

Private Lesson Syllabus

Tuba • Trombone • Bass Trombone • Euphonium • Baritone
Composition • Jazz Improvisation • Music Theory

Last Updated: August, 2009

INSTRUCTOR: Stefan Kac (last name pronounced *cats*, like the animal)

ABOUT ME:

- I was born, raised, and educated in Minneapolis, attending the University of Minnesota, Patrick Henry High School, Anwatin Middle School, and Hall Elementary School.
- I hold a Bachelor of Music degree in Tuba Performance (2005) from the U of MN.
- My musical background is primarily in two stylistic areas:
 - Classical Music (Bach, Mozart, Brahms, Stravinsky, etc.)
 - Jazz Music (Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, etc.)

WEBSITE: <http://www.stefankac.com>

- On my homepage, you'll find a calendar of my upcoming performances, as well as free recordings and sheet music for some of my compositions. There's also a "Lessons" page, which houses many materials that I use with students. You may occasionally be asked to download and print some of these documents for use in lessons.

ABOUT LESSONS:

- **Location:** all lessons will be held at the West Bank School of Music (1813 South 6th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55454, <http://www.westbankmusic.org>). The instructor currently is unable to make "house calls" to other locations. Please refer to the WBSM website for current rates and policies.
- **Frequency:** ideally, lessons are held *weekly*. The instructor will work with students and parents to establish a mutually agreeable weekly lesson time whenever possible. Less frequent lesson schedules, such as every other week, are discouraged because (a) students almost always make slower progress this way, and (b) it is difficult to schedule a student every other week when all the other students meet weekly. The instructor will consider such requests only in the case of exceptionally motivated students, and only then when there are two such students available to alternate weeks.
- **Scheduling:** once established, the instructor assumes that students will be present at their "normal" weekly lesson time unless other arrangements have been made. As a reminder, the instructor will send a weekly e-mail confirming the schedule for the week to all students and parents, who need reply only if there has been a misunderstanding or mistake made. Whenever possible, the schedule will be "padded" with 15 extra minutes between lessons. This accounts for the time it takes to pack/unpack instruments and enter/exit the room. I also believe it is important that the schedule allow for lessons to run long when things are going well, as well as to be abbreviated when they are not. Hence, I ask for students' and parents' cooperation in accommodating the possibility that this extra time will be used, even if this is not the case every week. (For example, if you are signed up for 30 minute lessons, please plan on being present for up to 45 minutes.)
- **Philosophy:** ideally, lessons should be not only about learning an *instrument*, but also about learning *music*. As students become more proficient players, the emphasis in instrumental lessons naturally shifts from instrumental technique towards musical and artistic concerns.

- Practice: *Consistency is paramount!* Practicing as little as 5 or 10 minutes every day is still better than practicing for an hour once a week. Aspire to practice 6 out of 7 days each week, and for roughly the same amount of time each day. Designating one day each week as a day of rest (physical *and* mental) can often be beneficial. The instructor will advise a daily practice regimen that is appropriate to each student's unique needs and goals. *You get out of it what you put in to it!*
- Parents: parents play an important role in their children's lesson experience. At the minimum, parents should ensure that their child adheres to a consistent practice schedule as mutually established with the instructor. Beyond that, an equally important yet often overlooked task is to monitor their child's level of satisfaction and engagement with music in general. If your child ever seems to become disillusioned or bored with lessons, make sure to talk it over with them, and also with the instructor if necessary. Music should always be fun and rewarding for them. If it isn't, then something needs to change. And remember, *it's your money!* Consistent practice and good spirits are essential to helping them get the most out of it.

STUDENTS SHOULD BRING TO EVERY LESSON:

- instrument and mouthpiece
- sheet music (band method books, etudes, lead sheets, etc.)
- a pencil
- completed written assignments, if given

INSTRUMENTS:

- Neither the instructor nor the West Bank School of Music is able to provide instruments for student use at this time. Most schools (K-12 and colleges) are able to rent instruments to their music students (including during the winter and summer breaks, although special arrangements must sometimes be made). Students who do not own an instrument or have access to an instrument through school may wish to consider renting or purchasing an instrument.
- Used name brand instruments are almost always of higher quality and lower price than brand new "student model" horns. Assuming it receives proper care, a quality used instrument can often be resold at or near the price it was purchased for. On the other hand, new instruments, like cars, depreciate the minute the transaction is completed. Unless the student is both a seasoned player and an aspiring professional, a used horn typically makes more sense.
- Because of their relative scarcity, it is often difficult to find low brass instruments for sale locally, especially tubas. Purchasing from private sellers online (including eBay) will afford the prospective buyer the best pricing and selection, though this always carries with it a certain amount of risk. A good approach to minimizing this risk is to deal with people who are known quantities. Established musicians and repair people with successful careers are easy to find and have something to lose if the transaction goes awry (i.e. their professional reputation and livelihood).
- ALWAYS** consult the instructor or another knowledgeable musician before making any purchases. Hint: this means someone who is *not* the person selling you the instrument. Local music stores can order practically anything you ask them to, but will charge a hefty markup and probably not give you the informed and unbiased advice that a teacher or colleague would.
- NEVER** purchase musical instruments from "big-box" stores such as Wal-Mart or Target. They will fall apart.

INSTRUMENT RESOURCES

New Instruments:

The Woodwind and Brasswind (www.wwbw.com)

Baltimore Brass (www.baltimorebrass.net)

Custom Music (www.custommusiccorp.com)

Tubadome of Elkhart (www.tubadome.com)

Used Instruments:

Wichita Band Instruments (www.wichitaband.com)

The Village Tinker (www.thevillagetinker.com)

“For Sale” Listings/Classifieds:

Bass Clef Brass (www.bassclefbrass.com)

TubeNet (<http://forums.chisham.com>)

eBay (<http://ebay.com>)

SHEET MUSIC RESOURCES

Hickey's (www.hickeys.com)

Sheet Music Service (www.penders.com)

Jamey Aebersold Jazz (www.aebersold.com)

REPAIR RESOURCES

Eric Peterson

(612) 522-7178

2801 Irving Avenue North, Minneapolis

Cadenza Music

(651) 644-3611

149 Snelling Avenue North, St. Paul

www.cadenzamusica.com

Schmitt Music

(763) 566-4560

2400 Freeway Boulevard, Brooklyn Center

www.schmittmusic.com

FREE INTERNET RESOURCES:

IMSLP– The International Music Score Library Project

A tremendous repository of public domain sheet music available for free.

<http://imslp.org/wiki>

MuseScore– Free Music Notation Software

Comparable to the “lite” versions of commercial notation software.

<http://www.musescore.org>

YouTube– YouTube??? Yes, YouTube makes the list. Why?

What started as an inane diversion has quickly become a staggering collection of cultural artifacts to rival the greatest libraries and museums the world has yet seen. It’s a particularly valuable resource for musicians, and if you already have internet access, it’s free. Use it.

<http://www.youtube.com>

DON’T BE A STRANGER:

- This syllabus is far from exhaustive. Among the many relevant topics I have not covered here are repetitive stress injuries, careers in music, and the local music scene. Please feel free to ask me any music-related questions that arise, whether they are directly related to lessons or not.