

Studio Handbook

For the students and parents/guardians of
Brian Kachur's Private Saxophone Studio

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Dear Parents/Guardians and Students,

Thank you for your interest in my private saxophone studio! Teaching saxophone is one of my life's passions, and I look forward to working with you all and helping you develop as a musician. Whether you are just starting out on the saxophone or looking to audition for a university music program, I will do my very best to guide you towards achieving your musical goals.

Throughout our lessons together, we will cover many topics, including but not limited to: posture and hand position, technique, sound and flexibility, articulation, rhythm, intonation, style and expression, music theory, music history, and practice techniques. Building a solid foundation of fundamentals on the saxophone is essential to making improvements, and I make sure to cover these crucial subjects with both beginning and advanced students alike. Working on these elements of musicianship will allow you to reach your potential as a well-rounded saxophonist and musician.

Throughout this handbook you will learn more about me as a musician and educator, understand my rates and lesson policies, and gain insight into some lesson outlines and curriculum. These policies are mainly to keep myself, as well as students and parents on the same page about scheduling, payment, and commitments. Please do not hesitate to let me know if you have any questions or concerns!

I look forward to working with you all!

Musically yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Kachur". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brian Kachur

About Me

I am originally from Pompton Lakes, NJ and graduated from Pompton Lakes High School. During my time in high school, I was a member of various honor ensembles, including having earned First Chair Alto Saxophone in the North Jersey Region Band in 2017, New Jersey All-State Band in 2016 and 2017, NAFME All-Eastern Band in 2017, and earning placement into the NAFME All-National Concert Band in 2016. These opportunities gave me much experience in preparing for auditions and performing for others, which led me to pursue a Bachelor's Degree, and now finishing a Master's Degree, in Saxophone Performance from the University of Michigan.

At the University of Michigan, I have studied classical saxophone with Dr. Timothy McAllister, an internationally-acclaimed, GRAMMY Award-Winning saxophonist. I have also done some jazz studies with Dr. Andrew Bishop. I have performed with multiple large ensembles including the U-M Symphony Band, Jazz Lab Ensemble, Digital Music Ensemble, Saxophone Ensemble, and the University Symphony Orchestra. Additionally, I have studied clarinet with DMA Pre-Candidate Emily Ji.

As a chamber musician, I have performed with two award winning saxophone quartets. Cerulean Quartet (2017-2020) and Aero Quartet (2020-Present). Aero Quartet has recently earned numerous awards in 2021, including winning the Gold Medal at the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition in the Senior Wind Division, 1st Prize at the Music Teachers' National Association Chamber Music Competition, New Orleans ChamberFest Competition, and the University of Michigan Briggs Chamber Music Competition. I am also a member of Invictus Duo, a saxophone duo which focuses on commissioning new music by modern composers. This duo has presented performances and masterclasses in both Phoenix, AZ and Las Vegas, NV.

As a soloist, I have participated in various solo competitions. I was recently named a winner of the 2022 University of Michigan Concerto Competition. I have also earned 2nd Prize in the New Jersey Wind Symphony Youth Soloist Competition, and was named a Semi-Finalist in the 2020 North American Saxophone Alliance Collegiate Solo Competition. I have also studied saxophone at summer festivals including the 2018 Great Plains Saxophone Workshop in Norman, OK, the 2019 Arosa Music Academy in Arosa, Switzerland, and the 2021 Avaloch Farm Music Institute in Boscawen, NH.

As an educator, I teach private students regularly both in-person and virtually over Zoom. I have experience in teaching students young and old, as well as beginners and advanced college students. I have worked with multiple educational programs including West Bloomfield High Schools and Middle Schools in West Bloomfield, MI, and Discovery Middle School in Canton, MI. I have also participated in education programs such as the West Milford Concert Band Academy in West Milford, NJ, and the Ypsilanti Youth Orchestra in Ypsilanti, MI. I regularly give guest performances to elementary and middle school students, and always aim to help my students improve as much as possible while also enjoying playing the saxophone.

Studio Policies

Lesson Rates

My starting rates are the following:

- \$50.00 for a 60-minute lesson (recommended)

- \$30.00 for a 30-minute lesson

These starting rates appropriately reflect my status as a teacher in terms of experience and my degree-holding status. However, I understand that financial situations differ from family to family, so I am happy to consult with each family to come up with a plan that suits both of our financial situations. For any students that I teach in person, I may be able to travel to the student's school or home for lessons; however due to travel costs, this may add an extra \$5.00-10.00 depending on the distance from my home.

Payment

Lesson payments can be made in cash, check, or electronically (preferred), with Venmo (@Brian-Kachur) or Paypal (bkachur@optonline.net). Virtual lesson payments must be made electronically. Lessons can be paid on an individual basis, or lesson package plans can be requested (i.e. paying on a monthly basis). A \$10.00 late fee will be added if payment is more than one week late.

Scheduling

It is recommended that students take lessons on a weekly basis to get the most out of their time studying with me, while also getting to work on their goals regularly. Students can take more than one lesson per week if scheduling for all parties allows it. Students are not required to take lessons every week, however keeping to a regular pattern will keep students motivated and working towards achieving their goals in the best way possible. I will aim to find a regular time each week to schedule lessons for each student, however this may not always be possible. Some months may require scheduling on a lesson-by-lesson basis.

Canceled/Missed Lessons

If a lesson is canceled or missed without having given me at least 24 hours notice, no refund or makeup lesson will be given and the full lesson price must be paid. This is to ensure that I am paid for the time that I reserve in my schedule for lessons. Obviously, emergencies do occur and things happen. If a lesson needs to be canceled less than 24 hours in advance, it should only be for serious emergencies such as a death in the family or an illness for which documentation such as a doctor's note can be provided.

Rescheduled Lessons

Lessons that are canceled in advance with more than 24 hours notice can be rescheduled at no extra cost. Please aim to let me know as soon as you know you will have a conflict so I can optimally adjust my schedule to fit in a new lesson time.

Tardiness

Students should be expected to be on time for all lessons (instrument ready to play at the scheduled time). When discussing availability, please try to account for some time to warm up or at least set up so that we can start on time. Please let me know if you are running late, especially if you will be more than 5 minutes late. If we start late, I may not always be able to finish the full lesson time depending on my schedule. However, I understand that tardiness can go both ways, so I will do my best to be on time and will let you know if I am running late as well.

Terminating Lessons

Feel free to contact me with any concerns about continuing taking lessons, whether it be logistical or financial; we can attempt to work out any conflicts as they come up. However, if you do ultimately wish to stop taking lessons at any time, you may request a refund for any lessons that were scheduled and pre-paid for as long as 48 hours notice is given before the next scheduled lesson.

Communication

Efficient communication is essential to a teacher-parent-student relationship. Whether it be email, text message, or phone calls, I ask that both students and parents contact me through whichever method will be the easiest and quickest to reach them at. This way, scheduling or rescheduling lessons will be easy to do. I will do my best to answer emails and messages as quickly as possible.

Parents in Lessons

Parents are welcome to sit in on in-person lessons with their child, or on Zoom in virtual lessons. However, I ask that you observe silently or mute your audio/video on Zoom so that we can focus on the lesson materials as much as possible.

Practice

Students are expected to regularly practice between lessons in order to gain the full benefit of your investment in these private lessons. Practice amounts will depend on the student's ability level, goals, assignments, and expectations. Ideally, a student should play their instrument for a minimum of 20-30 minutes each day to keep their "chops" in shape, but longer practice hours will lead to greater benefit.

It is important to note that the phrase "practice smarter, not harder" applies greatly to music lessons. Practicing with focus, intent, and specific goals for short periods of time will benefit students more than long practice hours of unorganized, distracted practicing. It is recommended that cell phones, laptops, and other electronic devices be turned off or left in another room during practicing to allow for minimal distractions.

Supplies and Materials

Students should bring a notebook and a pencil to every lesson, as well the music they are working on. I will often send PDF's of music to students via email for them to print out, but students may sometimes have to purchase copies of certain repertoire or method books.

A metronome and tuner would also be very helpful for students' own use. Physical metronomes and tuners can be bought, and sometimes they are sold as a combination item. I recommend ones from the brand Korg. These items are also available electronically as iPhone or iPad apps. Tunable is a great app that has both a metronome and tuner combined into one. While it has been stated above that technology can be distracting, it can also be helpful if used appropriately. Devices can be left on airplane mode to prevent messages or emails from distracting students while practicing.

Students should take proper care of their instruments by having a cleaning swab for their saxophone and neck, and potentially a swab or gentle brush for their mouthpiece. Reeds should be kept in a proper case that holds multiple reeds, such as one made by the D'Addario brand. Reed cases should seal properly so

that mold does not grow, and so that humidity is kept relatively stable. Reeds should also be rotated in terms of their usage so that they have a longer life-span. For suggestions on upgrading equipment such as saxophone brands, mouthpieces, neck straps, and more, please check out the Saxophone Equipment Resource Guide on the next few pages.

Saxophone Equipment Resource Guide

Saxophones (Alto)

Beginner/Inexpensive

- Yamaha YAS-23
- Jupiter (many different models)
- Jean Baptiste (can be found on Amazon, but decent quality for cheapest option)

*Avoid cheap Amazon brands under \$500... Mendini, Cecilio, etc. If there are white gloves in the case, this is a bad sign. These horns are poorly made and will fall apart/break quickly.

*Renting from a local music store is a great way to get a quality instrument for a low monthly price.

*Beginner model instruments are made with lower quality materials and may be more likely to need repairs/maintenance.

Intermediate

- Yanagisawa A901
- Yamaha YAS-62

Advanced/Professional Model

- Yamaha Custom EX-875/Custom Z
- Selmer Serie II, III or Selmer Supreme
- Yanagisawa AW01, and other Yanagisawa models (many plating options to choose from)

*Professional models are hand made with better quality materials, and are more likely to maintain adjustment.

Mouthpieces

Saxophone mouthpieces come in many shapes and sizes, but the main two things that differ from mouthpiece to mouthpiece are the tip opening (distance between reed and mouthpiece at the very tip) and the chamber (the hollow space inside the mouthpiece that you can see when looking through the bottom). Different size and shape chambers will yield different sounds, dynamic ranges, and levels of resistance.

While a specific model of mouthpiece (i.e. Vandoren Optimum) usually has one style/size of chamber unique to that model (i.e. square shape, round shape, large, small, etc.), that model may have a large range of tip openings (i.e. Selmer S90 has the options of 170, 180, 190, or 200). These openings are often denoted by numbers, letters, or a combination of the two. Smaller tip openings make it easier for the reed to vibrate, requiring harder strength reeds to acquire a balanced sound, while larger tip openings make it

harder for the reed to vibrate, requiring softer reeds. Smaller tip openings often can allow the player to play much quieter, while larger tip openings allow players to achieve a much louder and projecting sound.

The mouthpieces listed below fall into the category of “classical” or “concert” mouthpieces. There is a good variety available, but there are also a plethora of “jazz” mouthpieces available which have a much larger range of options in terms of materials, chamber size and shape, tip openings, and other elements. If you are interested in jazz or jazz equipment, we can talk more in lessons!

Beginner/Inexpensive

- Yamaha 4C
- Rico Metalite M5

Intermediate/Moderate

- Vandoren V5 A28
- Vandoren Optimum AL3
- D’Addario Reserve 155

Professional

- Vandoren Profile AP3
- Selmer S80 C*
- Selmer S90 180
- Selmer Concept
- Claude Delangle Mouthpiece (Selmer)
- Backun “Vocalise” TM1 or TM2

*Buying a separate mouthpiece is a step up from using the cheap/poor quality stock mouthpiece that comes with most student saxophones. Beginning students will play just as well on the Yamaha 4C (\$30) as they would on the Selmer S90 180 (\$160).

*The increased price comes from better quality material, difference in dimensions/shape, and hand-made product vs. factory line made. It is better to purchase a cheaper student mouthpiece to start and upgrade when the student reaches a stronger level.

*Not many options fall into the Intermediate category of mouthpieces. It is usually the case that any mouthpiece from a major brand is considered a professional upgrade, so the only main difference is in price. It is more important to find a mouthpiece with a tip opening that is right for you and your embouchure (even though reed sizes/brands can be experimented with and adjusted/switched), rather than buying the most expensive mouthpiece.

*Mouthpiece patches (both thin/thick padding) can be purchased to protect the mouthpiece as well as the student’s teeth. Vandoren brand are inexpensive and high quality.

*Certain brands manufacture mouthpieces in different ways than others, resulting in differing levels of consistency. Vandoren mouthpieces are much more similar to each other than Selmers,

so if you try 5 Selmer mouthpieces, they might all play completely different, while 5 Vandoren mouthpieces will feel much more similar across the board. Knowing this, it may be a better decision to purchase mouthpieces after testing multiple out in person first before purchasing. Many music stores will allow you to try mouthpieces in their studio spaces, or even loan them out for short test periods of a few weeks before purchasing. This is often a better option than purchasing one single mouthpiece online without testing it.

Reeds

Beginner/Intermediate

- Rico Orange Box
- Rico Royal

Advanced

- D'Addario
- Vandoren Blue Box

*Size depends on the student's level, time spent practicing, and mouthpiece size. Many beginners start between size 1.5-2.5, while intermediate and advanced students can move up to 3-3.5. A larger number does not mean a better player. The size of the reed is determined based on both its flexibility, and thickness in the material. The higher the number, the stronger the reed will be, and more air/embouchure strength needed to make a sound.

*Rico reeds are cheaper and do not last as long, but are more consistent between reeds than the advanced brands. It may be good to buy 2 boxes of slightly different sizes (2.5 and 3) to see which works best for your student.

Ligatures

Inexpensive

- Rovner Dark
- Bonade
- Rico H
- Vandoren M/O

Higher-end

- Rovner Versa
- Ishimori
- Silverstein
- BG France
- Bay

*Ligatures do not make much difference in terms of sound. Metal ligatures tend to have better response than fabric ligatures (like the Rovner), but are less durable/more easily damaged. Any of

these brands will offer the same result with little difference, and the most important factor is if the ligature is sealing the reed onto the mouthpiece.

*Students with thick neck corks that do not use cork grease often may damage their ligatures when putting the mouthpiece on or when tuning their instrument.

Neck Straps/Harnesses

*Students of all levels need quality neck straps or harnesses that work for their bodies. It is important that the neck strap supports the instrument without hurting the student. Some brands, like Neotech, are made of stretchy material. While this can be helpful for marching band, it is not good for concert playing as it does not support the player and can lead to improper posture and holding of the instrument.

*Look for a neck strap that provides proper padding, a closed strap hook, and is long enough to fit the student for their height and the instrument they are playing (baritone players will need a longer strap than soprano players)

Good brands (cheapest to most expensive)

- Rico
- BG (strap or harness)
- Cebulla (strap)
- Oleg (strap or harness)
- Ishimori (strap)
- Vandoren (strap or harness)
- Breathtaking Co. Lithe Strap

Other Equipment

-Jazz mouthpieces

Good Brands

- Vandoren (V16 or Java)
- Meyer
- Jody Jazz (Metal or hard rubber)
- Otto Link (Metal or hard rubber)
- Berg Larsen (Metal)

*Jazz mouthpieces are sometimes made of different materials with different size tip openings (the distance between the mouthpiece tip and the reed), which will require different setups. Some are made of metal, and some are made of ebonite (hard rubber). *These can be much more expensive than mouthpieces, and I would not recommend looking into these unless your student is seriously interested in jazz studies. After finding the right brand and model, the right opening must be found after considering reed strength and material.

“Auxiliary” Saxophones

*Many serious students will look into playing other voices of saxophone, from soprano, to tenor and baritone. Here is some information about the auxiliary saxophones.

*The mouthpieces, ligatures, and reeds listed earlier all transfer over to their soprano, tenor and baritone versions. The variations are slight, but the brands and models are quality for all horns.

Tenor Saxophones

-Jupiter, Yamaha YTS-62 (beginner/intermediate)

-Yamaha Custom EX-875/Custom Z

-Selmer Serie II or III

-Yanagisawa T991

*Many schools have tenor saxophones to use, so purchasing a tenor may not be necessary. Also, colleges will only require alto saxophone for university auditions.

Soprano Saxophones

-Yamaha YSS-475/675 (beginner/intermediate)

-Yamaha Custom EX-875

-Selmer Serie III

-Yanagisawa SW01 and other professional models

*Some sopranos are one solid straight piece, while others have 2 detachable necks, one straight and one curved. Most beginner sopranos are one solid piece, but more advanced models give students the option to play a curved option.

Baritone Saxophones

*Most high schools and colleges will have baritone saxophones to use, and they are much too expensive to be worth purchasing for a high school student. Setups can be from the same as listed for alto. Larger harnesses may be better than neck straps for baritone playing.

Signature of Agreement

By signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read and agree to all policies and information included in this Studio Handbook.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Parent/Guardian Name (Print) _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Student Name (Print) _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Contact Information

Parent/Guardian Name _____ Phone _____

Email _____ Preferred Method of Communication _____

Additional Parent/Guardian Name _____ Phone _____

Email _____ Preferred Method of Communication _____

Student Name _____ Phone _____

Email _____ Preferred Method of Communication _____