



# CRISTINA CZAIA MUSIC STUDIO

## STUDIO POLICIES & PROCEDURES

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## **Musical Expectations**

### **Overall Goals of Private Study:**

1. To encourage the natural growth of the voice through careful practice and observation.
2. To develop awareness of & familiarity with the physical body and its capabilities through active & conscious listening.
3. To inspire contemplation of the interconnectedness of the physical, mental and spiritual realms of the voice in an open and safe space for a holistic discovery of the instrument.
4. To treat musical literature as an artistic expression of revelation whose practice has a concrete fulfillment in performance.

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

1. Demonstrate a working knowledge of technical musical terms and their application.
2. Demonstrate growth of the vocal instrument.
3. Demonstrate competency in the assigned repertoire.
4. Demonstrate increased comfort and confidence in the body.

**Important Notes:** In assessing new voice students, I find there is a range in students intuitive understanding of the well-placed voice. Some students possess an ease with adapting to free and clear tone and technique while others may struggle to comprehend complex vocal concepts and theories. As a result, some students will develop very quickly while others will take careful and continued discipline for progress to be felt. Students should not feel pressure to move at anyone else's pace but embrace the joy of the musical process and the individual growth they will experience.

The exercises and vocalises play a crucial role in building the voice and developing good vocal technique. Over time this technique will transfer to songs and the repertoire will inform which vocalises and exercises are most suitable.

Many students prefer to work with these exercises privately. If you or your student feels this way, it is much better that you or they be left alone in the room while practicing.

Several short periods of practice a day are recommended over one long period during the beginning of your vocal studies. Students tend to lose focus during longer rehearsals and this often leads to forming poor habits. Short focused practice sessions are great for tackling specific problem areas and ultimately lead to greater progress.

Each student is required to record their lesson. I expect students to listen to this tape at least once between lessons. The tape will also enable students to practice before their next lesson even if they do not have access to a piano or keyboard.

Continual practice is necessary for full benefit of lessons. Students with disciplined and organized regular practice make the most progress. Occasionally, circumstances will arise where a student will not be able to practice as much as usual, and in this case the lesson will be a supervised practice session, not a missed lesson.

Due to the athletic nature of singing, students will also undertake a one month health journal at the beginning of their lessons to help draw attention to how positive health habits will benefit their musical growth and development.

### Benefits of Vocal Study:

Not all students who take voice lessons will develop into professional solo singers. However, many will find that as a result of this training they will be able to exhibit more musical self-confidence. Many former students have found that these lessons have given them opportunities to stand out as influential members in youth choirs, church choirs, community chamber ensembles, college vocal groups or musical theater organizations. In all cases, former students have gained a much deeper appreciation for all types of music and music in general. They have also developed a much better speaking presence and self-confidence in front of large audiences.

### Semester Dates

- Full time students receive a reserved spot in my studio for the entire semester and are given **priority scheduling** for the following semester.
- Full time students are also offered one **free studio class** per semester. Studio classes are a wonderful opportunity to perform in front of your peers in a safe learning environment.

Semester	Description	Dates	#of Lessons	Cost
Fall Semester	Weekly Lessons. Includes 1 additional free studio class to perform in front of your peers in a safe learning environment.	September 1 - December 22.	15	60 Minute Lessons = \$750 30 Minute Lessons = \$450
Spring Semester	Weekly lessons. 1 additional free studio class to perform in front of your peers in a safe learning environment.	January 1 – May 31.	21	60 Minute Lessons = \$1,050 30 Minute Lessons = \$630
Summer Semester	Weekly Lessons.	June 1 – August 31.	13	60 Minute Lessons = \$650 30 Minute Lessons = \$390
6 Week Package	This package provides either 3 - 60 minute lessons in a 6 week period or 6 - 30 minute lessons in a 6 week period, your choice. <i>First time students and summer discount package only.</i>	Anytime (Subject to availability.)	3 or 6	\$150/package or \$150
Month-Month 5 Lesson Package	This package provides weekly lessons per any 5 week month.	Month- Month (Subject to availability.)	5	60 Minute Lessons = \$250 30 Minute Lessons = \$150
Month – Month 4 Lesson Package	This package provides weekly lessons per any 4 week month.	Month–Month (Subject to availability.)	4	60 Minute Lessons = \$200 30 Minute Lessons = \$120
Single Lessons	Students may sign up for single lessons NOTE: Priority scheduling is given to students who commit to Semester Long or Month-Month packages. Please continue to check the waiting list for cancellations and schedule openings.	(Subject to availability.)	1	60 Minute Lessons = \$50 30 Minute Lessons = \$30
Beginner Piano Lessons	This package provides either 3 - 60 minute lessons in a 6 week period or 6 - 30 minute lessons in a 6 week period, your choice.	Anytime (Subject to availability.)	3 or 6	\$120/package

### Investing in a semester versus month-month or individual lessons.

- Learning to sing or play an instrument is a real commitment as are most life goals.
- Semester long lessons provide frequent and ongoing support and establish positive routines which lead to higher productivity and a sense of accomplishment.
- Developing consistent practice habits helps students progress faster.
- Students who experience this success are more likely to be fulfilled in their art making and leads to a cycle of positive growth.
- Students are welcome to pay lesson-lesson (if available) but going it alone can be challenging although not impossible, especially with an instrument that often changes due to it's biological nature. Consider that most serious athletes work with a coach on a regular basis throughout the duration of their profession.

### **Holidays**

**\*\*My studio does not close on every federal holiday.\*\***

My studio is closed on the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Between Good Friday and Easter Day
- Memorial Day
- 4<sup>th</sup> of July
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving and day after Thanksgiving
- The week between Christmas Day and New Year's Day

Lessons on these dates are by appointment only. If your lessons normally fall on an official studio holiday your lesson will be rescheduled for a different date.

### **Cancellations and Makeup Lessons**

**\*\*Lessons canceled with less than 24 hours notice are forfeited.\*\***

### **Illness, Emergency, or Bad Weather**

Lessons may be rescheduled within a month of the original lesson if 24 hours advance notice is given due to illness or in the event of an emergency or dangerous weather.

If a student is unable to sing but is still able to come to their lesson there are many productive alternate activities to fill our time together. Alternate activities could include:

- Theory
- Music history
- Listening lessons with discussion of Fach
- Advanced planning of repertoire
- Sight-singing guidance
- Character analysis
- Translation work
- Piano lesson

### **General Conflict**

(for events other than illness)

Students may be charged for cancellations due to a last minute rehearsal, sports activity, or an event other than illness. If I am given advanced notice of a week or more, students can often arrange to trade lesson times with another student. Students will be able to trade lessons through their online account.

### **Teacher Absences**

I reserve the right to reschedule for any planned absences. In the event that I am not available and there is an unplanned absence a guest clinician may be invited to work with your student. When guest clinicians or make-ups are not possible or desired, families may opt for a tuition credit toward the following semester's tuition.

### **Vacation Schedule**

One planned absence and makeup lesson is offered per semester for vacations.

The Summer Flex Package is a great way to hold your spot during the summer months while giving yourself plenty of time to enjoy travel and nice weather.

In order to "hold" your spot in my studio during the Summer (6/1-8/31) you may pay only for classes taken, if the following occurs:

1. 7 days notice is given for absences.
2. Student takes at least 2 lessons per month
3. Payments are made in advance

### **Making Payments**

Payment should be made in full at the time of the lesson for all semester long students.

All students who are able to pay for the complete semester in one installment will get a discounted rate of 1 free lesson.

Accepted forms of payment include cash, checks and Venmo.

### **Additional Costs:**

#### **Music Purchases**

Please budget for additional costs involved in the purchase of music.

An estimate of music costs for the first year of lessons may range from \$50 to \$100 depending upon the progress, age and ambition of the student.

Students are responsible for purchasing and bringing their music to every lesson.

I make every effort to use books whenever possible, as opposed to single sheet music, in order to eliminate as much cost as possible.

However, I may recommend individual sheet music until I am certain of the vocal range of a new student.

Any sheet music should be organized and compiled neatly into a 1" thick three ring binder.

In the event that the music we are working on is not in my catalogue of repertoire, I may require that the student provide a copy of the music they are studying compiled in a three ring binder.

Students should also be prepared to provide an additional three ring binder for a collaborative pianist if one is scheduled for your lesson.

This is standard etiquette and ensures that lesson time is used as efficiently as possible.

#### **Hiring a Collaborative Pianist**

I am able to play most high school level repertoire. If you are a moderate-to-advanced level vocalist, you may want to consider hiring a pianist to attend some or a portion of your lessons. I am able to provide recommendations of pianists who are available for lessons and their fees. If you would like to use audio tracks and back up tapes during your lessons, feel free to bring those as well. However, we may not always require accompaniment, as it is important that we take time to focus on technique and keen listening to your solo voice.

## Studio Etiquette

**Preparation:** Please come to your lesson prepared and ready to sing. As in all things, the more you give to your practice, the more you will get out of the experience.

**Punctuality:** Punctuality is very important to get the most out of your lessons. Late time will be forfeited and can cause additional stress and distraction during the lesson. If you are running late, please inform me ahead of time, as best you can.

**Recording Device:** Please bring a recording device – audio or video (preferred) – to each lesson. Playing back your lesson is an excellent tool for practicing throughout the week and will help students observe their own voice and physicality. Students who record lessons gain experience with personal examination of their singing technique and builds confidence in critiquing and self improvement.

**Cell phones:** Cell phones are not permitted during lessons except as a recording device. Any texting during a lesson may result in the forfeiture of the lesson.

**Writing Utensils:** Please bring a pencil with you to each lessons. It is important to be able to write notes in your music as we rehearse so that you recall techniques in your individual practice. Pens should not be used to write in your music as you may wish to erase information or change the information at a later time.

**Water Policy:** Please bring a water bottle with you to each lesson. It is very important to remain hydrated during your lesson. I may offer your student filtered brita water during the lesson. If this is not something you are comfortable with please let me know in advance.

**Food Policy:** No chewing gum or food during your lessons.

**Clothing:** Please wear comfortable clothes to your lesson. We will be moving around and engaging in stretches and physical activity to stimulate the voice. If possible, please refrain from wearing excessively tight and loose fitted clothing. My goal is for you to be comfortable and that I am able to observe your physical anatomy. If you aren't certain what to wear I recommend wearing layers. If it is an issue I will always ask if you are comfortable removing a loose fitting sweater so that I am better able to observe your posture and breathing.

**Visitors:** Parents are welcome to observe a lesson anytime they wish *with the students permission*. However, you must understand that with some students this will be an unnatural situation and they will not be as relaxed and responsive as they usually are. You may feel free to call me to discuss the vocal progress of your student at any time.

**Age Appropriate Repertoire:** My role as a teacher is to be an advocate for young voices so that they have a long lasting and healthy singing career. A child's voice must be treated as a child's voice. Therefore, the repertoire that I recommend for children must be age appropriate. There is no shortage of nursery rhymes, folk songs, group oriented music, disney tunes, classical and musical theater repertoire that we can tap into. Pop music, on the other hand, is not appropriate for very young musicians. It is dark, adult oriented and often highly sexual. Not only can it overload the child voice but often requires a maturity and understanding that they simply have not developed.

## **Practice Procedures**

**How Much Time Should I Practice?** Daily practice is necessary for the full benefit of the lessons. The amount of time spent practicing will vary from person to person. The important thing is that each minute of practice involves concentrated thought and careful focus. Fifteen minutes of focused practice is far more productive than an hour of “just singing.” Problem areas within exercises and songs need to be consciously addressed and worked through during your personal practice.

**What Is Practice?** Practice is an umbrella term for any work that will shape the music you are working on. It may involve time in front of a keyboard, listening to your lesson recording, singing warm-up exercises in the shower or driving to work, concentrating on breathing technique on the floor, exploring resonance in front of a mirror, practicing reading skills in church choir, mental memorization on the train or before going to bed, reading assigned literature on the music’s background or composer, and physical exercise. These all add up to what I consider “Practice.”

**Where should I Practice?** Set aside a specific place in your home to practice. This can be a small isolated space, preferably with a mirror, so you can observe yourself as you practice. A piano or keyboard is also a very helpful tool, although not necessary, as you begin your lessons. I encourage parents to refrain from interrupting practice even if the goal is to compliment your student. This is not performance space. It is space for students to workshop and experiment and they should feel free to make sounds that aren’t intended for audience ears.

**Keeping a Practice Journal.** Students are required to listen to their lesson recording at least once between lessons. Students should take time to write out the important things covered during the lesson in a practice journal. Journals should include a brief summary of the lesson, a list of the technical exercises to practice, anything that stands out in the lesson and any questions you may think of during the week. Students are then able to refer back to their journal as they practice during the week and as they progress.

### **Warm-Ups**

**Stretching:** The singing apparatus is the whole body. Thus, just like athletes, singing should always begin with stretching. A handout with appropriate warm-up stretches will be provided to you or your student and should become habitual before each and every time you sing. Stretching should also take place just before each lesson when possible.

**Exercises and Vocalises:** Careful self-observation with exercises and vocalises is crucial for vocal development and should also become habitual before working on repertoire. During the first several months, these exercises and sight-singing drills will be the focus and foundation of your student’s lessons and are crucial in home practice. These exercises will shape your students healthy vocal technique and then transfer into the singing of songs. As your student progresses the exercises and vocalises must be continually reinforced for improved technique, reading skills and extension of range. My philosophy is that a student’s technique must be so secure that once a student begins performing it will be second nature and the singer will be able to concentrate on expressing the music and interpreting the text.

### **Learning A Song:**

1. Text should be read aloud as a poem. Students should memorize words first without music to feel the natural cadence of the text. I recommend, writing the words out and reading the words outloud as part of this process.



2. The melody line should be vocalized on vowels similar to your students vocal warm ups. Focus should be placed on correct pitches and rhythms.
3. The text should be spoken in rhythm while not losing the natural cadence or pulse as when it was read as a poem.
4. Only at this point should the words be added to the music.
5. In problem passages where poor tone quality is evident, students should revert back to the vowels and then work to match the words into the same open vowel positions.

### **Understanding A Song's Meaning**

Students are responsible for understanding the meaning of all musical terms and symbols and should grow comfortable consulting a music dictionary and writing the meanings above the terms in the music until they become familiar.

Students need to do a thorough examination of the song's text to understand what the song's meaning is. Students should be able to answer: What does the author mean? What mood should be expressed? If you were asked what this song is about, could you explain it? The ultimate goal for a singer should be to convey a depth of meaning and understanding to their audience when it comes time for them to perform.

For advanced students, singing in a foreign language requires translating the text into English using dictionaries and special books I have a resources which are available before or after your lesson. You should not sing a foreign language song unless you know what you are singing about. When singing operatic arias, it is also important to read the story of the opera, or libretto, so that you understand your character and where this song falls within the narrative of the entire work. I also have resources available to help you with this.

**Memorization** After the words have been memorized, it should be a simple process to memorize the whole piece. I encourage students to memorize all of their songs so that they can focus on interpreting and expressing the music.

**Accompanying One's Self** Practice up until this point should be done in a standing position to achieve good body posture and support. Only once a song is mastered and memorized should singers attempt to accompany themselves, for those students proficient enough at the piano. Although the song has been mastered using great concentration and focus on good technique and posture, careful attention must continue to be applied to make sure serious mistakes and habits do not form. In general, the piano should serve to check pitch and very occasionally as accompaniment. Students should never attempt to accompany themselves before the music is thoroughly learned as this can be detrimental to their musical growth.