

ALEX UPTON

Saxophonist and Composer
Curriculum Vitae

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EDUCATION

University of Memphis

2025

M.M. in Jazz & Studio Music

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

2023

B.M. in Performance w/Jazz Studies Focus

Private Study:

- Saxophone: Rahsaan Barber, Heidi Radtke, Michael Shults, Jim Ketch, Aaron Hill, Wally West
- Composition: Stephen Anderson

PERFORMANCE EXPERIENCE

Freelance Saxophonist

2018-Present

- Awarded 1st Prize at the North American Saxophone Alliance's National Jazz Competition in 2022
- Premiered commissioned works by Christian McBride at the 2023 North American Saxophone Alliance Biennial Conference
- Recorded on Summit Records Label
- Produced, performed, composed, and recorded full album of all-original music for jazz quartet (2023)
- Founder, organizer, and host of the Crosstown Arts Monthly Jazz Jam
- Freelance work in the North Carolina and Memphis areas at regional venues such as The Green Room, Sharp 9 Gallery, Bond Bros. East, and Alfred's on Beale
- Performed and recorded with renowned artists including Rachel Therrien, Rahsaan Barber, Baron Tymas, and more
- Awarded the Kenan Music Scholarship Grant to record a portfolio of original compositions
- Bandleader, saxophonist, and composer for the Alex Upton Quartet
- Performer at the John Coltrane International Jazz & Blues Festival

- Presented original compositions at the 2022 JEN Conference

Lead Alto Saxophonist, UofM Southern Comfort Jazz Orchestra

2023-Present

- Core member of University of Memphis' premiere jazz ensemble
- Regularly performs eclectic big band repertoire ranging from Fletcher Henderson to Bob Brookmeyer
- Regular doubler on soprano saxophone, clarinet, and flute
- Organizes and leads the saxophone section during sectional times and rehearsals

Alto Saxophonist (Sub) , Memphis Jazz Orchestra

2023-Present

- Regular substitute for the Memphis Jazz Orchestra
- Performed in the 2nd Alto chair with respective woodwind doubles (flute, clarinet, soprano sax, etc.)

Saxophonist and Composer, 360° Jazz Initiative

2022-2023

- Composed, performed, and recorded original compositions for the 360° Jazz Initiative's 2022 album *Please Only Tell Me Good News* released on Summit Records
- Collaborated and recorded with nationally renowned recording artists such as Rahsaan Barber, Rachel Therrien, Stephen Anderson, Baron Tymas, and more

Saxophonist, North Carolina Jazz Repertory Orchestra

2019-2022

- Core member of North Carolina's state-funded professional jazz orchestra
- Regular performances at the esteemed Sharp 9 Jazz Gallery in Durham, NC
- Performed in both the 2nd Alto and 2nd Tenor seats

Saxophonist, University of North Carolina at Chapel-Hill Jazz Ensemble

2019-2023

- Core member of UNC-CH's premiere jazz ensemble
- Performed in both Lead Alto and Lead Tenor chairs, both requiring respective doubles
- Led ensemble rehearsals in the event of director's absence
- Served as leader of the saxophone section and organizer of sectional/rehearsal time

MUSIC EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

Graduate Assistant, University of Memphis

2023-Present

- Instructor of record for MUTC 3826 Jazz Improvisation II
- Instructor for University of Memphis Jazz Combo I (Fall 2023)
- Instructor for University of Memphis Jazz Combo II (Spring 2025)
- Instructor of private lessons for three non-major music students enrolled at the 100 lessons level (Fall 2023, Spring 2024)

Freelance Private Saxophone Instructor

2019-Present

- Maintained private lessons studio in both NC and Memphis areas with instruction focusing on jazz saxophone and improvisational methods
- Coached students resulting in successful placement of NC All-State, TN All-State, and Essentially Ellington Jazz Competition
- Devised individualized lesson plans catered to maximize students' growth
- Composed and compiled etudes and exercises for students' use
- Coached/mentored students weekly to meet their musical goals
- Managed scheduling of lessons and finances of studio operations

Improvisation Instructor, UNC Summer Jazz Workshop

2022-2023

- Instructed 45 students in a one-week course outlining topics including: the blues, chord-scale pairing, motivic development, harmonic/formal analysis, ear training, etc.
- Designed a one-week course outline with daily lesson plans
- Led each class session and served as moderator for group engagement/interaction during scheduled camp jam sessions

Ensemble Coach, UNC Summer Jazz Workshop

2022-2023

- Coached and mentored a combo comprised of 12 middle/high school students in preparation for end-of-week performances

- Led daily rehearsals on selected repertoire for the duration of the camp
- Selected, organized, and distributed repertoire for the combo's performance

**Instructor, John Coltrane Youth Jazz Workshop
2021**

2019,

- Instructed 25 middle/high school students in a one-week course regarding jazz saxophone-specific topics (sound production, technique, chord-scale theory, etc.)
- Assisted in leading the Youth Workshop Band in preparation for the end of week performances

RECORDING AND STUDIO EXPERIENCE

***Portraits of a Silent Moment*, The Alex Upton Quartet
2024**

2023 -

- Composed and produced all music for full-length (7 tracks, 48 minutes) studio album
- Performed alto saxophone on six album tracks

***Please Only Tell Me Good News*, The 360 Jazz Initiative
2022**

- Performed alto saxophone on four tracks of album released on Summit Records featuring Rachel Therrien
- Composed and recorded "Pursuance of Infinity" track for jazz quintet featured on album

AWARDS/GRANTS

**Saxophone Graduate Assistantship, University of Memphis
2023-Present**

- Two (2) available positions awarded based on musical/academic merit and availability of position
- Scholarship covering full tuition and fees for the duration of the M.M. Degree (4 Semesters)

**1st Prize, North American Saxophone Alliance
National Collegiate Jazz Competition**

2022

- Prestigious biennial competition eligible to any undergraduate, master's or doctoral-level jazz saxophonist ages 18-26
- 1st Prizewinner honored as featured performer at the biennial NASA Conference

(rescheduled to 2023 due to COVID-19)

William R. Kenan Jr. Music Scholarship, UNC Chapel Hill

2019-2023

- Awarded annually to four (4) incoming music majors
- Full-ride scholarship including tuition, housing, and fees for up to and including eight (8) semesters of study
- \$6,000 supplemental funds dedicated to projects in performance, recording, or research

UNC Jazz Studies Research Grant

2021

- Awarded annually to two (2) UNC Jazz Studies students
- \$750 funding towards a performance, recording, or educational project proposed by the student