

ATLANTA ACADEMY OF VOCAL ARTS STUDIO POLICIES

JANUARY 2017



Professionalism

You can expect a high level of professionalism at AAVA. Instruction is based on several years of study, training, music degrees and professional singing experiences. AAVA commitment includes pouring our energy, expertise, encouragement and absolute best into every student. Vocal artistry is multifaceted. You can expect to be honored for your unique creativity and our approach tailored to custom fit your needs and level.

What we do

There are a number of aspects to becoming a great singer. The bulk of our time involves working on skills related to building and strengthening vocal technique, diction, appropriate repertoire, musicianship skills and performance & presentational skills including interpretation and acting. Life coaching and performance psychology skills are also integrated where appropriate into each aspect to continue to build your levels of strategy, mastery and confidence.

Lesson Preparation

Students are expected to come prepared for lessons. This means that students have studied and practiced assigned materials and technique from the previous lessons. Please come with any questions, concerns or feedback on what you have discovered during your practice. Lessons are not meant for just learning music or once a week practice. You will not progress nearly as well if you expect the lesson time to be once a week practice and/or have not worked since the previous lesson. Students are encouraged to memorize their pieces as quickly as possible. Your dedication directly impacts how you will progress.

Goals & Feedback:

At the beginning of each semester, every student will identify their specific goals. We will discuss your developmental goals and decide on which steps we should take to accomplish them. Identifying, writing down goals and setting milestones (important dates) will help us focus on structuring our work, time and progress.

Practice:

Listening to your recorded lesson is a wonderful starting place for your practice. Please write down the coaching tips, exercises and corrections in detailed specifics on a separate sheet of paper in your binder. Composing your own summary of the lesson can be used as a practice guide for yourself. Students are expected to practice in between lessons. A short practice time every day is optimal. There are many different ways to practice that include listening, reading, speaking, vocalizing and thinking about your vocal and performance habits. However, consistent but short concentrated efforts of 4 to 6 days a week, are much more valuable than a long period of practice once or twice a week. Beginners may practice less, starting at 5 to 15 minutes and gradually increase as their vocal habits and stamina improve. Advanced students and professionals who have worked for a period of time may practice less frequently; as they already have good practice habits, are able to concentrate longer and can take longer lessons without the risk of harming their voices. In every case, you must decide to stay patient with yourself while practicing a new technique. Muscle memory takes repetition and overall mindfulness of being aware and having full concentration on the sensations of singing. Please allow yourself time and regular practice for change and transformation. Plan several weeks in advance if you are preparing for a performance or an audition (if possible).

Physical contact:

Since singing is a very physical experience, occasionally it is easiest to explain using physical contact for demonstration purposes. Student should understand that in order to demonstrate, the instructor may occasionally touch you or ask you to touch the instructor in the abdominal, back, face or head/neck area. The instructor will ask for permission before touching you, but at any point that you feel uncomfortable, you must say so immediately.

What to Bring to Lessons

1. **Your Instrument & water bottle:** Yourself in good health, well hydrated and rested. Bringing your water bottle is always a good idea. If you were sick and it hurts to swallow, please don't sing. Please let us know at the beginning of the lesson and we can focus on other aspects of singing: diction, music theory, breathing exercises, acting/reciting and presenting a piece and performance psychology coaching. There is always a lot of work to do even without singing.
2. **Recording Device:** Recording each lesson is now required. Voice Memos application on the mobile phone works very well for most students with a smart phone. Please be sure to have adequate space on your phone. Recording each lesson allows you to hear how your voice really sounds in an objective manner, remembering that your voice sounds differently to you than it does to the rest of the world. Listening to your recorded lessons and taking notes creates a great guide to practice. Digital voice recorders with a USB or SD card are also a great option.
3. **Three ring binder/Sheet music:** Your binder should be for lesson material only. It will contain your worksheets, sheet music, song lyrics, articles and any other material and reading assignments.
4. **A pencil with an eraser:** Be prepared to mark your music and take notes as needed.
5. **Extra copies of sheet music or lyrics/lead sheets:** These should be clearly copied, double-sided, three hole punched and ready to share with the instructor or an accompanist.
6. **Translations:** If the piece is not in English, bring a translation. Many translations can be found in the aria database or The Lied and Art Song Texts Page. Your instructor also will have access to the IPA and literal translations of many pieces.
7. **Concentration:** Most of all bring a ready, focused, curious and positive attitude! Your self-confidence and honesty are key. You will get out of lessons when you bring to them.

Regular Lesson Schedule:

Private instruction commitment options include **intensives** (more than once a week), **weekly** (one lesson each week), **biweekly** (two lessons a month) and **monthly** (one lesson each month) levels. The more frequently any person invests in private instruction, the more progress and ground the student can cover.

Communications:

AAVA uses email, telephone calls and text messaging as communication medium. Please read the communications from AAVA as they may contain important messages to you. Our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/aavasings) and private group (we must be FB friends to be added) also are updated with invitations to student performances, special news and studio highlights and successes. Our studio website is www.aavasings.com. Please refer any prospective parents and students to these two sites. Thank you for telling others about AAVA!

Cancellations:

Please notify the instructor as soon as possible if you need to reschedule your lesson. Lessons canceled with less than **24 hour notice** will be forfeited and charged. Each lesson time is a standing appointment. It is the student's responsibility to know when their lesson is scheduled. Please don't hesitate to confirm if you are unsure. In the case of illness: infections, fever, colds, cough, sore throat, hoarseness, and vomiting may be cancelled anytime---please do not come to your lesson. No shows with no prior communication will not be made up or refunded. Payment is due whether or not you attend your lesson. AAVA reserves the right to make any exceptions on a case-by-case basis. Illness, documented emergencies (medical or personal) and cancellations made 24 hours in advance will be made up. In a rare case that the instructor has to cancel a lesson and we cannot reschedule a make-up lesson to a mutually convenient time during the same calendar month, you will receive a credit for the following month.

Make-up Lessons:

Make-up lessons must be rescheduled and completed within that calendar month. Your regularly scheduled lesson times cannot be used as a make-up. If lessons must be missed due to a conflict, please notify as far in advance as possible. Please understand that your time slot will be given to others while you are absent.

Commitment:

Student commitment is required for a full semester. Fall semester is August through December. Spring semester is January through May. There will be a cancellation fee of one month's lessons fee for any dropouts mid-semester. For example if a student with a weekly commitment informs us on **October 15** that they are no longer able to complete the semester, tuition for the entire month of October is due. If monthly tuition has already been paid, there will be no refund.

Withdrawal from the AAVA studio requires a written 14 day notice minimum. AAVA reserves the right to withdraw a student from attending lessons due to any reason including excessive absence or tardiness, offensive behavior, multiple delayed payments or no payment, or non-compliance with the AAVA policies.

Payment:

All payments are non-refundable. Options are cash, check or electronic bank transfer. Any returned check will incur an extra \$30 fee. All lessons must be paid for at the time/day of the lesson or in advance either for the entire semester or month. When paying monthly, a check is due at the first lesson of every month. If payment is received after the first lesson of the month, a \$10 late fee will apply. Regular, on-time payments help both student and teacher understand obligations, save time and avoid misunderstandings.

Tardiness:

On occasion, lessons may run a few minutes behind (2-5 minutes). In this case, please be assured that you will receive your full scheduled time. All lessons are scheduled in 60 to 90 minute increments. Parents and students are expected to make every effort to be on time. Please aim to arrive five minutes early to each lesson and not any earlier, as it can be disruptive to the student before you. If you are running late, please notify me with a text message or a phone call. In the case that you arrive late to your lesson, you will have only the remaining time within the scheduled time for your lesson.

Parking:

Please feel free to park on the driveway. If you are parking on the street, please be mindful of not blocking the entrances or the mail boxes of the neighbors. Please do not loiter or make noise in the neighborhood. Please honor our neighbor's safety and privacy.

Student Safety:

Please do not wait outside if you arrive early or until someone comes to pick you up after the lesson. You are welcome to sit in the lounge if you are early or waiting until someone arrives to pick you up. AAVA cannot be responsible for children left unattended outside the studio and we are not responsible for student's safety before and after the lesson times.

Visitors & Lesson Observation:

Parents are more than welcome to observe the first lesson as a way of introduction. Most students prefer that parents not observe subsequent lessons or practice time. Please honor their request for privacy. Parents and other siblings or friends who are dropping off or waiting during lessons may wait in the lounge while the student is working the lesson.

Accompanists:

You may bring an accompanist to work with at your lesson any time. AAVA will hire excellent accompanists for master classes and recitals. Those fees are not a part of your lesson tuition and are based upon the number of students participating in the event.

Studio Etiquette:

AAVA expects all students and parents to be respectful to our instructors, other students, visitors and performance spaces. Please refrain from profanity, harmful behavior, offensive attitude and disrespect of any kind. We may ask anyone engaging in such manner leave the studio.

AAVA Recitals and Performances:

AAVA encourages all students to participate in the studio recitals and external shows. Student selection to participate such events is determined by their willingness and readiness. Your participation in such events automatically grants AAVA to display any images of your performance on the AAVA websites, posters or on any other promotional materials. Students and parents also acknowledge and confirm that no liability is assumed by AAVA for any accidents or injuries caused by acts of you or any person(s) at or outside the studio or performance venue.