

DEREK KELLER, PH.D.

4700 MARCONI AVE., APT 225
CARMICHAEL, CA 95608

PHONE: (916) 716-2771
DEREKKELLERMUSIC@GMAIL.COM

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Over the last dozen years of professional teaching, I have taught in a wide range of settings (in order of prevalence): community colleges, religious universities/liberal arts colleges, research institutions, conservatories, private/applied lessons, and master classes. While teaching in this diverse array of institutions, I have been able to teach *and reach* a wide variety of learners from an equally wide array of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. I strive to be sensitive to *how* my students learn, whether they are one with a learning disability filling a GE requirement at a community college or a prize-winning conservatory student that has had every privilege provided them. As an educator, I strive to impart to my students ways in which they can use their developing musical skills as a tools for social transformation.

Through a wide variety of teaching and learning settings, I have diversified my pedagogical strategies in order to: 1) I accommodate their learning patterns and creative backgrounds, 2) I motivate them to be self - resourceful, -reliant, and -aware, 3) and I contextualize my curricula and pedagogy, both contemporaneously and historically, to empower my students with a sense of artistic and entrepreneurial purpose. Moreover, I have designed ways to convey course materials effectively through a variety of classroom techniques while calling attention to the historical, cultural, and social contexts relevant to the mechanics of making music. My dedication to teaching has been recognized through a competitive appointment in the Teaching Fellows Program at UC San Diego.

Roughly half of my teaching experience has been with traditional music majors. The other half of my experience has been with students who are less prepared for academic demands; and who often feel actively disenfranchised from higher education. I have encountered dozens of students of this type in the 10 years of teaching digital audio recording. In this setting, I observe that these students are situated along a continuum of preparedness. For the beginners, I reinforce that anyone can be creative if given the space, time, concepts, and skills. For intermediates, I create project-oriented activities that engage the instrumental skills they have with the technology. I try to mentor the advanced students through questioning their aesthetic stance and whom they are trying to reach and how their music may be a function of social transformation through their engagement with their local community.

From a recruiting and retention standpoint, I find have encountered many students who have been threatened (if not outright suckered) by for-profit career schools (with mountains of debt to follow) that promise a job in a field in which turning a buck is difficult at best. When I encounter these kinds of students, I try to channel them to community colleges and then to four-year institutions, which will give them a better chance at a well-rounded education – because if music doesn't work out, they have a chance to get a job. When I encounter this demographic in the classroom, I strive, again, to accommodate their learning patterns and backgrounds and help motivate students with varying degrees of investment and capacities.

In my life as a composer-performer, progressive topics have often entered my musical endeavors. For example, my developing multi-media work/opera, the *California Tableaux Project*, is more timely than ever with the new president and his administration. *CTP* synthesizes music, spoken word, video and dance to celebrate

California's cultural crossings *and interrogate the forces that wish to dismantle its diversity*. CTP looks back into early California history, as seen through the eyes of the infamous Sir Francis Drake; draws on post-Gold Rush short stories; reframes popular song (such as Led Zeppelin's "Immigrant Song" – in Spanish!); interpolates native and multinational folk songs; sets poetry and prose by California authors and poets; and perverts the cultural function of English "Tableau" games. This project aims to counteract a historical amnesia that forgets California was Native land; was invaded twice by the Spanish, then the English; was occupied, farmed, mined; and then worked by Mestizo, Mexican, Chinese, Chilean, Peruvian, French, German, and African-American peoples. Through this project I seek to highlight and question what it means to be "American".

As a professional educator and musician, the work to reach my surrounding community does not stop at the teaching institution, nor at the edge of the concert stage. I often situate myself in the community at large. For example, I have participated in several concert performances for underserved elementary school children, such as those in downtown Cleveland, Ohio. I have also worked with like-minded musicians to expose rural communities to music that would be otherwise unheard; for example, through the Native Scholars Program at the La Jolla Reservation in Southern California. I have taught guitar courses as part after-school arts enrichment programs serving largely immigrant and low-income schoolchildren in Downtown San Diego. Finally, I have been a singer (tenor) at a local church or have sung in community choirs for most of my professional career in my own backyard.

In closing, I was the first in my family to graduate from college. Thus, my commitment to educational opportunity and access is more than philosophical – it is also personal.