

# Beginning the Bagpipes

## Terms & Conditions

*Revised March 21, 2009*

### GETTING STARTED

To begin your study of the Great Highland Bagpipe, you will need two things: a **Competent Teacher** and a **Practice Chanter**. If you are reading this, then hopefully you have found a Competent Teacher. A Practice Chanter can be purchased with the help of your Teacher who can direct you to a proper retailer.

### THE HIGHEST STANDARDS

Before we begin, it is important to understand that I am a professional musician who offers private instruction. My first priority in performing and teaching is to pay proper respect to the music and traditions of the Great Highland Bagpipe. My lessons are specifically structured with the intent to pass along this respect and appreciation to you, the student.

I expect only the highest standards from all of my students. In no uncertain terms **Discipline** is quite simply the most important characteristic any student can display, the characteristic I value the most by far, and the one characteristic that is most requisite when learning an instrument as complicated as the Great Highland Bagpipes.

An important fact about the Great Highland Bagpipe: They are an easy instrument to play badly and a hard instrument to play well. I want every student to feel as though they have a sense of responsibility to play the Pipes to the best of their ability. For this reason, I expect the following from all of my students.

### LESSON FREQUENCY

I strongly prefer that each student to take a weekly lesson. I am reasonably flexible about the day, though the same time each week is recommended and preferred. To properly advance on the Great Highland Bagpipe, adherence to a rigid schedule of practice and instruction is absolutely necessary. Students incapable of committing to weekly lessons and to daily practice will not progress at the proper pace. This wastes my time and the student's money.

### ARRIVAL & TARDINESS

I would ask that each student please arrive at least 5 to 10 minutes early to warm up before the lesson begins. This helps the student to prepare physically and psychologically for the lesson. It is important that the student have time to warm up, reviewing what he or she has worked on for the week. I prefer not waste a student's lesson time for this. This makes it possible for me to use the full hour for instruction.

Regarding tardiness, I am on a strict schedule with other students and for solo bookings, so it is important that each student be here on time (or slightly ahead of time, as mentioned above).

### CANCELLATIONS

I must be notified by at least 24 hrs in advance of an absence. Students that fail to cancel in a timely manner will still be responsible for the cost of the lesson. I have also instituted a three-strikes-you're-out policy: I will drop any student who fails to notify me after three absences. (Obviously, I will make an exception for exceptional cases.)

## **PERSONAL PRACTICE SCHEDULE**

It is imperative that each student find time *every day* to practice. It takes at least 80 repetitions of any task to fully commit it to muscle memory, and each of these repetitions must be correct and consistent with all other repetitions. Only *perfect* practice makes perfect, and it will take tremendous discipline to maintain a personal practice schedule. At least one hour a day is recommended.

## **PERSONAL ENJOYMENT**

My primary interest is in maintaining the integrity of the Great Highland Bagpipe and its music. Therefore, I wish only to train Pipers who have the same goal. I will be a hard teacher and I will settle for little less than your very best effort. But no matter how tedious the work may seem at times, bear in mind that I am providing you with a wonderful and rewarding opportunity for cultural enlightenment and enrichment that will last you a lifetime.

Having said all this, you should be learning the Great Highland Bagpipes for the purpose of personal enjoyment. The enjoyment I get from playing the Pipes consists of being the best Piper I can possibly be, making myself proud to perform in front of peers, friends, and strangers alike. I hope that you will see it this way as well.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL & LESSON FEES**

I will provide all the instructional material you will need in the form of Handouts and Worksheets. Each student must purchase a 1½ inch three-ring binder in which to keep the Handouts and Worksheets.

Lessons are **\$40 per hour**. Half-hour lessons may be offered to advanced students under special circumstances for \$20 per hour.

Discounted lesson fees are available *only* to members of the Ian Sturrock Memorial Pipe Band. Cut-rate lessons will focus only band-related music and topics.

## **QUESTIONS & CONCERNS**

If you have any questions at all about my requirements, do not hesitate to ask. I can be reached by phone at **(205) 427-1756** and by email at **ryan@birminghambagpiper.com**. You can also visit my website at **www.birminghambagpiper.com**.

I look forward to working with you.