



# ALEXIS MAHLER

## VIOLIN STUDIO

2023-2024  
POLICIES

### Welcome!

Thank you for joining our collective studio this year. I am looking forward to a year of musical and personal growth with each of your students, and am honored to be trusted with their development and learning. To help make this the best experience possible for each of your students, I've outlined some important information related to our shared expectations below.

### Our Studio's Culture

Each student's musical and personal growth is best achieved in an environment in which they feel safe, celebrated, and capable. With this in mind, we aim to build and maintain an inclusive community of musicians rooted in respect, care, and diverse perspectives and experience. Students learn from their peers, and eventually step into mentorship roles of their own within the studio. In an effort to encourage all students to participate, learn, and flourish as both musicians and people, instances of intolerance or disrespect will not be tolerated.

# About Me / Teaching Philosophy

## Experience

I am a violinist, cellist, and songwriter based in Portland, Oregon. I enjoy an eclectic musical life of teaching a full private studio of bright young string players, doing recording work for fellow songwriters, writing and arranging my own pieces, and performing at various venues in Portland and beyond.

I received my Bachelors degree in Violin Performance and Music Education at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin. During my studies, I found my greatest connection with professors who thought (and taught) outside the box. Moving to Portland changed my life and opened up unforgettable opportunities. I'm inspired by and learn the most from colleagues who challenge the way music is taught in the classroom, and the responsibilities of a music educator. It is a joy and an honor to share my experience, both as an educator and as a performer, with my students.

## Philosophy

I believe deeply in the importance of expression through art, and accessibility and equity in the music scene. I am striving to build an anti-racist, queer-friendly, feminist, body-positive, safe, and celebratory community within my studio to provide music for students of all experiences and levels.

## Approach

My specialty is connecting with my students and building a safe and warm space to build a love of music and the community that comes with it. While I draw significantly from the Suzuki Method, my approach is about much more than memorizing songs from one series of books. In addition, I focus heavily on physical technique, music theory, history and culture beyond our immediate surroundings, improvisation, and deep listening. It's about exploring the worlds music can open up for us, and enjoying the experience.

## Accessibility & Inclusion

Growing up, I had a large portion of my violin lessons and musical opportunities covered by scholarships, donations from family members outside my home, and generosity of my teachers. I know what it's like to not have access to lessons, and I won't let a child be held back by burdens that are simply not their own. As much as I personally love the sounds of classical music, both playing and listening, I have experienced first-hand the exclusivity within the culture and the ways unspoken traditions hurt people's experience, and I refuse to perpetuate it. I believe strongly in questioning the norms out loud, and actively challenging them with more inclusive alternatives. I'm not subtle about this. I want it to be very clear to my students how harmful the foundations of this culture can be, and how we can move through it intentionally and still create something positive and celebratory.



# Tuition

The cost of lessons is based upon the time your student and I will spend together each week. Considering the breaks outlined below, each student will be scheduled for 41 individual lessons per year, two recitals per year, two studio events per year, and two required group classes per year. **Payment for lessons is due monthly, before the 1st of each month.** An additional \$25 fee is required for late tuition payments. A cost breakdown by lesson length is below:

30-minute lessons \$160/month  
45-minute lessons \$200/month  
60-minute lessons \$240/month

# Recitals, Group Classes, and Studio Events

In addition to our weekly private lessons, I am excited to host **two annual recitals, two annual group classes, and two annual studio events per year.** These events are important developmental activities that help encourage your student's growth as a musician and performer, and help them develop confidence in their skill and talent. Music is inherently a communal activity, and this studio embraces and celebrates this - each student's education is enriched through learning with and from their peers. This community of musicians has the power to encourage and foster each other's growth, and **attendance at recitals, group classes, and studio events is therefore expected.**

For recitals and performances, piano accompaniment is available for an additional fee which varies depending upon the amount of required prep work and rehearsal beforehand.

# Annual Breaks

Throughout the year, we'll take periodic breaks, typically aligned with the Portland Public Schools calendar. **Students are required to schedule a minimum of 6 lessons during the summer.** During breaks, your student is encouraged to continue practicing, but also enjoy their time off with loved ones. This year, studio breaks will take place during the following periods:

Fall Break: November 20 - 24, 2023  
Winter Break: December 18, 2023 - January 5, 2024  
Spring Break: March 25 - April 5, 2024  
Summer Break: June 24 - July 5, 2024  
Administrative Break: August 26 - September 6, 2024



# Lesson Attendance

Though things like illness and other time conflicts arise from time to time, it's important to attend weekly lessons at their scheduled times. Given the number of students in our studio, and my active performance schedule, it is often difficult, if not impossible, to accommodate make-up lessons in the event a student is unable to attend their regularly scheduled lesson.

Each semester, I will arrange for one predetermined week in which make-up lessons can be scheduled. Aside from teacher scheduling conflicts outlined below, **each student is guaranteed one make-up lesson per semester for any reason**, which will be scheduled during this make-up week. Below, you'll find some helpful additional information related to lesson attendance:

- If you anticipate a conflict during a particular week, more advanced notice of the conflict is greatly appreciated - it is significantly more likely, though not guaranteed, that we'll be able to reschedule that lesson within its original week with more notice. When students cancel their lesson within one week of their lesson, it is unlikely that we'll be able to reschedule during that week.
- Though we all wish it wouldn't, illness happens - out of respect for other students' health and that of their families, I will cancel lessons whenever I am sick. **In cases of mild student illness, students are able to wear a mask and attend in person or participate in their lesson virtually.** In the event of more serious student illness, I ask that the student's lesson be canceled.
- As an active performer in the community, conflicts may arise within my own schedule throughout the year. Should a conflict arise in my schedule that conflicts with your student's planned lesson, I will pre-arrange a make-up time for that lesson with you and your student.
- In the event of **inclement weather**, I am unable to guarantee the availability of make-up lessons. I follow the Portland Public Schools' guidance related to inclement weather - if the schools are closed, the studio will also close to keep us all safe!

## Expectations Related to Practicing

While it would be truly impressive to learn new music and technique simply by attending weekly lessons, it is impossible for your student to develop their skills fully without consistent practicing outside of our shared lesson time. **For students just starting their musical journey, 20-30 minutes several times each week** is usually appropriate to reinforce what they're learning. **For more experienced students, 30-45 minutes most days each week** tends to encourage consistent growth over time. While there is no perfect recipe for how much time to spend practicing, it's important for me and your student to see growth and learning from lesson to lesson - this keeps your student motivated to stretch their skill and learn more, and also helps me know that we're on the right track in terms of teaching practices.



# Communication

We live in a world of almost constant connection which certainly has its benefits, but oftentimes important communication is lost in the shuffle. In order to help all of us stay on top of information, **it's best to communicate about more official items related to your student's lessons via email, and via text regarding any last-minute or emergency situations.** I'm committed to responding as soon as I'm able, but will be unable to respond while in a lesson with a student or outside of regularly scheduled studio hours. If you do not receive a response from me within three days, please feel encouraged to follow up. I also love hearing updates about your student's life and accomplishments, so please feel free to candidly share!

Beyond this, I'll send out important studio updates via email, typically related to things like recitals, group lessons, studio events, or upcoming breaks. **Please be sure to read through these emails thoroughly** - I will do my best to communicate fully and transparently with you, and will try to answer anticipated questions within those emails as well.

# Discontinuing Lessons

While it is my sincere hope that your student enjoys and thrives within my studio, I recognize that interests change over time, and that no one teacher or method is best for every student. In the event that something is feeling off for your student, I encourage transparency and would love the opportunity to speak with you to learn more about what is and isn't working in their experience. Where adjustments are able to be made, I am happy to individualize my approach, but when adjustments would not be possible, I will do my best to recommend another teacher who may be a better fit for what your student needs to succeed.

In the event that your student chooses to discontinue lessons with me, I require one month's notice and tuition payment through that final month.

While rare, I may determine that I am unable to fulfill the needs of your student, or that our collective needs are not a mutual fit. In instances in which I choose to discontinue lessons with your student, our transition will occur at the end of the current month and tuition payment for the following month will not be required.

rev. September 2023

