



ShawStrings

STUDIO HANDBOOK

2024 - 2025

Hagerstown Studio

19420 Longmeadow Road
Hagerstown, Maryland 21742

Shepherdstown Studio

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SHAW STRINGS PRIVATE STUDIO

“If a musician wants to become a fine artist, he must first become a finer person.”

- Shinichi Suzuki, “Nurtured By Love”

Founder of the Suzuki Method

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Table of Contents

- Welcome Note
- Instructor Introduction
- Studio History
- Academic Calendar 2024 - 2025
- Studio Enrollment and Attendance
 - Typical Lesson Routine
 - Typical Group Class Routine
- Communication and Etiquette
- At Home Practice and Listening
- Lesson Materials
- Absences, Illness and Online Lessons
- Studio Policies and Guidelines Overview

Welcome to Shaw Strings Private Studio!

I am thrilled to share this studio handbook with the students in my studio and their families! Through this handbook you will learn about the Shaw Strings Private Studio, me as your instructor and what expectations you have for your time in the studio.

As Brené Brown says “Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind.” I hope providing this resource to you will help us have the most productive and enriching experience possible while working together!

Please keep this guide as your handy resource during our time together.

Thank you for choosing my studio for your music instruction! It is my honor to work with so many students as we work to learn and play music together.

Renee Shaw Nutwell

What is the Suzuki Method?

The Suzuki Method, also known as the Talent Education Method, is an educational philosophy that believes:

- Every Child Can Learn
- Ability Develops Early
- Environment Nurtures Growth
- Children Learn From Each Other
- Success Breeds Success
- Parents Are Critical
- Encouragement is Essential

You will find these beliefs guide our time in lessons together and will support the best learning experience for all. Please take time to familiarize yourself with the Suzuki philosophy and reflect on what this looks like for you and your family.

Renee Shaw Nutwell, Owner and Violin/Viola Instructor of Shaw Strings

Renee knows the importance of having the right teacher at the right time. She was hooked on music after her first orchestra teacher, Marianne Gooding, overheard her practicing during lunch period and said she could study music in college and make music as a living if she kept it up. As time passed, Renee's music studies focused on violin and piano, with brief detours into voice, music theory, guitar and flute lessons along the way. Her list of violin instructors include Nadège Foofat, Jeffry Newberger, Heather Austin-Stone, Peter Sirotin and Julie Heder. Other notable instructors include Frauke Higgins on piano and theory and Brooke Evers for voice.

Renee graduated *magna cum laude* with a Bachelors of Music Education from Shepherd University. After graduation, she has continued her studies through the Suzuki Association of the Americas teacher training programs, Peabody's Pedagogy Masterclasses, Ohio State University's String Teachers Workshop and the Suzuki Association of the Americas and American String Teachers Association's national conference.

Renee is a Suzuki teacher with registered training for the following Suzuki Association of the Americas courses: Every Child Can, Violin Unit 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, and Suzuki Early Childhood Education Level One. As an active member of the SAA, Renee is eager to continue her Suzuki training and bring those benefits back to her studio!

In addition to teaching, you can find Renee performing in many professional ensembles of the tri-state region. Be sure to look for her at the Two Rivers Chamber Orchestra, in the orchestra for the Shepherd University Masterworks Chorale and Mercersburg Area Community Chorus and more!

Studio History

Renee has been consistently teaching students in the tri-state region of Maryland, West Virginia and Pennsylvania on violin, viola and piano since 2011. After offering lessons in her childhood home, she began teaching with the Shepherd Preparatory Division, now known as the Shepherd Community Music Program, in October 2011. In 2022 her family moved to their current home, with the perfect space dedicated to the studio!

Fun fact: The Hagerstown studio was also a voice and piano studio in the 90s!

Other locations Renee has taught at include the Hagerstown Music and Arts (2013 - 2020), the Cumberland Valley School of Music (2014 - 2018) and Grace Academy (2014 - 2020).

Hours of Operation

Hagerstown Studio

Individual Lessons are offered by appointment on Monday and Tuesday

Studio group classes are offered to the entire studio by appointment

Shepherdstown Studio

Individual Lessons are offered by appointment on Wednesday

2024 - 2025 Calendar | Shaw Strings

Please note these dates in your calendar and expect a dedicated email thread to these events. The studio calendar does not necessarily follow your school's calendar - Our studio pulls students from countless public and private schools in MD, WV and PA, as well as homeschool families and adults!

August

- Thursday, August 22nd - Studio Orientation, In Person at Hagerstown studio
- Sunday, August 25th - Studio Orientation, Zoom
- Monday, August 26th - Start of the 2024 - 2025 Lesson Schedule
- Saturday, August 31st - Music on the Porch Studio Performance at Hagerstown Studio

September

- Sunday, September 15th - September Group Class
- September 21st - Hagerfest Arts and Music Festival (Open to students ages 9 - 21)

October

- Sunday, October 20th - October Group Class
- Month of October - Prepare for ASTACAP online examinations due in November

November

- Sunday, November 10th - Studio Field Trip to the Maryland Symphony
- Sunday, November 17th - November Group Class

December

- Sunday, December 15th - December Group Class
- Thursday, December 26th - Holiday Music Performance with Houses of Worship Tour
- Studio Closed for lessons from Friday, December 20 - Friday, January 3rd

January

- Sunday, January 5th - Studio Parent Education
- Sunday, January 19th - January Group Class

February

- Sunday, February 9th - February Group Class
- Sunday, February 16th - Studio Field Trip to see Ava Pakiam, 14 year old violinist presents a FREE recital at Hood College
- Saturday, February 22nd - Washington County Public School (WCPS) Solo and Ensemble Festival

March

- Sunday, March 9th - March Group Class and Accompanist Rehearsal
- Saturday, March 15th - Shaw Strings Studio Recital
- Sunday, March 16th - Studio Field Trip to the Maryland Symphony
- Monday, March 17th - Tuesday, March 18th - Studio Spring Break, no lessons
- Thursday, March 20th - Saturday, March 22nd - Suzuki Leadership Conference in Atlanta

April

- Sunday, April 27th - April Group Class

May

- Sunday, May 18th - May Group Class
- Thursday, May 29th - Studio Performance at the Flying Boxcars

Additional dates for community performances and studio social events may be added throughout January - May 2025 according to studio interest and local events.

Studio Enrollment and Attendance

Scheduling

Shaw Strings goes through its biggest schedule changes at the start of the academic year and the start of the summer months. Students who are currently enrolled in the studio and in good standing are given priority when the schedule is compiled.

- Schedule forms are provided through the studio website at the following times:
 - Late July for the academic year
 - April for the summer months

- All student availability will be recorded using these forms, including the date and time they are submitted.
- Parents or caregivers are expected to submit the form for students who are not responsible for their own transportation.
- Adults with daytime availability and homeschool students are asked to complete their lessons before 3:00 PM. Elementary students are asked to come as early in the afternoon as possible. Later evening times work wonderfully for older students. Adhering to these guidelines helps each student age to have a lesson when their focus and energy is at it's optimal state!
- Beginning students start out with a half hour lesson. As time passes our repertoire and technique demands expand and make longer lessons necessary. Students and their families should plan to enroll in:
 - Half hour lesson for Suzuki Book 1
 - 45-minute lesson for Suzuki Books 2 - 3
 - Hour lesson for Suzuki Book 4+

Once the school year and/or summer schedule has been set, it can be exceedingly difficult to make adjustments mid-year. New students will be admitted to the studio based on what openings, if any, remain on a rolling admission basis. All students should have an updated registration form submitted into Shaw Strings at: <https://www.shawstrings.co/registration-form>

While every effort is made to ensure each student has a lesson in their preferred time, with limited spots available and all parties subject to busy schedules of their own, it is not always possible to accommodate students' requested times. I thank you in advance for your understanding and patience in this matter.

Typical Lesson Routine and Attendance

Students and their families should arrive for their lesson on time with all materials needed for our lessons together. Be mindful of your lesson start and end time as you enter the studio. Out of respect for your teacher's home and time, please be considerate about entering the studio space outside of your lesson time. Parents are encouraged to enter the studio space first, especially with younger students, to demonstrate how to enter the studio space quietly and considerately. Guide them through unpacking the instrument, respectful greeting of the teacher and fellow studio mates so your child can observe how to behave.

Students can expect to tune each day, warm up with a scale or similar exercise then proceed to our etudes or pieces. If there are concerns or updates that need to be shared with your teacher, please do so either at the beginning of our lesson time or through email ahead of the lesson time to streamline logistical discussions. Students and their families should leave with a clear understanding of the week's assignments, please ask questions before leaving so you are clear on what to work on!

Typical Group Class Routine and Attendance

One of the Suzuki method's key concepts is "Children learn from one another". Group class is our best way to facilitate that learning! More advanced students are given an opportunity to lead, build confidence in their playing and mastery in the Suzuki repertoire. Students earlier in their violin or viola journey will learn from their example and develop their own skills of listening and observing the students who are further along. All students will learn ensemble skills, musicianship and benefit from taking part in a music community.

Please enter the studio at group class time to unpack and tune. Once your instrument is out, cases should be closed up and out of the way so all students may unpack as smoothly as possible. Repertoire for classes will consist of the Suzuki repertoire, please be prepared by attending to regular review in your individual practice at home. In the case when only one or two students attend group, these students will receive an extra mini lesson.

Tuition

	30 minute	45 minute	60 minute
Monthly Lesson Rate	\$145	\$217.50	\$290

Monthly Tuition:

- Tuition includes 3 - 5 lessons a month, regular group classes, several performance opportunities throughout the year and more. Consistent attendance to studio events is encouraged for students to get the most out of their studio tuition. Please mark your calendar carefully so you do not miss out!
- Tuition remains the same for all months of the year.
- Tuition will increase annually.
- Note: Additional fees for extras like field trips, outreach events, accompanist fees and materials are not included in this tuition fee.

Payment:

Payment is expected for each month a student is enrolled in the studio, regardless of attendance. Payment is due the first of the month by cash, check to Renee Shaw Nutwell or Zelle payment to renee@shawstrings.co. A returned check adds a \$30 fee to be paid for each instance. Tuition received after the first of the month will automatically have an additional \$25 late payment fee. No refunds will be given.

Scholarships:

Shaw Strings supports various scholarship opportunities in our area. The studio maintains a list of local scholarships for the Hagerstown and Shepherdstown areas on www.shawstrings.co. Please feel free to view what scholarship would fit you and your needs best!

Studio Withdrawal:

No student stays with the same teacher forever. 30 days' written notice is required to cancel your lesson time and studio membership. Failure to do so will result in another month's fee. This is to provide the instructor ample time to conclude current projects within lessons and prepare the student for what is next.

Payment for any unpaid-for lessons within the 30 day notice period is due at cancellation in the form of the monthly studio membership or a la carte lesson rates as appropriate. Studio membership is not prorated.

Shaw Strings reserves the right to terminate lessons for any reason, including but not limited to: failure to maintain lesson payment, failure to prepare appropriately for lessons, lack of schedule availability and more. When students are let go from the studio, please know it is done with careful thought and consideration, with the hope of everyone's best interests in mind.

Communication and Etiquette

- Shaw Strings heavily relies on email to reach students and their families. Please save this as your method of contact for the studio, with one topic per an email so that no important information is overlooked.
- Studio parents and caregivers are welcome to talk with the teacher at any time about their progress. This can most easily be done at the start of your child's lesson time (For sensitive issues, feel free to request a private setting).
- As a studio, we will address any professional musicians (Teachers, accompanist, master class guest, etc.) with "Miss/Ms./Mrs./Mr." Please model this at home with your child for consistency and to model respect for the instructors.
- If you wish to receive outside coaching with another teacher, please give your teacher advance notice. This respects your teacher's pedagogical expertise and preserves transparency.
- If you are considering changing teachers, please let your teacher know before beginning this process. Your teacher gives her studio her all and she will appreciate your honoring the relationship in this way and will be glad to help you find the right fit.
 - *30 days notice is required to cancel your lesson time and studio membership. This is to provide your teacher with ample time to conclude current projects and prepare the student for what is next.*
- Parents are required to attend lessons for elementary and middle school aged students, and encouraged to drop in through high school graduation. This is to protect your investment in lessons and to help

equip you to best support your young musician at home when they have questions. Playing a string instrument has lots of specific details and needs, your child will thrive with your knowledgeable support!

At Home Practice and Listening

As outlined in Christine Goodner's book "Beyond the Music Lesson: Habits of Successful Suzuki Families", the habits exhibited by students and their families who get the most out of private music lessons are:

- Be present
- Practice Daily
- Listen to Great Music
- Create a Positive, Musical Environment
- Be a Part of Your Suzuki Community
- Focus on Mastery
- Focus on the Big Picture

All of these habits will serve you or your child well as you learn music. These are all values you can work to instill in your home and within your family to create an environment that nurtures musical growth.

Best practices for students include:

- Practice 5+ days each week
- Consistent practice leads to consistent progress. Even just 15 minutes daily is better than 60 minutes just two days a week. Please protect your schedule to allow for regular practice.
- Aim to improve one specific area of each practice assignment each time you practice.
- Some students may benefit from multiple short practices vs. one long practice.
- Take a ten minute break for every 45 - 60 minutes of practice. Ideal practice sessions are about the same duration as your weekly lesson.

In addition to regular practice, students are expected to listen to various recordings of their instrument, including listening to their Suzuki recordings every day. Each week, students should also choose an extra listening to listen to three to five times throughout the week that features their instrument. The instructor can provide suggestions to get you started.

Lesson Materials

Students are expected to bring an appropriate instrument and bow with all other materials to lessons. If a student arrives at their lesson without their supplies, the teacher reserves the right to end the lesson.

Recommended suppliers include Potter Violin Company or Brobst Violins as a great in person resource and Shar Music as a competitive online resource.

Materials include:

- Instrument, bow and shoulder rest (Size and quality to be approved by the instructor)
- Required books and sheet music
- Rosin
- Cleaning Cloth
- Tuner
- Lesson notes
- Recording Device
- Pencil
- Folder to protect lesson books and sheet music

Absences, Illness and Online Lessons

Absences

- Student absences should be communicated by email at renee@shawstrings.co as soon as possible. Advance notice is greatly appreciated.
- Being late for your lesson time by ten minutes or more with no notice will cause the lesson time to be forfeit.
- Online lessons will be held for cases of inclement weather or mild illness, with the studio following local school closures. Directions for online lessons will be emailed to students as needed.
- **Make up lessons for student absences are not guaranteed, but subject to instructor availability.** A specific time is reserved for each student's lesson and missing your slot incurs additional administrative work, if nothing else. That being said, please know that your teacher wants you to be successful in your music studies and they know consistent attendance is a huge part of that. Every effort will be made to take advantage of schedule openings. You can help by giving advance notice.
- Unexpected instructor absence will guarantee an offering of make up lesson times. Please keep in mind expected instructor absences, for cases like teacher illness, training, performances, and breaks, are already accounted for in the monthly rate. Instructor absence will be communicated as early as possible by email and kept to a minimum to allow for consistent instruction of each student.

Illness

- Students should not attend lessons in person if they or a member of their household is ill themselves, including excessive cold or allergy symptoms. Shaw Strings reserves the right to dismiss an unwell student or parent in order to protect the teacher and others in the studio.

Options for student illness include:

- Online lesson through free online platforms FaceTime or Google Meet at our regular lesson time.
- Submit a video for review and practice tips for the coming week by your lesson time. Your instructor will use your lesson time to provide thoughtful feedback. Video recordings can be of a typical practice session or for individual assignments as best suits you or student attention spans.
- Use the time for a parent teacher conference in a private setting.
- Donate the time to another student.

Online Lessons

Shaw Strings has used online lessons for cases of mild illness, travel and inclement weather since 2018. The studio is equipped to use either Facetime or Google Meet for online lessons. Additional details will be provided by email as needed, but here are the basics.

How to Access Online Lessons:

Below you can find the two platforms we will be using for private lessons:

- **FaceTime:** This app comes pre-downloaded on Apple products such as iPhones, iPads and MacBooks. Students using Facetime should direct video calls to renee@shawstrings.co at their lesson time.
- **Google Meet:** Due to challenges with Zoom at the end of 2024, I have been trying out Google Meet with several students and been very pleased with this program! Like Zoom, it is accessible to all computer types and smart devices. To access Google Meet for violin lessons, click this link:
<https://meet.google.com/rkn-phre-vyw>
 - Otherwise, to join by phone, dial +1 401-526-2063 and enter this PIN: 257 430 199#

Once you've determined which service will be easiest for you, please confirm which method you intend to use so I can be prepared and ready to answer your call at our lesson time. Sending a picture of your most recent practice assignments would also be helpful for us to be as efficient as possible.

Some tips and tricks I've found to be useful while conducting lessons online are:

- Parents of preschool, elementary and middle school students need to be present to aid in tech help and continue to be aware of what we are working on in lessons.

- Frame your instrument and body straight on in your video's feed. I need to be able to see both your left hand fingers and bow hand, so you may need to adjust how closely you stand to your camera to get both in the frame. I will be happy to trouble shoot this with you during our lesson time, but a little prep before our lesson goes a long way.
- Come to your lesson time with a pencil, tuner and metronome in the room and easily accessible. You may find a set of head phones to be useful as well.
- If you are using a phone for this call, please be sure your connection is through the Internet and not your cell phone's data service. This makes a big difference in our call quality.
- Please be mindful of your lesson time, so that I might have enough time to review your practice assignments at the end of your lesson. This will also help me be available for the next student in a timely manner.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns!

Student Performances

An annual studio performance is scheduled each year with a professional accompanist and elevated performance venue. In addition to this performance, students are provided with opportunities in the community throughout the year to share their music. All students are expected to participate in the annual studio performance and are strongly encouraged to participate in additional performances. These recitals allow students to refine their skills in front of an audience and develop their stage presence.

Solo recitals are strongly encouraged for students as they complete each Suzuki book and prepare to move on to the next level. These recitals range from formal to casual performances held at homes, religious meeting places or schools. Primarily scheduled by the student and their families, the instructor will work to assist in the completion of this milestone. Additional details will be provided at the appropriate times in lessons.

Shaw Strings Private Studio

Policies and Guidelines 2024 - 2025

- Please pay your tuition by the 1st of each month - Cash, check or Zelle to renee@shawstrings.co . This will involve planning ahead.
- Tuition received after the 1st will be charged a \$25 late fee. There are no refunds.
- Please attend all lessons and group lessons.
- Let your teacher know as soon as possible by email if you must miss a lesson.
- Mark your calendar accurately to include all of our events and dates when there are no lessons. Mark recital dates and events in big red letters.
- Please do not bring a sick child to a lesson or arrive ill yourself. If your child is too sick for school, they are too sick to have a lesson.
- Please set all electronic devices to silent and put them away during your lesson, with the exception of using phones to create practice videos at the appropriate time. Texting, using social media, or receiving phone calls during lessons distract your child and minimize the lesson's impact.
- Contact your teacher by email. Please e-mail your teacher to set up a conference about sensitive issues rather than discuss them in front of your child and waste valuable lesson time. These include questions regarding your child's progress or insights into your child's skill development. These issues are not appropriate to discuss in front of your child, and should be addressed in a private conversation with your teacher.
- Bring all of your materials, especially the lesson notebook and technology to record practice videos, to every lesson. A bag may help you keep these items together.
- Put LISTENING and REVIEW on the top of your priority list. These are the cornerstones of the Suzuki approach and will make the biggest difference in your child's progress
- 30 days notice is required to cancel your lesson time and studio membership. This is to provide your teacher with ample time to conclude current projects and prepare the student for what is next. Your teacher gives her studio her all and she will appreciate your honoring the relationship in this way and will be glad to help you find the right fit.
- Work hard. Your teacher's assignments are not mere suggestions; they need to be carried out fully in order for your teacher to help you and your child do your best.
- Trust the process.

Student's Name: _____

Parent's Signature: _____

Date: _____

A copy of these policies is available for reference at www.shawstrings.co within the studio handbook.

I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand these policies.

My signature above represents my agreement.