

## Welcome to the Mason Voice Studio!

I am thrilled to be working with you on your journey as a musician. Together, we will build your skills in vocal technique, musicality, performance, and knowledge of classical music. I look forward to getting to know you and your unique voice, seeking healthy technique that works in conjunction with your sound and personal style.

### **Expectations:**

I expect you, as the student, to arrive to your lesson time promptly. I expect you to bring a pencil, your music, and a willing attitude to each lesson. Your music should be in its book or in a three-ring binder for ease of use. Feel free to bring a notebook in which to make notes. You may also record your lesson on your phone or another recording device, if that helps you. I also expect you to come to your lessons having practiced the skills and material that we discussed in our last lesson.

During the lesson, I expect you to take ownership of your learning. If something feels wrong, or of something does not make sense, please ask questions about what you are experiencing. I will be happy to clarify any material or redirect you as necessary. You know your own voice and sensations best, and it makes the learning process much more productive if you remain vigilant about your own learning. I also expect you to try, at least once, what I ask you to try. Much of music-making relies on experiencing a range of sounds and sensations in order to find what works best for your voice, and what is healthiest and most effective.

### **Practice:**

As musicians, we commit to improving our skills and knowledge not only in the studio, but outside of it as well. By committing to voice lessons in my studio, you have committed yourself to rehearsal time and practice on your own. I recommend at least the length of your lesson time (30 or 60 minutes) five times a week. But *how* do you practice?

- **Do:**
  - **Warm up:** take the time to get your voice ready to sing by doing warm up exercises that you have learned in the studio or in another musical setting.
  - **Work in small sections:** don't try to tackle the entire piece at once. Start with small sections, working first on rhythm, then adding melody, then adding text. This allows your brain to process the music more quickly and more efficiently.
  - **Use a mirror:** give yourself the opportunity to see what you are doing as you sing. You could use a video recording of yourself instead of a mirror; both provide the same instant feedback without the bias of our constant inner monologue.
  - **Make note of what you practiced:** write down not only what you did or which songs you rehearsed, write down what went well or what went poorly. Write down what gave you trouble, or any discoveries you made while practicing. You can use a journal or a practice log, like the one included in this letter, to make these notes.

- **Warm down:** Just like any athlete, after you have used your “singing muscles” you ought to give them a chance to wind down. Do some slow, easy vocal exercises before moving on.
- **Silent Score Study:** Practice your music silently. Research the composer, the piece’s history, the time period, and the text of the piece. Listen to others perform the piece to find inspiration for artistic interpretation.
- **Don’t:**
  - **Oversing:** this includes spending too much time on warm up exercises, singing a difficult note too many times or too loudly, or tiring your voice by overusing it after a long day. Take cues from your body, and if something hurts or is feeling shaky, don’t push yourself unnecessarily. Instead, pursue silent score study or simply play through your melody.
  - **Practice poor habits:** Repetition builds habits, whether they are good or bad. Poor singing habits can be hard to break, so be aware of your posture, breathing, and tension even as you practice little things or learn notes. Your body learns the summation of an experience, which makes bad habits harder to isolate once they are learned. If you notice a bad habit within your practice, stop immediately and correct it.
  - **Rely on recordings to learn your piece:** Youtube, Spotify, and Soundcloud are great resources for singers, but they should not take the place of independent learning. Take the time to play your melody out on the piano, or practice your sight singing while checking yourself against the piano. Learning solely based on another’s performance of a piece can instill bad habits and change your sound production because you have begun imitating someone else’s unique voice instead of focusing on your own.