

Private Lesson Handbook

Alex Shanafelt, Instructor

Overview – why take lessons?

Hello, and thank you for your interest in private lessons! Composition and music theory are valuable skills for all musicians, and private lessons are the first steps towards improving these skills and exploring the possibilities of music.

For young composers, it can be difficult to know where to begin making music. The benefit of having a teacher to provide direction and encouragement is difficult to understate, as the opportunity to study composition and music theory in depth isn't typically available until college, despite them being essential musical skills. Private lessons are a great way to “jump start” development of these skills, and they're not only for composers. Understanding composition can help musicians better understand a piece of music, allowing them to be more competent and confident performers. Composition lessons can also be considered a kind of college prep or tutoring for anticipating music majors, providing basic fundamentals and vocabulary that they'll need for many of their classes. For those who are not current students, music composition is an exciting and versatile new skill to learn, combining both sides of your brain to craft new, dynamic, and beautiful works of music.

In this handbook, you will find information about a general curriculum, lessons costs, and payment and scheduling options to help you make the best decision for yourself or your student.

Curriculum

Lessons, above all, will be guided by the student's interests, whether that be contemporary music, marching band, Jazz, songwriting, or music production. However, all lessons will include:

- Exercises to cultivate your unique compositional voice
- Fundamentals of music theory and practice
- The music and life of historically significant composers
- Weekly listening and score study assignments

As students compose new pieces, I will organize private performances and obtain quality recordings of their music, free of charge. If the student wishes to have public performances of their music, I can help organize these as well for an additional fee.

Just as my students expect me to come prepared and ready to teach every week, I expect students to come prepared and ready to learn. Consistent work and practice are not only necessary for private lessons to be effective, but are the fundamentals of developing your musicianship.

Cost

Lessons begin at **\$20 for half hour** and **\$30 for full hour**. I offer lessons once a week, both virtually and/or in-person. There is an additional **\$5 travel fee** charged per lesson for in-person lessons.

There are a few different packages available to choose from:

12-week, 30-min - \$180 (\$15/lesson)

12-week, 1 hr - \$300 (\$25/lesson)

4-week, 30-min - \$72 (\$18/lesson)

4-week, 1 hr - \$108 (\$27/lesson)

Travel fees are not included in these prices. All lessons are guaranteed even if we cannot meet every week (see cancellation policy). Alternatively, if you would prefer not to commit to a package, you may choose to schedule lessons on a week-by-week basis. I am happy to work with you to find an affordable solution that fits your needs!

Payment

Lessons may be paid for in full upfront (preferred), biweekly, or weekly as long as payments are consistent. After two unpaid lessons, lessons will be paused until the outstanding balance is paid. I accept payments via cash, check, Venmo, or PayPal.

Scheduling

Lesson time and location will typically stay consistent for every lesson, unless scheduling adjustments are made by the student or myself. Upcoming lessons will be confirmed at the end of each lesson. While packages are designed for weekly lessons, it is possible to have lessons every other week, or even once a month.

Cancellation Policy

If the student is unable to make a lesson, they have up to 24 hours before the lesson to cancel or reschedule. If a lesson is cancelled within 24 hours of its scheduled time, payment will still be due as if it took place. If I cancel a lesson in the same way, a make-up lesson will be scheduled free of charge. If the cancelled lesson has already paid for, the amount can be applied as a discount for future lessons or refunded. This policy is put in place to protect both you and me, and to avoid unnecessary waste of time and energy.

Exceptions to the policy include sickness, family emergencies, car troubles, acts of God, etc. A doctor's note must be presented in the case of sickness.

My Teaching Philosophy

As an educator, I believe that teaching is more than dictating definitions and facts. By encouraging critical thinking and experiential learning, I aim to teach my students how to be independent, active learners. My goal is to develop flexible, diverse, and enduring skills that my students can apply to not just their craft, but to other aspects of their life as well. I work to promote each student's individual approach towards learning to make materials more meaningful and engaging. Music is deeply personal, and I believe that building confidence and reinforcing unique perspectives through creative pursuits makes successful musicians. I view composition as a path to accomplish this goal and as a method towards a more complete, fundamental understanding of music.

Instructor Bio

As an emerging composer, Alex is constantly discerning new influences to help integrate contemporary, popular, and Jazz languages into his music. He has written a diverse repertory of concert music, ranging from small duets and trios to assorted chamber orchestras, as well as a budding catalogue of electroacoustic music. Alex has had opportunities to attend the Charlotte New Music Festival, the Wintergreen Summer Music Academy, the Atlantic Music Festival, and the Nief-Norf Summer Festival. In addition, he has been commissioned by organizations such as Hypercube and the Fresh-Squeezed Opera Company, writing *Two-Step and Game Sounds* and *Mirror*. Alex frequently seeks out collaborative and interdisciplinary projects, and is currently working closely with Indianapolis-based Ballet INitiative to create new works involving contemporary dance and electronics. Furthermore, he arranges and composes for the Hickey-Shanafelt Collective, a Jazz ensemble co-founded with trumpeter Kent Hickey.

Separate from composition, Alex has worked with the Greenfield-Central High School Marching Band and the Carmel High School Marching Band as a music and visual instructor. Alex attended Butler University in Indianapolis, IN where he received a BM in Music Composition, and recently graduated from the University of South Florida in Tampa, FL with a MM in Music Composition.

Thank you for your interest in private lessons, and I look forward to helping you accomplish your musical goals! If you are ready to start lessons, please follow the link below to the Google Form. Otherwise, feel free to contact me through email or text with any questions.

Google Form – <https://forms.gle/s59NMZNeNZNQeYwQ6>

Email (preferred) – alexpshanafelt@gmail.com

Phone – (317)-908-8428

Website – <https://ashanafelt.com/>