

**Isak Gaines**  
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## THE LONG VERSION:

With a creative identity that is part-producer, part-improviser, part-composer, and part-visual artist, Isak Gaines is an artist not easily categorized. His chamber pieces have been internationally recognized. His sample-based music has been represented on multiple releases with Inner Ocean Records. His jazz compositions have been featured in *Downbeat Magazine*. His saxophone playing has brought him to some of the biggest stages of Europe, South America, and the United States. Nonetheless, these facts only represent a limited perspective of his work.

In 2014, after having spent his first 19 years immersed in Seattle's rich music culture, Isak moved to New York to study at the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music. His first major arrangements - featured on his 2016 release *Bits and Pieces* - won the Downbeat Student Music Award for undergraduate small jazz ensemble. Shortly thereafter, he began working in two drastically different mediums: sample-based production and classical composition. It during this time that he connected with his greatest mentor - GRAMMY award winning producer Robert Sadin - under whose oversight he wrote and recorded his first major chamber and orchestral pieces. In the summer of 2018, Isak was invited to participate in the International Antonin Dvorak Composition Competition in Prague, where he won the special prize for Best Chamber Music. He was a 2019 national finalist for both the American Prize in Instrumental Chamber Music Composition and the 2019 ASCAP Morton Gould Award. Throughout this entire period, he was also a frequent guest artist with the house band at The Lesson - a weekly improvised experimental Hip-Hop session in New York's Lower East Side organized by drummer Lenny "The Ox" Reece. As a member of New York-based experimental folk project Belaver, he has recorded in collaboration with prolific Austin-based producer and songwriter Robert Ellis. In July 2020, Isak signed with Inner Ocean Records and subsequently put out a pair of EP's - *Revelries Pt. I+II* - his first solo releases with the label after having been featured on several of their compilations.

All of these experiences boil down to a unique aesthetic style: the pervasive and undeniable influence of Black American Music, combined with a deep respect for both the harmonic and textural innovations of the European Classical tradition and the rich lineage of American songwriting. Between densely-layered sample manipulations, intricate chamber arrangements, and multi-instrumental improvisations, his work focuses on experimentation in search of the point where they all intersect. After graduating, Isak relocated to Philadelphia where, along with frequent returns to New York, he is currently active.

## THE SHORT VERSION:

With a creative identity that is part-producer, part-improviser, part-composer, and part-visual artist, Isak Gaines is an artist not easily categorized. His chamber pieces have received international attention. His jazz compositions have been featured in *Downbeat Magazine*. His sample-based music has been featured on releases by Inner Ocean Records. His saxophone playing has brought him to some of the biggest stages of Europe, South America, and the United States.

Born and raised in Seattle, Isak moved to New York in 2014 to study at the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music. It was there he connected with his greatest mentor - GRAMMY award winning producer Robert Sadin - under whose oversight he wrote and recorded his first major chamber and orchestral pieces. In Summer 2018, Isak was invited to participate in the International Antonin Dvorak Composition Competition in Prague, where he won the special prize for Best Chamber Music. He was a 2019 national finalist for both the American Prize in Instrumental Chamber Music Composition and the 2019 ASCAP Morton Gould Award. As a member of New York-based experimental folk project Belaver, he has recorded in collaboration with prolific Austin-based producer and songwriter Robert Ellis. In July 2020, Isak signed with Inner Ocean Records and subsequently put out a pair of EP's - *Revelries Pt. I+II* - his first solo releases with the label after having been featured on several of their compilations. He is currently based in Philadelphia.

(keep scrolling for resume)

## EXPERIENCE

### Awards received include:

- Best Chamber Piece, 2018 International Antonin Dvorak Composition Competition, Prague, Czech Republic
- National Finalist, American Prize for Instrumental Chamber Music Composition, 2018-2019
- Finalist, ASCAP Morton Gould Award, 2018-2019
- Best Undergraduate Small Ensemble Recording, 2016 Downbeat Student Music Awards, New York

### Festivals/venues played include:

- All 3 Jazz At Lincoln Center venues, New York City
- Sony Hall, New York City
- Paramount Theater, Seattle, WA
- Jazz À Vienne, Vienne, France
- Jazz À Toulon, Toulon, France
- Alba Jazz Festival, Alba, Italy
- Umbria Jazz Festival, Perugia, Italy
- Tivoli Gardens, Rome, Italy
- Auditorio Ibirapuera, Sao Paulo, Brazil
- Bourbon Street Music Club, Sao Paulo, Brazil

### Performed with:

- Leading Broadway actors including Mary Kate Morrisey, Mallory Bechtel, Kate Rockwell, Nick Rashad Burroughs, Isaac Powell, Matt Doyle, and others.
- Top Jazz artists including Robin Eubanks, John Faddis, Rufus Reid, New York Voices, and Immanuel Wilkins
- Studio sessions with GRAMMY winners Robert Sadin, Charlie Pilzer, and Donald Palma (Orpheus Chamber Orchestra)
- Live shows with GRAMMY winners J Hoard (Chance The Rapper), Kristine Kruta (Jagged Little Pill)

### Instruments:

- Saxophones (primary)
- Woodwinds including clarinet, bass clarinet, and flute
- Piano, keyboards (including ready recording access to a steinway grand piano and church pipe organ)
- Guitar, electric bass

### Music industry positions held:

- Audio engineer, Rittenhouse Soundworks, Philadelphia (August 2021 - present)
- Artist, Inner Ocean Records, Calgary (July 2020 - present)
- Artist/in-house producer, Fulton Street Music Group, NYC (March 2020 - present)
- Assistant engineer/producer, XK Audio, NYC (August 2017 - August 2019)

## EDUCATION

- BFA - Jazz Performance - The New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music - May 2018
- Minor - Music Composition - Mannes School of Music - May 2018

### Studied with:

- Robert Sadin (GRAMMY-winning producer for Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter)
- Kirk Nurock (orchestrator for Leonard Bernstein, Dizzy Gillespie)
- Chris Hoffman (producer/composer who has worked with Martin Scorsese, Iron & Wine, Yoko Ono, and others)
- Reggie Workman (legendary jazz bassist for John Coltrane, Art Blakey)
- Mark Guiliana (drummer on David Bowie's "Blackstar")