human beings to come in contact with
those traditions so that the the World Society only survives with a
continuity,

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00:15:40,580 --> 00:15:49,520
which is the traditions moving through. And if it's evolving, which is
bringing in the newness of the world in the new human beings,

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00:15:49,520 --> 00:15:54,860
and it'll be up to the next generation to decide which traditions stay in
which leave.

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00:15:54,860 --> 00:16:02,090
But as a teacher, to understand that you do have both a responsibility
and an authority when you enter that classroom,

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00:16:02,090 --> 00:16:04,610
you have, you know, the traditions.

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00:16:04,610 --> 00:16:14,810
You know, you have expertize in the subject matter and to not be afraid
to carry the weight of that knowledge and expertize,

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00:16:14,810 --> 00:16:18,800
which is a kind of an authority without being authoritarian,

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00:16:18,800 --> 00:16:25,340
that the openness of being open to the new through the connections that
you're trying to make.

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00:16:25,340 --> 00:16:32,810
Those are the things that matter. But you have to carry with yourself
that sense that you do have the expertize to offer them.

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00:16:32,810 --> 00:16:40,460

As Dave said, we're all on the same path. Some are just further know that you are further along that path and you're further along

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00:16:40,460 --> 00:16:47,750

enough that you can take in their questions and their challenges and not be afraid of them.

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00:16:47,750 --> 00:16:53,540

It's awesome. I mean, I think what I what I was thinking about was something very similar along the way,

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00:16:53,540 --> 00:16:59,980

and absolutely students can smell weakness and they smell when you don't know what you're talking about and they

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00:16:59,980 --> 00:17:05,510

have an uncanny knack for really being strong and being prepared and knowing what's happening with certainty,

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00:17:05,510 --> 00:17:10,100

what's happening in the class and how they're going to play out. So I think there's an extension of it too, and it's kind of what you're getting.

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00:17:10,100 --> 00:17:17,640

And I think that one of the things that I started very early on was if I didn't know the answer to something.

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00:17:17,640 --> 00:17:22,080

Don't bluff. You know, the answer was, you know what?

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00:17:22,080 --> 00:17:25,560

That's okay. That's a great question. Look, I don't I don't want to. I don't take a stab at it.

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00:17:25,560 --> 00:17:31,110

Let me find out. And the students will respect that honesty, and they'll respect the fact as long as you follow up and come back with it.

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00:17:31,110 --> 00:17:39,970

And I suppose as well, if you never know anything, that's a bigger problem too. But in that way of, wow, that's fantastic.

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00:17:39,970 --> 00:17:41,040
Let me do some research.

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00:17:41,040 --> 00:17:48,330
Let me think about it and come back and and then they know that you're that you're treating them with respect and you're going to and that

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00:17:48,330 --> 00:17:54,120
everything else you say now has worked because you prove that you're not sort of fluff your way through the class and make stuff up.

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00:17:54,120 --> 00:18:01,740
And as a teacher, I think we fear that fear sometimes where we want to get away or if we feel that pressure that heat,

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00:18:01,740 --> 00:18:07,810
you just want to make you make a stop or do whatever you do, don't situation the situation sort of friends.

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00:18:07,810 --> 00:18:15,720
And I think that that's really a really helpful thing to have a confidence, especially early surge of fear to say, You know what?

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00:18:15,720 --> 00:18:21,810
It's cool. I don't I don't truly know right now. Let me find my way, and we'll put it together because it can wait.

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00:18:21,810 --> 00:18:27,730
It can wait a week if they don't. Very rare. Or if they do need to know today, you can e-mail them after class.

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00:18:27,730 --> 00:18:30,240
Just make sure you follow through and do it. And a lot of people will forget.

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00:18:30,240 --> 00:18:35,340
So I'm notorious for what I'm teaching, making notes, having scrap paper and making notes to myself or my phone.

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00:18:35,340 --> 00:18:39,030
Of course, it happens often. I got to check this one at home. Check this, check this.

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00:18:39,030 --> 00:18:46,050

OK, good. And that actually, now that I think about it really, really kind of helps people,

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00:18:46,050 --> 00:18:53,110

especially in a subsequent class of classes and substance narratives to students, will start the process.

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00:18:53,110 --> 00:18:57,970

Yeah, thinking of your future self is, I think, a really important way to kind of go about that, right,

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00:18:57,970 --> 00:19:04,870

because chances are a question like that may come up a year from now, two years from now or whatever it is.

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00:19:04,870 --> 00:19:14,980

I've in some of my courses I've I've taken to making a sort of frequently asked questions in some of my blackboard sites on topic or topic B.

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00:19:14,980 --> 00:19:21,640

And sometimes it's questions that were asked by a student five years ago on and the course and I just keep adding to it and amending it.

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00:19:21,640 --> 00:19:28,930

And that's a is a nice way to kind of be able to keep a shared knowledge base going and also is good.

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00:19:28,930 --> 00:19:30,790

I'm really glad that you said that, Dave,

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00:19:30,790 --> 00:19:39,010

and I think just being OK with not knowing everything in the moment and sometimes just being able to take a step away from it,

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00:19:39,010 --> 00:19:45,640

research and get back to the student might give you the ability to provide a more detailed or thorough answer than than you would have otherwise.

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00:19:45,640 --> 00:19:50,650

So I mean, it's it's a win win, right? You're absolutely right. I just want to comment to that.

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00:19:50,650 --> 00:19:56,710

The back to your point about not bluffing, when you're confident enough about what you know that you can say,

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00:19:56,710 --> 00:20:03,820

what you don't know or what you would like to investigate further than the reverse of that is the students can come,

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00:20:03,820 --> 00:20:08,770

can have confidence in what you do say, and they'll feel that.

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00:20:08,770 --> 00:20:18,520

And I'd like to add just on that first day, a particular housekeeping item that I think is really important for faculty to talk about.

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00:20:18,520 --> 00:20:26,140

And that's to discuss assignments, to discuss marks and how you mark what is your marking process.

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00:20:26,140 --> 00:20:31,930

What is it that you're looking for in general? How do you mark what your turnaround time?

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00:20:31,930 --> 00:20:36,850

Give them information around those things because assignments are very scary to students.

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00:20:36,850 --> 00:20:43,630

And when you bring it up and you put it on the table as a topic, then you open that door right off the bat.

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00:20:43,630 --> 00:20:47,620

And that will give them a sense of security. Wow.

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00:20:47,620 --> 00:20:52,720

This is a fascinating discussion, and I feel like we could go on and on for for a long time,

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00:20:52,720 --> 00:21:01,270

and I really want to thank both of you for your time today and especially to Kathy on your last week of

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00:21:01,270 --> 00:21:08,320
work officially for taking the time to grace us with your presence and
share some insights from many,

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00:21:08,320 --> 00:21:15,160
many, many decades of teaching yourself. Thank you so much to you both.

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00:21:15,160 --> 00:21:21,880
Well, thanks to Anthony, if I can say it was a real pleasure to do
this and I really enjoyed the opportunity.

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00:21:21,880 --> 00:21:31,920
Thanks very much. I agree. Thanks for having me. And if that's true, also
you're welcome.

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00:21:31,920 --> 00:21:39,060
For today's teaching tip, I want to talk briefly about lesson planning
and how I think about lesson planning for the first day of class.

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00:21:39,060 --> 00:21:45,270
My lesson plans generally are fairly straightforward, and they usually
include three different parts.

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00:21:45,270 --> 00:21:51,840
What that usually means for me is that on the first day of class, I will
go through the course, outline the critical path.

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00:21:51,840 --> 00:21:56,310
I'll give the students an opportunity to get to know each other, and I'll
get a chance to get to know them.

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00:21:56,310 --> 00:21:59,370
And also, we're going to get into the first lesson, of course.

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00:21:59,370 --> 00:22:03,900
So that's typically the three part structure that it looks like for me on
the first day,

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00:22:03,900 --> 00:22:09,930
and I would encourage you to just write down on a piece of paper or using
an app or whatever it is to just write out some thoughts

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00:22:09,930 --> 00:22:17,430

and kind of get yourself organized so that you have a structure in place that you can think about fairly easily in the moment.

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00:22:17,430 --> 00:22:23,250

One thing I also like to do is after that first class is done and really after every class is done,

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00:22:23,250 --> 00:22:30,810

go back into that lesson plan document that I've created and just write a couple of sentences as a kind of debrief for the lesson.

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00:22:30,810 --> 00:22:36,390

I find that's really helpful as a little bit of a journal to be able to document my thoughts right after the

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00:22:36,390 --> 00:22:42,480

lesson happened so that a semester from now or a year from now or whenever I get to teach the course next,

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00:22:42,480 --> 00:22:48,300

it gives me an opportunity to be able to make adjustments or reflect on what worked and what didn't.

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00:22:48,300 --> 00:22:56,490

For no faculty and staff, if you want to see some of the tools that I use to be able to create my lesson plans using OmniOutliner on the Mac,

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00:22:56,490 --> 00:23:05,810

please take a look at the show notes for this episode and you'll see a link to a Panopto video where I described these processes in more detail.

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00:23:05,810 --> 00:23:12,110

But. Our feature interview for today's episode is with Mark pro-McCain.

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00:23:12,110 --> 00:23:20,270

Any of you who have ever been to a show on King Street in downtown Toronto probably heard a wonderful woodwind sounds of Mark pro-McCain.

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00:23:20,270 --> 00:23:25,100

Marc has for many decades has been one of the top woodwind players in Toronto and

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00:23:25,100 --> 00:23:31,340

was the woodwind curriculum lead in the Bachelor of Music Program for many years.

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00:23:31,340 --> 00:23:36,050

Mark and I have had a longstanding relationship. I met Mark when I was in my teens.

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00:23:36,050 --> 00:23:41,780

He was my teacher for a year, and he's one of the primary reasons why I ended up at Humber to begin with.

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00:23:41,780 --> 00:23:49,790

So this is a real pleasure for me. And this was also recorded in June 21, just before Mark retired.

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00:23:49,790 --> 00:23:55,220

Mark, I just want to thank you so much for being a part of this episode.

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00:23:55,220 --> 00:24:06,320

It's always a great pleasure to talk to you, and we've had a lot of fun conversations over the past several decades trying to do the math in my head,

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00:24:06,320 --> 00:24:12,050

and I figure I've known you for at least 25 years at that point, if you can believe it.

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00:24:12,050 --> 00:24:15,090

Yes, I think that's pretty accurate.

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00:24:15,090 --> 00:24:23,120

And maybe if you could just tell everybody a little bit about your time at Humber in terms of when you started and what your journey was.

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00:24:23,120 --> 00:24:33,320

You know, in general. Sure. I came in to Humber as a student in 1981, having studied at Western, and I got my degree there.

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00:24:33,320 --> 00:24:42,110

So I came in as a mature, fairly mature student and then continued with the program at Humber in fall of 87,

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00:24:42,110 --> 00:24:51,830

I started as a part time teacher and that went until fall of '99, when I became full time and the head of saxophone woodwinds.

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00:24:51,830 --> 00:24:56,870

The topic of today's show is about the first day of classes, you know?

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00:24:56,870 --> 00:25:05,120

And do you have an example of a first day experience that was memorable for you as a teacher?

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00:25:05,120 --> 00:25:11,210

Honestly, I think it has to be the first one because I'll give you the circumstances around it.

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00:25:11,210 --> 00:25:16,820

Each year in music, of course, from my position, I would do the auditions.

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00:25:16,820 --> 00:25:23,570

And so coming into coming into the new into the new year, I would I would know everyone.

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00:25:23,570 --> 00:25:32,450

I would have either met them personally one one or I would have reviewed their recording of their auditions.

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00:25:32,450 --> 00:25:42,740

So I knew who was who. I knew what they look like. I I could meet them and I went in ahead and knew their names, so I knew who everyone was.

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00:25:42,740 --> 00:25:52,680

My first one. If you want to call it memorable, was one where I didn't know anybody because the circumstances around me becoming full time,

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00:25:52,680 --> 00:26:00,980

at least covering the full time was that my predecessor Eddie Source and had suddenly passed away during the summer and he did all the auditions.

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00:26:00,980 --> 00:26:08,300

And so when I came into my first year, I didn't know who was who and I really had to.

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00:26:08,300 --> 00:26:17,210

I mean, it was my first year teaching full time. So it was like, put put everything, put everything out there, and I didn't know at all.

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00:26:17,210 --> 00:26:25,970

So it was really memorable. But I think one thing that really helped me was to just isolate each student in class and

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00:26:25,970 --> 00:26:30,980

have them introduce themselves where they were from a little bit about their background,

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00:26:30,980 --> 00:26:36,170

maybe who was an influential person in their music lives.

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00:26:36,170 --> 00:26:38,210

So you just get to know them that way.

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00:26:38,210 --> 00:26:45,380

And and so I carried that on every year, and it does take a little bit of the first time, a first class time out of the first class.

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00:26:45,380 --> 00:26:54,590

But I think it's well worth it because certain people in the class will relate to their experiences where they're from.

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00:26:54,590 --> 00:26:59,810

They say, Oh, I didn't know you studied with so-and-so. I studied with that same person at some point.

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00:26:59,810 --> 00:27:06,020

And you know, people start to get interactions with each other and it becomes more of a a community,

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00:27:06,020 --> 00:27:10,820

a community group rather than one, you know, everybody being separate.

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00:27:10,820 --> 00:27:18,560

So I felt like that that really helped me on that first day and I kept it going every year from that point on.

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00:27:18,560 --> 00:27:23,630

And yeah, that really helped them. The feeling in the class?

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00:27:23,630 --> 00:27:29,810

Well, I mean, it strikes me as a good way to start establishing trust, too,

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00:27:29,810 --> 00:27:36,590

because I can imagine that for you as a teacher coming in under those very odd circumstances,

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00:27:36,590 --> 00:27:41,030

you know, for everyone concerned, right, your predecessor passing away suddenly.

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00:27:41,030 --> 00:27:46,310

And who's this new person, you know, standing in front of me, teaching me this thing that I did?

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00:27:46,310 --> 00:27:49,730

I don't know. So I mean, that's a that's an awkward moment for everybody, I think,

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00:27:49,730 --> 00:27:55,370

and acknowledging that they all have separate backgrounds and different stories and that somehow they're

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00:27:55,370 --> 00:28:01,550

interrelated and seeing those connections and acknowledging them is a really great way to not just break the ice,

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00:28:01,550 --> 00:28:06,290

but also establish some community in the classroom. So I think that's that's good advice for everybody.

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00:28:06,290 --> 00:28:18,000

Really? Yes. And just giving off a really warm human personal vibe, I think helps to establish that trust.

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00:28:18,000 --> 00:28:30,680

You know, people are not afraid to just speak up in class and contribute, you know, they don't feel like it's not the atmosphere to do that so soon.

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00:28:30,680 --> 00:28:36,020

It becomes a really great group of people working together.

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00:28:36,020 --> 00:28:42,350

Mm hmm. Mm hmm. I think that for teachers, it's very important to establish that.

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00:28:42,350 --> 00:28:49,360

And I mean, I would imagine that for myself as a new teacher, I was much less relaxed.

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00:28:49,360 --> 00:28:51,970

It for sure, you know, that as I am now,

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00:28:51,970 --> 00:28:58,510

because I'm more kind of comfortable in my own skin and more comfortable as a teacher and with with the students.

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00:28:58,510 --> 00:29:03,990

It's taken some time, but I said that's something that I've always noticed about you.

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00:29:03,990 --> 00:29:07,870

Was that the way that you view the way that you talk to people,

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00:29:07,870 --> 00:29:18,460

it it definitely establishes a sense of respect, but also, you know, friendliness and and positive energy.

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00:29:18,460 --> 00:29:27,130

And it's wonderful. And I and I I'm not surprised that your students respond in accordingly because you create that vibe.

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00:29:27,130 --> 00:29:28,660

Yeah, I think that's really important.

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00:29:28,660 --> 00:29:40,000

I always, you know, early on in the year, I tell them, I am your mentor, but at the same time, I I'm just I'm the same as you.

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00:29:40,000 --> 00:29:48,310

I just have more experience some of and in fact, truthfully, I would say, out of a class of, say,

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00:29:48,310 --> 00:29:55,510

15 that I might have probably two or three of them have more talent than I actually was born with,

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00:29:55,510 --> 00:30:00,560

you know, because we're all born with a certain amount of musical talent and that's fostered over time,

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00:30:00,560 --> 00:30:06,430

but certainly two or three of them, I would look at them going, Oh man, I wish I had what they had in certain ways,

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00:30:06,430 --> 00:30:13,690

you know, musically and and I so I just say to the students, Look, we're we're all, we're all this in this together.

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00:30:13,690 --> 00:30:16,190

I just happen to have a little more experience than you do.

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00:30:16,190 --> 00:30:20,770

So I'm just going to pass that on and see what that's worth, and you can take what you want from that.

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00:30:20,770 --> 00:30:26,070

But just trying to make them feel at ease like I'm not there is, you know,

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00:30:26,070 --> 00:30:29,830

the man from the pulpit sort of thing is just, I guess it's just all do this together.

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00:30:29,830 --> 00:30:36,280

I've got a little more experience. And from that experience, I'll pass that on to you and it seems to work pretty well.

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00:30:36,280 --> 00:30:43,480

I think, because there's no sense in creating that that the separation between you and the students.

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00:30:43,480 --> 00:30:48,670

I never thought that was really productive.

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00:30:48,670 --> 00:30:54,400

Way to do things. Mm hmm. Yeah, it sort of levels with them and says, we're all on this journey together.

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00:30:54,400 --> 00:30:58,480

Yes. You know? Yeah, exactly. Exactly. Yeah.

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00:30:58,480 --> 00:31:02,110

Very relatable and very powerful in terms of establishing a. Yeah.

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00:31:02,110 --> 00:31:08,380

And also, I felt like, I suppose, this this is becoming pretty mainstream.

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00:31:08,380 --> 00:31:18,490

But looking looking at the positive like back in the day, teaching used to be pretty hardcore,

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00:31:18,490 --> 00:31:27,730

not much in the way of praise, pointing out what you did wrong rather than what you did, right?

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00:31:27,730 --> 00:31:35,740

Not all that. In some ways, not all that productive because some students would just shut down right with that approach.

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00:31:35,740 --> 00:31:42,680

I think that that's kind of gone away from most of the teaching today, but I really felt like that was an important aspect to have.

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00:31:42,680 --> 00:31:47,680

What I mean when I started teaching was 43 years ago at No.

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00:31:47,680 --> 00:31:58,030

I was already thinking that way. I needed to promote the students, so I needed to have them feel inspired rather than deflated, you know?

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00:31:58,030 --> 00:32:03,430

And you know, if there was things they did well, certainly point that out.

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00:32:03,430 --> 00:32:07,000

Other things they didn't do well, it would be just a matter of fact.

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00:32:07,000 --> 00:32:12,980

So you know this this this needs work and you don't it doesn't have to be more or less than that.

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00:32:12,980 --> 00:32:16,540

I think that the message is clear there. This needs more work. Yeah.

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00:32:16,540 --> 00:32:25,060

And if you're at all, you know, have any kind of work ethic, they'll they'll that's all it takes for them to to hear it, right?

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00:32:25,060 --> 00:32:30,850

Nothing more than that. Yeah. So I think hopefully that's been all I think.

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00:32:30,850 --> 00:32:35,440

I think it's been an effective pedagogical approach anyway. Yeah, I think so, too.

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00:32:35,440 --> 00:32:40,570

And you're right. I think I think it seems to be more common these days rather than the as I like to call it,

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00:32:40,570 --> 00:32:44,760

the whiplash approach to music education or education in general, right?

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00:32:44,760 --> 00:32:45,850

That's exactly right.

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00:32:45,850 --> 00:32:51,820

I think that there's a reason that movie was perhaps so popular is that a lot of people could relate to that as an educational story,

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00:32:51,820 --> 00:32:53,200

whether they were in music or not.

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00:32:53,200 --> 00:33:01,960

But but, you know, I think what you're talking about is building them up rather than breaking them down and also acknowledging that yes,

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00:33:01,960 --> 00:33:05,530

they're doing certain things well, but they also have to work on these specific things.

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00:33:05,530 --> 00:33:10,480

And I think that is good, you know, because I think there's there's the flip side of it,

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00:33:10,480 --> 00:33:16,660

which could just be all praise all the time, which I don't think also serves people if they don't know what they can do to improve.

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00:33:16,660 --> 00:33:20,950

Exactly. Yeah, yeah. So, yeah, it's interesting.

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00:33:20,950 --> 00:33:26,770

I think I'm not surprised to hear that you came at teaching from that perspective, you know?

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00:33:26,770 --> 00:33:29,530

But but yeah, it's good to it's good to hear that, you know,

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00:33:29,530 --> 00:33:38,950

it's funny we used to when we would adjudicate at music festivals, we used to call it the the adjudicators sandwich.

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00:33:38,950 --> 00:33:43,270

So, you know, you've got your bread and whatever's in the middle and the bread on the other side.

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00:33:43,270 --> 00:33:49,280

So you start with something positive. They did you in the middle talk about some things they could do better and then.

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00:33:49,280 --> 00:33:53,630

You praise them at the end, and typically that's not a bad approach.

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00:33:53,630 --> 00:33:59,510

Yeah, it works. Yeah. The Compliment Sandwich, I think, is another term that people use for that same idea,

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00:33:59,510 --> 00:34:07,970

and I can tell you that I definitely use that as an adjudicator on the table myself when I'm talking to two high school bands or bands at Humber.

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00:34:07,970 --> 00:34:12,170

You know, it's it's it does work. It absolutely does work. Absolutely.

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00:34:12,170 --> 00:34:21,560

Yeah, for sure. Well, Mark, I know we could we could probably talk all day, but I want to thank you so much for this chat,

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00:34:21,560 --> 00:34:26,870

but also just for the years of of mentoring and guidance that you've given me,

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00:34:26,870 --> 00:34:33,020

and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of students in at your time at Humber as a teacher.

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00:34:33,020 --> 00:34:39,920

And I wish you all the best in your upcoming retirement, and I hope we get to hang out soon.

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00:34:39,920 --> 00:34:44,630

Sure. And I feel like it's a mutual respect. I have such respect for you.

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00:34:44,630 --> 00:34:52,170

What what you've done in your musical life and in your teaching, you are your top of the heap.

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00:34:52,170 --> 00:34:55,850

Well, thank you. Thanks so much, Mark.

332

00:34:55,850 --> 00:35:04,270

OK, sure. At that pleasure talking with you. The staff lounge is brought to you by Humber teaching and learning.

333

00:35:04,270 --> 00:35:11,410

Our producer is Fiona Tudor Price. Our theme song is composed and performed by me, Shirantha Beddage.

334

00:35:11,410 --> 00:35:16,720

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00:35:16,720 --> 00:35:24,068

Thanks again for listening, and we'll see you next time. On the staff lounge.