

Tislam Swift

Teaching Statement

Since the beginning of my own musical studies, I have always been passionate about Music education. Starting my studies at the age of 13, I began a journey that would not only help to actualize my desire to become a professional musician, but to also provide me with a set of skills that could be utilized across multiple disciplines. Additionally, studying Music would also allow me to be exposed to different cultures, languages and other things that I may not have had a chance to experience as a young kid from Brooklyn. Regardless of my student's own personal goals and dreams, it is my desire as an educator to provide unique experiences for them with Music education. No student is the same and my duty as an educator to assure that I tailor an experience for each student.

As a Black and Queer Musician, I often struggled with relating to the subject matter presented by my teachers, professors and mentors. Culturally, I struggled with the content and its level of importance because of the lack of representation of musicians that looked like me. Additionally, many of my classmates had previous experience as their parents sent them to private classes and lessons, thus making them more advanced in things like piano proficiency, music theory and ear training and languages. These experiences would immediately influence my teaching as a teaching artist for the Atlanta Music Project.

While teaching at the Atlanta Music Project, I was hired to teach Black and Brown children who had come from low-income communities. I would challenge them to learn how to do things like read music, learn the names of composers such as Beethoven and Mozart and how to identify music that they may have heard from their favorite Looney Tunes cartoon. Recognizing that this was their experience, I would incorporate things from their own cultural

identities. For example, once we learned about music notation, I would write out simple melodies from R&B and Rap songs. This technique would allow the students to not only be confident in their ability to learn the skill but to also be culturally validated. It would also allow them to simultaneously be confident to try new things. These students also be challenged to analyze and critique this music from an intellectual perspective, yet another skill that be utilized across a plethora of disciplines.

As a Scholar who is passionate about cultural competency and representation, I look forward to bringing my teaching philosophies to the Music department at Indiana Technical University. It is my job to create safe and educational spaces for young minds as my teachers have done for me and continue to do, as I also believe learning is a life-long process. I am not looking to turn each student into a professional musician, but instead into a conscious, critical thinker who is confident in their abilities. I look forward to being granted the opportunity to help mold next generation of brilliant minds/