

1/20/22

Dear Instructional Personnel Review Committee,

I completed a peer teaching observation of Dr. Luke Dahn's MUSC 2570 Composition Seminar I course on 11/15/22. Dr. Dahn arrived at the classroom well before the students arrived and greeted each when they came into the room. He was friendly and demonstrated a good rapport with the students, who were engaged throughout. The scheduled topics for this meeting included a discussion of the students' in-progress composition projects and an introduction to a new project.

During the first portion of the meeting, half of the class shared their projects (the other half had presented the previous meeting). Each student's score was projected for the class to view, and computer-generated audio was played to allow everyone to hear a rough mock-up of the work. Dr. Dahn let the other students speak about their classmates' work before adding his thoughts, keeping the full class involved even when they were not the one presenting. Each of the composers seemed comfortable giving and receiving feedback. Additionally, the students' comments were appropriate and insightful, involving observations rooted in the score and audio rather than unsupported opinions. The quality of the feedback the students gave each other speaks to how well Dr. Dahn has helped the students improve their listening skills, build their ability to constructively critique works-in-progress, and work collaboratively in the classroom. Similarly, the respect with which the discussions progressed speaks to the supportive classroom environment Dr. Dahn has established.

Dr. Dahn also contributed his own feedback to each student. This involved not only giving verbal suggestions but also improvising excerpts at the piano to demonstrate musical possibilities the student had not yet explored. Modeling the creative process in real-time helped the students to see how a more experienced composer might work and demonstrate the types of considerations one might make. Dr. Dahn showed a clear understanding of what each student was trying to accomplish and directed the discussion toward helping them fulfill their intentions effectively. He also recognized the revisions students had made based on previous feedback, boosting their confidence in their work and reinforcing the importance of revision in the creative process.

After the students' shared their works-in-progress, Dr. Dahn introduced their last composition project of the semester. Whereas the last project had been very open-ended, this project had very proscribed instructions. This gave the students a different experience and served the nature of the project well, since it involved a number of new concepts to prepare the students for continuing into MUSC 2571 Composition Seminar II. Dr. Dahn provided the students with a handout that included detailed instructions for the new project, as well as some practice exercises to build the skills they would use in their composition.

He began with an example from J.S. Bach that would serve as a model for the students' pieces, playing some of the music at the piano. He discussed how it was constructed and clearly explained how their project would relate to the example. Then he taught new material to the students, accurately and concisely answering the questions students asked about the concepts. After they had completed some of the practice exercises together, he had the students work on their own while he circled around to help as needed. After giving them time to try the exercises, he went over them with the class, finishing his planned material by the end of class time.

Throughout the session, Dr. Dahn exhibited high level of preparation, knowledge, and experience. The class activities not only supported the goals of the course but also reinforced concepts from the students' music theory and history classes, while also pre-teaching material they would cover in more depth in their spring semester theory class. The students were interested and responsive during both halves of the class meeting, and seemed eager to start working on their project outside of class. Everything I observed indicates that Dr. Dahn is a talented, caring instructor who is an asset to the School of Music.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JR', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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