

# Teaching Videos and Analysis – Richard Yang

MUSIC 1802B – Winter 2025

## Exceptional Teaching:

[Professor Jerry Junkin Masterclass - Conducting Holst's 1st Suite in Eb \(I. Chaconne\)](#)

*Please begin the video at 2:52.*

In this video, Professor Jerry Junkin, the conductor of the University of Texas Wind Ensemble among a whole slew of other titles, gives a masterclass to this student, who has taken just one semester of conducting so far. The main takeaway from this video is Junkin's exceptional teaching methods, where he provides reasoning for all of his constructive suggestions and pushes the student to explore and try new ideas, all with an excellent attitude of respect.

I believe it is extremely important that students are given justifications when being asked to change something so the student can understand the discipline deeper and use it as food for thought; therefore, I consider this exceptional teaching. A good first example is Prof. Junkin explaining his request for the student's elbows to be more out – one would look too small on the podium otherwise. His next request is for the student to raise their arms up higher. Again, he provides a reason, that the baton and the face should be in the same plane from the player's point of view. By providing justifications, Prof. Junkin is respecting the student's capability to think and judge for themselves, even if they are inexperienced.

Prof. Junkin demonstrates exceptional education again when he gives new ideas for the student to try, in hopes that their conducting becomes less mechanical and more expressive. Prof. Junkin teaches effectively, by giving a relatable analogy to the student (a cellist) about a bow moving over a string, and how the lyrical lines at the opening require a similar smoothness that should be indicated through gestures. He then provides a way to accomplish this, asking the student to move more horizontally. It doesn't matter that the student can't accomplish it immediately – Prof. Junkin is exposing the student to new ideas that will continue to serve them throughout their career. All this is exceptional teaching because Prof. Junkin acknowledges the student's potential and tries to elevate the student accordingly, while simultaneously exposing the student to ideas and questions they must keep asking themselves for the rest of time.

Bonus: Prof. Junkin creates a safe space try these new things in, using humour at the end to make the student feel more comfortable when they undoubtedly aren't.

Prof. Junkin demonstrates what it means to be an exceptional educator in this clip. He has an excellent attitude and respects the student's abilities and development. He provides justifications and analogies to support his teaching while pushing the student to explore new ideas and try new techniques, focussing on major conducting fundamentals that will continue to serve the student through time.

## Disastrous “Teaching”

### Agatha Trunchbull from "Matilda" - A Tyrant in the Classroom

It is possible for the teaching (and classroom management) exhibited in this clip to be better optimized for student success and mental health. The takeaway for this clip is now knowing what not to do, in consideration with better practices for discipline and classroom management.

All teachers face the problem of maintaining discipline and handing out punishments. I believe punishment should be a last resort for teaching discipline. The first step is to talk and empathize with the student so they know that you care, and then help them regulate their emotions.

Overly severe punishments only serve to increase a student’s resentment for the system and should be avoided. Biased punishments exacerbate this problem. Physical punishment serves to associate fear (and pain) with education and learning and should also be avoided so that students do not lose their curiosity and sparkle. Instead, schools should be a place of inspiration, where curiosities are developed and skills attained.

Agatha Trunchbull throws all of this out the window and into a sewer. Children should not have to run away in fear from the sight of any one teacher, thus, there must be a number of things that make Agatha’s teaching disconcerting.

Firstly, Agatha’s choice of punishment is the Chokey: a dark dungeon cell with large metal spikes protruding from all sides. I can only imagine that this punishment makes children feel miserable and fearful and it does nothing to teach the emotional regulation and discipline that children will need in later life, instead, only increasing their hate for schooling. Agatha is extra tyrannical in that she levies personal grudges upon an innocent daughter (Matilda), using this bias to justify her incredible punishment (“the apple never rots far from the tree”).

Secondly, Agatha demands a militaristically bare classroom devoid of any bubbly and happy decorations, as the next frantic scene makes evident. As a teacher, Agatha does not foster inspiration and curiosity. She is repulsed by small children and is perfectly unsuitable for education. The strictness she demands (don’t smile, don’t breathe) does not serve the students in any positive capacity. Her teaching method consists of aggressive intimidation and corporal punishment. This is displayed when a boy is grabbed upside down and released into the jaws of gravity. It is a rather Treaty of Versailles approach to classroom management that is not conducive to positive mental well-being or student success.

Therefore, the teaching in this clip is calamitous because the opportunity for students to grow and develop has been robbed from them. Schools are delicate institutions, and teachers bear a duty to support each child’s development by being positive, firm, and fair. Agatha achieves none of this when she inflicts such extraordinary punishments on these...repulsive creatures.

*I know my tone is quite informal. I apologize if it is unsuitable for an academic assignment.*