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# Approaching the classical style: a resource for jazz saxophonists

Joel Patrick Vanderheyden  
*University of Iowa*

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APPROACHING THE CLASSICAL STYLE: A RESOURCE FOR JAZZ  
SAXOPHONISTS

by

Joel Patrick Vanderheyden

An essay submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the  
Doctor of Musical Arts degree  
in the Graduate College of  
The University of Iowa

May 2010

Essay Supervisor: Associate Professor Kenneth Tse

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Graduate College  
The University of Iowa  
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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D.M.A. ESSAY

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This is to certify that the D.M.A. essay of

Joel Patrick Vanderheyden

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the essay requirement for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the May 2010 graduation.

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To Sarah, my Tenor Girl

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## INTRODUCTION

I have played the instrument that I love for many years and have dedicated my life to it, resulting in the accumulation of a variety of performance experiences, and I remain a curious student of the saxophone as it is performed in all styles. This project is merely my attempt to share my own odyssey through immersion in two “schools” of saxophone playing, combined with the opinions and experiences of several notable and nationally recognized experts to provide a breadth of scope that will account for the individuality and diversity of all the saxophonists who choose to use this work as a resource.

While this document is primarily aimed at the jazz saxophonist who wishes to approach classical saxophone playing, the classical saxophonist may also find it to be useful in understanding the physical and conceptual processes of the jazz player, for either personal idiomatic exploration or pedagogical purposes. Each chapter deals with a particular aspect (or aspects) of playing in which I share insight from my own experiences as a jazz saxophonist engaging in serious study of the classical saxophone, supplemented with invaluable input from a panel of professional performers and educators that I have selected for their experience with both idioms. I presented each panelist with a questionnaire pertaining to the process of switching styles on the saxophone, and collected their responses via phone interview and e-mail correspondence. The full transcriptions of each member’s questionnaire responses are found at the end of this document, and they offer a virtual “private lesson” with each saxophonist.

As a time-saver, I can offer a single sentence that may save hours of poring through the ensuing material: You must *thoroughly listen* to a style of music in order to begin to properly assimilate its idiomatic language. The importance of listening throughout the process of learning a new style in any aural medium is paramount. Dr. Ramon Ricker, Professor of Saxophone at Eastman School of Music, likens the process

of learning a new musical style to learning the proper “accent or dialect.”<sup>1</sup> He tells a story of listening to others speaking German and having someone mention to him how different the two German dialects were. As a novice German speaker, he did not notice the difference at all. This same concept can be applied to the saxophone in that, if you are aurally unfamiliar with a style of playing, it is impossible for you to detect the idiomatic inconsistencies in your attempts at performing it. The idea behind this document is to point out some common inconsistencies (and consistencies) between the mechanics of creating jazz and classical saxophone styles, in order to *inform* the processes of listening and practicing, with the goal of expanding the skill set of saxophone performers and pedagogues.

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<sup>1</sup> Ramon Ricker, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, February 7, 2009.

## CHAPTER I: THE HISTORICAL DUALITY OF THE SAXOPHONE

### Dawn of a New Era

By design, the saxophone is an instrument in which worlds collide. It combines the agility of a woodwind instrument with the power and projection of brass. Therefore, it is not surprising that this relatively young instrument finds itself caught between two schools of playing: the longstanding European classical tradition and the newer school of American jazz. While the classical tradition of playing music preceded the birth of jazz by hundreds of years, the saxophone took a roundabout way into its place in the current canon of each genre, and was suffering something of an identity crisis in the early twentieth century.

Despite receiving the enthusiastic backing of some major orchestral and operatic composers such as Berlioz and Rossini after its invention in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>2</sup> the saxophone was not destined to become a permanent fixture in the orchestra. It was adopted by French military bands after an infamous duel in 1845 between a band led by the instrument's inventor, Adolph Sax, which incorporated saxophones (called *saxhorns* at the time), and one led by the director of France's *Gymnase Musical*, Michele Enrico Carafa, which did not.<sup>3</sup> Sax's band, which was smaller in number, had overwhelmingly superior dynamic power, and his invention began to gain popularity in military bands around Europe and eventually in the United States, where it was featured in the legendary bands of Patrick Gilmore and John Philip Sousa.

Noted John Philip Sousa scholar Keith Brion states that even by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (some 60 years after the saxophone's invention), many audience members

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Segell, *The Devil's Horn*, (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), p.15.

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Hemke, "The Early History of the Saxophone," D.M.A. Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1975, p.200.

still viewed the saxophone as a “novel, or curious instrument.”<sup>4</sup> This popularity of the instrument among traveling musicians, coupled with the ease with which one could play and finger notes on the instrument (however horrendously out of tune they may have been), led to what is known as the “Saxophone Craze” (1915-1930). This refers to a time in American musical history when several hundreds of thousands of saxophones were purchased by people across the United States.<sup>5</sup> As Dr. Larry Teal recalled in a conversation with Michael Hester,

“From 1915-1919, it was possible that a typical saxophonist might have purchased an instrument on Thursday and by Saturday that same week made 35 cents on a vaudeville stage. The requirements for securing work as a saxophonist were low because there were almost no examples of what the instrument was capable of.”<sup>6</sup>

In many of the burlesque and vaudeville circuits in the United States around the turn of the century, the saxophone’s novelty was often exploited for the pop culture entertainment of the times. Michael Segell writes of one of the more popular vaudeville acts, the Six Brown Brothers.

“Although they [Six Brown Brothers] did much to demonstrate the saxophone’s humorous personality to wide audiences, they also contributed to its reputation as a lowbrow instrument, suited to imitating the braying of donkeys, laughing hyenas, a flatulent dowager, and the roar of an approaching locomotive. In a business in which a family of seals playing ‘My Country ‘Tis of Thee’ on batteries of horns was thought to be wildly hilarious, they were advancing a certain ignoble tradition.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Eric Hester, “A Study of the Saxophone Soloists Performing with the John Philip Sousa Band, 1893-1930,” D.M.A. Dissertation, The University of Arizona, 1995, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.57.

<sup>7</sup> Segell, *The Devil’s Horn*, p.65-66.

While the Brown Brothers and other performing acts were advancing the instrument to increased popularity and prominence, it is possible that their “antics” fostered the growth of certain negative connotations regarding the saxophone, leaving a lasting impression that would frustrate those who sought loftier ideals. This group included Clay Smith and G.E. Holmes, who performed on the Chautauqua circuit, which was “a sort of morally respectable vaudeville” that toured all across America via railroad and featured lecturers rounded out by musical performances, plays, poetry readings and wholesome novelty acts.<sup>8</sup> Like the vaudeville circuit, Chautauqua exposed millions to the saxophone, although presenting it in a more refined, musical light.

Smith and Holmes set out to counter the notion that the saxophone was “incapable of answering a higher musical calling” which was perpetuated by groups like the Brown Brothers and the hundreds of thousands of amateurs who were playing the instrument with modest skill and proficiency. In their opinion, jazz saxophonists were just as guilty of giving the saxophone a bad reputation. Smith and Holmes shared a byline in the *Dominant*, a publication for amateur musicians. Smith spent a number of columns condemning the emergence of jazz music, calling jazz musicians “human hangnails” and writing that “The ‘Jasser’ should be subject to the same quarantine restrictions as if he had the foot and mouth disease.”<sup>9</sup>

Tom Smialek, professor of music at Pennsylvania State University, who wrote his dissertation on Smith and Holmes, discusses the suspect nature of Smith’s character, which may have fueled his hatred for jazz.

“Clay Smith was a bit of a blowhard. He was definitely not shy about voicing his opinions, even if they were frequently contradictory. Smith was a Freemason, espousing ‘brotherhood’ among men, yet like many Americans of his day, he was fairly comfortable with his racism. He was a Baptist, but was sympathetic to

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<sup>8</sup> Segell, *The Devil’s Horn*, p.67.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.69.

those who drank liquor during the years of Prohibition. He and Holmes considered themselves musical progressives in promoting the saxophone to American audiences. But at the same time, Smith would rail against what he called the ‘hideous cat-calling’ of the saxophone in jazz music.”<sup>10</sup>

While some of Clay Smith’s attitudes toward jazz and novelty acts may have been partly fueled by racism, there were other champions of the classical side of saxophone playing whose ideals were seemingly based merely on high standards of performance. One such musician was a saxophone soloist with the John Philip Sousa Band named H. Benne Henton who was largely responsible for elevating the standards of the concert saxophone. Henton’s musicianship was legendary, including pioneering exploration of the altissimo register, and his performances were received with overwhelming praise and admiration. An excerpt from the *Kohler Wisconsin Sheboygan Press* of October 21, 1919 reviewing the John Philip Sousa Band concert from the previous evening states that the

“...saxophone solo, ‘Nadine,’ by H. Benne Henton, composed by himself, was a beauty. Although the saxophone is considered by some critics to be best suited for mere ‘jazz’ and useless for concert purposes, Mr. Henton proved that there really is a ‘tone’ in a saxophone, if played right. A violin has no sweeter sound than Mr. Henton produced on his ‘sax.’”<sup>11</sup>

Note the writer’s choice of the words “mere jazz,” and how this illustrates some of the pervading attitudes toward jazz (and the saxophone itself) during that time. Much like any new art form, jazz met a great deal of opposition in its infant stages, and it certainly did not help woo jazz’s critics when the saxophone, already known for less than serious musical pursuits in the vaudeville circuit and amateur community bands around the country, became a flagship instrument of the genre. If anything, it was likely that this

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<sup>10</sup> Segell, *The Devil’s Horn*, p.69.

<sup>11</sup> Hester, “A Study of the Saxophone Soloists Performing with the John Philip Sousa Band, 1893-1930,” p.55.

may have pushed serious classical saxophonists to distance themselves from the idea of jazz as much as possible. Even Henton remarked in 1923 that he thought “jazz foolishness” was a thing of the past.<sup>12</sup> Yet, while the classical saxophone and its repertoire were beginning to be codified one concert at a time, jazz music (and the jazz saxophone) began to dominate the American popular music scene in the late 1920s, bolstered by the advent of radio as a mass entertainment outlet and the number of innovators who breathed new life into the music. As the saxophone matured, finding its home in both the concert hall and the night club, the ancestral artistry of the instrument formed two separate paths.

#### Archetype of Jazz

As the saxophone established its role in each idiom, its presence at the forefront of the intoxicatingly new and rapidly evolving genre of jazz eventually built the instrument into an archetype of the music. While jazz had its share of innovators, there were a proportionately large number who played the saxophone, including Sidney Bechet, Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, and many others. With each “reinvention” of the style came a veritable reinvention of the saxophone itself. The only similar event in the classical idiom was the formation of saxophone ensembles, and in particular, the codification of the saxophone quartet. Even then, however, the music itself was not particularly revolutionary, despite the new voice that was proclaiming it.

The two styles developed side by side, occasionally crossing paths throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with both sharing the common lack of acceptance in professional and

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<sup>12</sup> Hester, “A Study of the Saxophone Soloists Performing with the John Philip Sousa Band, 1893-1930,” p.57.

academic circles. While the longevity of the classical saxophone benefited from its adoption into the school instrumental program in the United States,<sup>13</sup> it would be years before the saxophone and jazz were fully acknowledged at the post-secondary level. Ramon Ricker discusses the standard culture of saxophone playing in his formative years, pre-dating the emergence of formalized saxophone degrees.

“...degrees in saxophone did not exist in many schools in the United States until around the 1960’s. Prior to that you would have to major in clarinet or flute and play saxophone on the side. I started on clarinet around age 10 and when I was 16 I took up the saxophone and five weeks later played my first gig. From then on I always played jazz on saxophone and classical music on clarinet, and that was typical for a lot of musicians.”<sup>14</sup>

Today, degrees in saxophone (classical and jazz) are offered at hundreds of institutions across the country. Still, when I mention to many non-musicians that I study classical saxophone, their eyebrows furrow with confusion. “What is that?” they ask. By leaving the “classical” part out and mentioning that I simply play the “saxophone,” a different reaction is elicited. Typically, their eyes light up and they begin to reference standard, non-musician saxophone stand-bys, such as Kenny G or Bill Clinton. The more “enlightened” non-musician might mention Bird or Trane, but I have yet to encounter anyone who mentions names such as Claude Delangle, Sigurd Rascher, or Eugene Rousseau, despite their tremendous impact on the saxophone world. Why is this? Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the saxophone has been imprinted into the consciousness of popular culture as an instrument of jazz – smooth, bop, cool or presidential. Even the shape of the instrument bears the resemblance of a J, frequently exploited to tiresome effect in pictographic spellings of the word.

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<sup>13</sup> Harry Hindson, “Aspects of the Saxophone in American Musical Culture 1850-1980,” D.M.A. Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1992, p.323.

<sup>14</sup> Ramon Ricker, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, February 7, 2009.



This archetype is a powerful one, and is something that I have seen classical saxophonists struggle with. For many, it is assumed that because they play the saxophone, they must play jazz. After years of repeating, “Yes, I play saxophone. No, I do not play jazz,” they may become resentful. Similarly, I feel that many jazz saxophonists feed off this popular iconic image and use it as an excuse not to familiarize themselves with the classical saxophone. Perhaps in both camps it is also simply an issue of fearing the unknown. The incredible advances of the instrument in both idioms have created metaphysical walls that can deter saxophonists who have poured thousands of hours of time into studying one idiom from crossing over, resulting in a large number of saxophonists who “specialize” in one style of playing.

#### Strengths and Limitations of Specialization

Specializing in a particular genre on any instrument is fairly commonplace, and is often advantageous. It allows musicians to focus all their efforts on mastering the nuances of a single idiom, honing their skills to the most refined level. There is a reason for the origination of the phrase “Jack of all trades and master of none.” If the scope of one’s goals for mastery is too great, then the dispersion of one’s focus simply does not allow the same level of achievement possible with specialization. In both jazz and classical saxophone playing, subtle nuances characterize an authenticity that takes a great deal of time, practice, and listening to perfect. Consequently, there is a great divide of skill sets between musicians in the two schools, and it is rare to find musicians who excel in both styles.

There is a potential downside of saxophone specialization, where performers can become trapped in the very box they sought to become familiar with. The challenge lies in that many musicians, and especially saxophonists, feel an increasing demand to excel in both styles. Part of this may stem from the public view of the saxophone as an archetypal jazz instrument, which supports the idea that even someone who

predominantly plays classical saxophone music is expected to at the very least have a functional knowledge of jazz. After all, they play the *saxophone*! With the exception of a handful of compositions in which saxophonists get to show their faces in an orchestra, most professional jobs are in jazz or pop idioms. Conversely, jazz players hoping for a teaching career are confronted with the reality that instructional positions in universities, even outside the halls of academe, are founded in the classical tradition and require significant pedagogical knowledge in that style. At the same time, many saxophone-based teaching posts require some degree of involvement in the jazz realm as well, whether it is leading a student ensemble, performing in a faculty ensemble, or incorporating jazz into studio lessons. This can be problematic for classical saxophonists, and the cycle just keeps perpetuating itself. Certain institutions with the financial means to do so employ separate instructors on the same instrument for jazz and classical styles, although there are only a few that can afford this level of specialization on a regular basis, and as a result, there is a high demand for those few musicians proficient in both styles.

Apart from academic pursuits, there are numerous professional situations which require the performer to have a proficiency that is idiomatically correct in each style. This includes studio work, pit orchestras, and some modern music ensembles which assume crossover techniques from both traditions. Furthermore, the physical and conceptual lessons learned in studying another style can build a better understanding of the technical processes found in one's own style, often improving skills in an otherwise untapped fashion. Thus, even if specializing in a specific style, there are abundant reasons to cultivate a familiarity with the other.

## CHAPTER II: TIMBRE

Beauty in any art is much easier to recognize than to describe, and this is doubly true of a musical tone.

Larry Teal, *The Art of Saxophone Playing*

When listening to a piece of recorded music, how is it possible for one to determine the instrumentation without actually seeing the musicians performing? The answer is the recognition of timbre. The timbre of each instrument is unique because the variances in construction between them are such that each instrument is designed (with regards to size, shape, materials, etc.) to either bring out or dampen certain overtones. As Siegmund Levarie and Ernst Levy put it,

“The construction of an instrument favors the loudness of some overtones at the expense of others; it extends the overtone series far up or limits it close down; and it may even eliminate some overtones altogether. A different constellation of overtones is responsible for a different shape, or form, or complexity of the vibration. The differences between overtone constellations account for the differences of timbre.”<sup>15</sup>

So, these “constellations” can be thought of as a sort of timbral thumbprint, by which each instrument is identified. How, then, can we begin to approach the timbre differences between two instruments with the *same* basic thumbprint? In other words, what makes a classical saxophonist sound different from a jazz saxophonist playing the same instrument? How about the different musical thumbprints between two classical saxophonists? Or two jazz saxophonists? How is someone able to correctly identify John Coltrane’s playing on a recording by hearing only one or two notes?

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<sup>15</sup> Siegmund Levarie and Ernst Levy, *Tone: A Study in Musical Acoustics*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (The Kent State University Press, 1980), p.63.

As master saxophonist and pedagogue, Larry Teal writes, “The mix of fundamental tone and overtones is different for each instrument and allows us to differentiate between instruments and also differentiate between various tone qualities on the same instrument.”<sup>16</sup> So how is the mix of overtones and fundamental affected to produce a variety of tone qualities on the same instrument? While the instrument is largely responsible for the shape, form and complexity of the vibration (and consequent overtones), it is not solely responsible. Levarie and Levy write specifically on the topic of timbre in woodwinds that “Breath, mouth, lips, reeds—these most personal agents are subject to the minutest fluctuations of the player’s will. Any change of pressure or position necessarily brings about a fresh overtone constellation.”<sup>17</sup> These factors affecting vibration and timbre that Levarie and Levy touch upon can be divided into two broad categories. The first is physical, relating to the bodily manipulation of various aspects of the oral cavity and embouchure, including tongue (position and articulation), jaw, facial muscles, lips, and air flow (direction and speed). The second category deals with equipment, and includes reeds, mouthpieces, ligatures, necks, and to a lesser extent, the particular model of the saxophone itself.

There is also a third category, which includes mental conceptualizations of tone that affect the overtones and vibration through the influence they wield over their physical manifestation. In *The Art of Saxophone Playing*, Teal cites four categories as having radical influence over the flexible and varied tone possibilities of the saxophone. They are: Tonal Concept, Reed and Mouthpiece, The Respiratory Organs, and Embouchure.<sup>18</sup> While the latter two are physical, and the second category is equipment-

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<sup>16</sup> Larry Teal, *The Art of Saxophone Playing* (Summy-Birchard Music, 1963), p.45.

<sup>17</sup> Levarie and Levy, *Tone: A Study in Musical Acoustics*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p.137.

<sup>18</sup> Teal, *The Art of Saxophone Playing*, p.46.

related, the idea of “tonal concept” is distinctly removed from the rest, though just as influential in determining the specific timbre that is produced. Much of the formation of tonal concept stems from the individual acts of listening and performance experience. The physical aspects of playing are dependent on the mental policing that begins with a clear tonal concept.

It is important to bear in mind that each category can only control a portion of the tone. In other words, adjusting one category will not necessarily overcome extreme deficiencies in another category. You could have the best physical control and embouchure in the world, but with the wrong equipment, could still produce a less than desirable tone. Conversely, the best equipment in the world will not make up for a terrible embouchure and weak facial muscle control. Furthermore, without a clear concept of tone production, even great physical form and proper equipment will fall short of beauty. There are many saxophone students and teachers who believe that if they buy a certain type of mouthpiece, or instrument, or reed, it will magically make them sound like a player they idolize. When this does not immediately help them achieve the desired result, they become confused and wonder, “Why don’t I sound more like Player X? I’m using the same setup!” Outside of the probability that the student has logged fewer hours in a practice room than Player X, the reason for this incongruence is that while one can have control over the timbral thumbprint in terms of equipment, one cannot control or modify certain fixed attributes of his physical makeup, including the size and shape of his oral cavity, tongue, teeth, lips, lungs, etc. All of these attributes go into creating that thumbprint (producing certain overtones through a pattern of vibration), and this is part of the reason why different saxophonists who have the same timbral goal might use very different equipment to get there. They choose equipment that, when *combined* with their physical makeup and habitual tendencies, will produce the desired timbre. Due to the more “mysterious” and less definable physical properties of creating certain vibrations (and resulting timbres), this document will focus on the physical and conceptual

transition from playing jazz saxophone to classical saxophone, while briefly touching on the equipment differences.

So, what makes a jazz saxophonist sound different from a classical saxophonist? The difficulty of this question is that under the umbrella terms of “classical saxophone” and “jazz saxophone” there exist a number of sub-styles that require their own separate idiomatic study, and are as different from one another as they are from those in the opposite umbrella style. To tackle this question with brevity, one must generalize to some degree. Broadly speaking, the difference between the two styles can be boiled down to idiomatic priorities. In the jazz saxophone world, the development of an individual sound is paramount, yet must be accomplished while retaining certain elements from any number of the iconic figures of the style (one’s “influences”) through an in-depth aural study. A jazz “sound” can be categorized by elements of timbre as well as improvisational tendencies, and draws a great deal of inspiration from the complexities and contrasts found in the human voice. There is no single timbral concept that defines a good jazz sound, and the same is true for classical saxophone. The key difference is that in the world of classical saxophone, the priority for individuality is not as prominent, and consequently, the spectrum of accepted timbres (and articulation styles, vibrato usage, etc.) is much narrower in scope. That is not to say that classical saxophonists do not strive to develop a unique voice, but that they do so with greater emphasis placed on uniformity of timbre throughout the range of the instrument than most jazz players. Chris Vadala, a Distinguished Scholar-Teacher, Director of Jazz Studies and Professor of Saxophone at the University of Maryland, illustrates his perception of the difference in timbres:

“Generally, a warmer, darker and very centered classical sound versus a bit more edge and slightly higher harmonics in my jazz sound, i.e., accepted conformity versus a personal approach. By ‘accepted conformity’ I am alluding to the tonal schools of classical saxophone playing (i.e., American (Sinta, Hemke, Teal, Leeson and disciples) vs. French (Mule, Deffayet, Londeix, etc.)). There are jazz ‘schools’ like Bebop and Hard Bop vs. Cool but with more tonal variations and

latitude. Jazz players have more latitude while classical players are expected to adhere to accepted standards and common practice.”<sup>19</sup>

Dr. James Romain, Associate Professor of Saxophone and Assistant Director of Jazz Studies at Drake University, sheds even more light on this idea of different timbres and includes other aspects of playing.

“In classical performance, the parameters are narrower, and the practices more clearly defined. Tone, phrasing, vibrato, articulation, dynamics—all must connect up with an established tradition of concert music. This is also true in jazz, but the parameters are broader. In jazz, individuality has long been considered an asset. In classical performance, emphasizing individuality may be a liability, depending upon the context. The intentions of the composer become paramount, and the performer is a conduit. The success of the performance hinges upon how well the performer transmits the work of the composer. Personal interpretive decisions are very real—and important—but are subtle. In jazz performance, the contribution of the performer—their improvised creative statement—is paramount, and the tune is generally considered a vehicle for that expression.”<sup>20</sup>

Dr. Kenneth Tse, Associate Professor of Saxophone at the University of Iowa, makes a comparison between classical and jazz timbres in the altissimo register in which he likens the classical saxophone timbre to that of a violin, and jazz saxophone timbre to that of a trumpet.<sup>21</sup> My interpretation of Dr. Tse’s words is that the target timbre for classical players has what is perhaps a slightly thinner or more delicate core, but focuses on maintaining uniform precision and perfect intonation. The target timbre for jazz players (in the altissimo range) is often comparable to that of either a screaming trumpet with a bigger, bolder sound, or even a male falsetto voice. The jazz timbre focuses more on the emotional impact and contrast of the sound, less on its purity and consistency with the normal range of the instrument. Many jazz players will strive to change the timbre in

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<sup>19</sup> Chris Vadala, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, February 8, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> James Romain, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, March 10, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> Kenneth Tse, Conversation with Joel Vanderheyden, March, 2009.

the altissimo register either through vocalization or “splitting” the note into an array of multiphonics for greater impact.

This insight is crucial for the jazz player approaching a classical style of playing. In my experience, many jazz players who have little classical playing (or listening) experience will hear classical saxophonists and be somewhat turned off, specifically by the lack of force and power in the upper register of the horn. This is likely a result of conditioning in which they have been programmed to accept a certain approach to playing in that register, and this particular approach does not conform to their expectations. Larry Teal provides further insight on this topic when he writes that “Adjectives can be used to describe tone, yet listeners do not hear the same tone in the same way. A tone quality which impresses one individual as refined and beautiful may sound thin and anemic to another.”<sup>22</sup> Exposure to the literature itself can also play a role, as Dr. Tom Walsh, Associate Professor of Saxophone and Jazz Studies at Indiana University, points out.

“Another difficulty that arises sometimes is that students with little or no classical background have a hard time relating to classical music at all. It hasn’t been part of their experience, so they don’t understand it and they don’t like it. The challenge here for the teacher is to help the student find some value in classical study and to help the student find a way to relate to the task of playing in the classical style.”<sup>23</sup>

While the classical approach to altissimo playing is different, it is important for the jazz saxophonist to realize that the beauty and power of the sound comes from the precision and control of a uniform timbre. When a world-class classical saxophonist is performing, it can be truly breathtaking and every bit as powerful as a jazz performance. It is through an intensive listening process that a student of any music begins to

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<sup>22</sup> Teal, *The Art of Saxophone Playing*, p.46.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Walsh, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, April 27, 2009.



understand the true beauty found within that music, and without significant exposure through listening, the appreciation will not follow.

While Dr. Tse's example refers to the altissimo register, I believe that it is fair to develop a similar construct for the low range of the saxophone. Jazz playing often involves timbre changes at the extreme ranges of the horn, and many young jazz saxophonists will treat the low end of the horn as an opportunity to either use subtone (a softer, darker sound with muted upper harmonics and typically more air in the sound) or to "honk" with emphasis. Both of these techniques are effective in expanding the aural palette of the jazz player, and are seldom found in classical playing. The problem with this approach is that these "colors" can also be used to mask unfamiliarity with playing cleanly in the low register. Younger saxophonists can start using these techniques as a crutch, and can be simply written off as playing with "jazz tone," when really they just have not learned to play low notes any other way. The reason classical players are able to navigate the lower register of the instrument with (apparent) ease in any dynamic setting is, again, the focus on uniform timbre throughout the range of the instrument and the repeated practice of oral cavity shape and tongue placement that allows them to play this way. This focus, as one will see, deals with the minimization or elimination of any unnecessary movement in the oral cavity, and is in a way, the heart of this document. Dr. Tse draws a vivid (and quite accurate) comparison between playing tennis and ping-pong.<sup>24</sup> The movements are all similar, but are on a much smaller scale in ping-pong, requiring a higher level of control.

This can be an obstacle for many jazz musicians attempting to approach classical saxophone, because on a surface level, the technical challenges presented in reading difficult music rather than improvising can overshadow this single most important aspect

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<sup>24</sup> Kenneth Tse, Conversation with Joel Vanderheyden, March, 2009.

of interpreting classical music – the uniformity of sound. Imagine the confusing aural incongruence that would occur if someone were interpreting a transcription of a Michael Brecker solo with a Boots Randolph *Yakety-Sax*-style concept. This is what I imagine many classical saxophonists feel as they listen to jazz musicians attempting to interpret their music for the first time (and vice-versa).

Stephen Duke, Distinguished Research Professor at Northern Illinois University, writes about the importance of physical sensations associated with stylistic interpretation and the compulsive application of inappropriate technique that often plagues saxophonists switching from one style to another.

“In learning both jazz and Classical styles, it is important to develop clear image, aural perception and sensation of producing the sound. The relation between these factors often confuses the player who has developed the ability to discern sounds but hasn't experienced the sensations associated with producing them. A Classically-oriented player, for example, may perceive the difference between jazz and Classical accents and may even hear that they are not executing Jazz style, but still cannot produce a jazz accent because they are not aware of the sensation associated with producing a jazz accent and compulsively apply inappropriate technique. Interestingly, when Classically-oriented players use Classical technique to play Jazz style their unconvincing interpretation is generally viewed as poor conception and when a Jazz-oriented player uses jazz technique in interpreting Classical style it is usually thought to be a technical deficiency. In either case, what is seemingly "good" technique in one style may be 'bad' technique in another. When a player is learning to play both Classical and jazz styles, the need for a more flexible technique increases because sound possibilities are expanded.”<sup>25</sup>

According to Duke, it would seem that the primary reason it is so difficult to switch between classical and jazz styles lies in the habitual application of inappropriate technique in a foreign style. Even when the differences in concept are clear to a saxophonist (“the ability to discern sounds”), the lack of familiarity with the physical sensation to produce the appropriate sound can prohibit them from correcting stylistic

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<sup>25</sup> Stephen Duke, “An Integrated Approach to Playing the Saxophone,” *The Saxophone Symposium*, Vol. 13 (1988): p.21.

deficiencies. This is, in my experience as both a player and teacher, quite valid. Once one has become familiar with the sensation (through physical adjustment guided by focused listening), one's tonal concept is able to shift accordingly.

In my conversation with Duke, he proposes that there is really a singular tone (or timbre) used in both jazz and classical circles, with the defense that there have been several studies (including one of his own, testing samples of classical versus jazz saxophone) that illustrate how indiscernible timbre becomes when the attack transients (beginning and ending of tones) are removed.<sup>26</sup> He elaborates, saying that, "it's what changes in the tone that allows us to identify the tone. In other words, the tone is the style. The style is the tone. It's not a 'jazz tone.' It's how that tone changes by how you play it. If you add a certain type of vibrato, you instantly know it's a jazz tone. If you add a certain type of attack, you instantly know it's a jazz tone. In fact, without the attacks and vibrato you can't tell the difference between a classical soprano and a jazz bari!"<sup>27</sup>

We will fully explore the important roles of articulation and vibrato later in the document, but does this mean that the vibrations and overtones present in a classical saxophonist's rendition of the *Ibert* are the same as a jazz saxophonist playing *Giant Steps*? It may, depending on who is performing each piece. Yet, even though the human ear may have difficulties detecting differences between two saxophone tones stripped of their attack transients, it doesn't mean that the differences are not there. A recent study conducted by Vanessa Hasbrook was able to accurately measure the presence of harmonics in both classical and jazz saxophone tones, coming to the conclusion that the

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<sup>26</sup> Stephen Duke, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, March 19, 2009.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

upper harmonics were significantly more pronounced in the jazz samples.<sup>28</sup> As Duke suggests, what we do with the tone (vibrato, attack, etc.) can push it further into an idiomatic box, defining it beyond question as belonging to one style or another.

However, both Hasbrook's study and my own experience tells me that there is a palpable difference in the timbre itself when switching styles, rooted in the shape of the tongue and oral cavity and resulting harmonics. Furthermore, I feel that the physical adjustments made to create that timbral difference lend themselves to a better execution of other aspects (articulation, specifically) of their respective styles. Just as Duke wrote about the "sensations" associated with certain conceptual and physical actions of articulation, I believe that there is a timbral sensation unique to each style of music. It is this sensation that not only helps define the timbral thumbprint of each style aurally, but allows each saxophonist to physically *feel* the difference in how their body resonates. Certainly, one could play with the same timbre in each style while switching other idiomatic qualities such as vibrato and articulation, but then one would not be truly capturing the essence of a style. There is a clear timbral shift when moving from jazz to classical saxophone.

The distinction of timbre is a significant determinant of the difficulty to play well in both styles. Dr. Thomas Walsh, Associate Professor of Saxophone and Jazz Studies at Indiana University, offers a simple solution for coping with the process of internalizing different sensations, as he writes,

"...when I was student I tried to keep the two styles separate in my mind by thinking of classical saxophone and jazz saxophone as two different instruments. One way I kept them separate was to practice only one style in a given practice session; so, I would practice my classical material in the morning and jazz material later in the day."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Vanessa Hasbrook, "Alto Saxophone Mouthpiece Pitch and its Relation to Jazz and Classical Tone Qualities," D.M.A. Thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2005, p.34.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Walsh, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, April 27, 2009.

I used a similar strategy in my own development and found that this mental “shortcut” led to a better understanding of the two forms of music. The idea of thinking of the styles as requiring two different instruments is enhanced if one is practicing more of one style on a certain member of the saxophone family (alto, perhaps), and the other style on a different saxophone (tenor, for example). However, there are also benefits to switching between styles on the same horn, as one’s awareness of physical adjustment becomes heightened and the degrees of movement are more easily quantified. Dr. Walsh also mentions a key elemental difference between classical and jazz playing when he writes,

“In a classical setting, with standard repertoire, my goal is a tone that is clear and pure with no distortion of any kind. In jazz, some distortion is desirable in the tone. You could say that my jazz tone has more ‘edge,’ is brighter, has more energy in the upper harmonics, etc. than my classical tone. Conversely, you could say that my classical tone is darker, more pure, has little or no ‘edge,’ etc. when compared to my jazz tone.”<sup>30</sup>

This conceptual difference of a “pure” classical sound versus a jazz sound with some distortion, or “edge,” is widely adopted and employed by many saxophonists to varying degrees. It could be assumed that jazz saxophonists have more latitude in terms of either the pureness or edge in their sound. Dr. Walsh goes on to say that,

“In considering the question of stylistic differences between classical and jazz, we have to recognize that in jazz there is a wider range of expression that is considered acceptable than in classical playing. In terms of tone, some jazz players have dark, mellow sounds that are close to the classical ideal (such as Paul Desmond and Lee Konitz). Others have very bright, edgy sounds (such as Eric Dolphy and Kenny Garrett).”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas Walsh, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, April 27, 2009.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

There are different schools of classical playing that differ in timbre, yet there is rarely a desire for “distortion.” Regardless of the approach, the saxophonist who wishes to excel in both jazz and classical styles must learn and internalize the sensations required to recreate the timbral character of each style.

## CHAPTER III: ORAL CAVITY AND EMBOUCHURE

### Jaw/Tongue Position and Oral Cavity

When discussing how a tone is physically manifested through aspects such as embouchure, oral cavity and tongue position, it is imperative that one first have a firm grasp on the target. Once saxophonists have sufficiently bathed their ears in an unfamiliar style to the point where nuances of style become familiar, and the manipulation of physical aspects a means to that end, then the most efficient learning can begin. It is exponentially easier for a saxophonist to hear a style and to make physical modifications (with some guidance) to achieve a similar result, than to have never heard the desired result and expect to get there through meticulous coaching of the embouchure or tongue placement.

That said, the heart of the schism between jazz and classical saxophone playing lies inside the mouth. The physical differences are ever so subtle, but their results are noticeable. One of the more obvious differences (both aurally and visually) is jaw movement. In general, there is a much greater amount of jaw movement in jazz playing, as moving the jaw forward or backward can alter the timbral thumbprint, making it richer in higher harmonics (forward), or dampening them (backward) as used in a jazz subtone. Moving the jaw up or down can also assist in other jazz-related effects, including pitch-bending. Classical saxophonists employ almost zero jaw movement, as this would modify the shape of both the oral cavity and embouchure, detracting from the consistency of timbre throughout the range of the instrument. While jazz players do not constantly move the jaw, it is an aspect of playing in that idiom, and is a crucial element of playing that becomes habitual and can be difficult to break when attempting classical music. As Dr. Walsh states,

“Many jazz players manipulate their tone expressively and create scoops and pitch bends by moving the lower jaw. In a classical situation, it is usually desirable to maintain a stable core to the tone and pitch without any scooping and

generally without variation in the tone color. The jazz-oriented player may need to work on maintaining a more solid embouchure and jaw position so as not to inadvertently move the pitch or tone color. The problem of allowing the pitch to move sometimes occurs at the beginning of the note with an inadvertent scoop, or it can occur at the end of the note as a little fall-off.”<sup>32</sup>

Many agree that the oral cavity plays a significant role in the disparity, which also (by nature) includes altering the tongue position to change the shape of the oral cavity. The problem in teaching aspects of oral cavity shape is two-fold. First, all people are blessed with different physiological blueprints for the inside of their mouths. Second, it is nearly impossible to watch the inside of someone’s mouth as he is playing the saxophone. So, one is left to his own devices and what seems to be a valid description for some will totally contradict what others think they are experiencing.

This problem is compounded when we take into account recent research conducted by Matthew Patnode, which reveals that often when saxophonists think they are experiencing a certain sensation in their tongue/oral cavity shape, it is possible that the exact opposite could be happening. Patnode’s dissertation is titled “A Fiber-Optic Study Comparing Perceived and Actual Tongue Positions of Saxophonists Successfully Producing Tones in the Altissimo Register,” and in it he states that, “In the extreme high register of D4, D#4, E4 and F4, many subjects often indicated that the opposite motion was occurring: upward rather than the correct downward motion as indicated by the panel.”<sup>33</sup> He also found that most saxophonists in the study were unable to correctly determine their tongue positions when producing altissimo notes, though they were able to detect changes or movement between notes.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Thomas Walsh, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, April 27, 2009.

<sup>33</sup> Matthew Patnode, “A Fiber-Optic Study Comparing Perceived and Actual Tongue Positions of Saxophonists Successfully Producing Tones in the Altissimo Register,” D.M.A. dissertation, Arizona State University, 1999, p.144.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.



While Patnode's findings pertain to the altissimo register of the saxophone, I feel that the ambiguity found in the link from actual tongue position to perceived position in any register is, in a way, pedagogically devastating. It forces one to admit that perhaps one does not always know what one is talking about...even when one is sure that he knows! However, there is nothing wrong with using perception to aid in physical adjustment, even if the physical result is the opposite of the perceived result. To use Patnode's research as an example, if you told students to imagine their tongues rising when playing in the extreme high altissimo register, and doing so caused them to somehow unconsciously move their tongues down, achieving the desired result, what is the harm? It is valuable to know what is actually happening, but one must be careful not to let data and scientific measurements get in the way of the ultimate goal. As will be seen, there are a wide variety of opinions on how to approach or conceptualize the transition between jazz and classical playing, and the key is to consider all opinions and hypotheses in order to find an image or description of a sensation that will work for an individual to produce the desired result (regardless of what may actually be happening inside the mouth).

Russell Peterson (Concordia College), Dr. James Romain (Drake University), Dr. Thomas Walsh (Indiana University), and Dr. Michael Jacobson (Baylor University) all mention a difference in mouthpiece pitch between styles, where on an alto saxophone mouthpiece their classical reference pitches range from A5-B5, while their jazz reference pitches range from Eb5 to F#5.<sup>35</sup> Dr. Romain offers that, "Playing higher in the pitch gives my classical playing a stability and purity that works in that arena. In jazz, I want pitch flexibility and a fat tonal resonance."<sup>36</sup> Dr. Walsh mentions how he uses the

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<sup>35</sup> Michael Jacobson, Russell Peterson, James Romain, Thomas Walsh, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, Spring, 2009.

<sup>36</sup> James Romain, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, March 10, 2009.

mouthpiece pitch as a “reference for determining the set of the embouchure and oral cavity,” where “referencing a lower pitch reflects a different set for the oral cavity and it results in a broader tone.”<sup>37</sup>

This idea of lower/higher mouthpiece pitch reflects a personal tenet for me when switching between styles or teaching students. It is a simple, quantifiable test that can help establish the correct oral cavity setting for each style. Vanessa Hasbrook’s study set out to determine the precise effect of mouthpiece pitch (or voicing) on the quality of the tone. Her test involved subjects voicing a classical reference pitch (concert A5) on both jazz and classical mouthpieces, as well as voicing a jazz reference pitch (concert Eb5) on both jazz and classical mouthpieces, with the resulting tones matched against reference tones in each style. She found that the correct idiomatic tone was produced 73.4% of the time by using the correct voicing, regardless of which mouthpiece was used. By playing on the idiomatically correct mouthpiece and using either voicing, the correct idiomatic tone was achieved only 53.38% of the time.<sup>38</sup> So, there is a strong correlation between producing the correct mouthpiece pitch and achieving idiomatically correct timbre. However, one must not rely on the pitch alone to determine the correct setting, as there are many variables that can influence pitch. One must also explore what is happening physiologically to create this pitch variance.

Some saxophonists, such as Dr. James Romain, use parallel high/low imagery for tongue position. He writes, “I play with a higher tongue arch (‘eee’) in general in classical, and more of a medium arch in jazz playing ‘ayyy’ or ‘ahhh.’”<sup>39</sup> Other saxophonists think in terms of air temperature and a “front/back” concept. In my

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<sup>37</sup> Thomas Walsh, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, April 27, 2009.

<sup>38</sup> Hasbrook, “Alto Saxophone Mouthpiece Pitch and its Relation to Jazz and Classical Tone Qualities,” p.40.

<sup>39</sup> James Romain, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, March 10, 2009.

correspondence with Dr. Frank Bongiorno, Professor of Saxophone and Jazz Studies Coordinator at the University of North Carolina – Wilmington, he writes,

“While the throat/oral cavity is used in both for note voicing, I tend to think of warmer air for classical, generated from the back of the oral cavity, and slightly cooler air for jazz, with a focus on the front of the oral cavity. The air flow is directed into the instrument different ways. Front of the mouth suggests a more streamline approach whereas the tongue is flatter allowing the air to move from the back of the oral cavity to the front of the oral cavity seemingly quicker. In classical, the tongue seems to be slightly arched and the air flow maneuvers around it so it does not feel like it is being blown as directly. Of course, I have no physical proof of this, but it is what I perceive as a player and describe when I teach.”<sup>40</sup>

The beauty of these two views on tongue position is that while the conceptual focus is different (high/low vs. front/back), in a way, they are similar. Both of them use a slightly higher, arched approach for the tongue in classical playing, and a flatter tongue by comparison (arched or not) in jazz playing. Dr. Romain’s focus on the high/low tongue position and Dr. Bongiorno’s focus on front/back produce different imagery, yet, they will likely achieve similar results. In my own experience, when I was first diving into classical study, I found that this image of higher tongue position was extremely helpful in locking in the correct oral cavity setting for that style of playing. Once I felt comfortable in both styles, and really examined what I was doing with my tongue position, I realized that there was a shift in position on two axes. I was adjusting high and low, while simultaneously moving front and back as I switched styles. In general, it seemed that in jazz playing, my tongue was further forward in my mouth and lower with a medium arch, while in classical playing it was further back in my mouth with the back of my tongue arched higher.

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<sup>40</sup> Frank Bongiorno, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, March 24, 2009.

These tongue positions relate to my idea about how idiomatic articulations are made easier based on the oral cavity/tongue position settings for appropriate timbres in each style. The tongue being further forward in my mouth for jazz playing allows me to use a little more tongue on more of the reed in certain jazz articulations that require it. Conversely, by having my tongue further back in my mouth and arched higher when playing classically, it allows for more efficient contact with the tip of the reed. As Dr. Bongiorno mentions, the movement in the oral cavity and throat used for voicing high and low notes is employed in both styles, so these “home positions” are merely a starting point for idiomatic tone production in each style with the assumption that adjustments will be made for voicing higher or lower notes.

There is also a distinct sensory difference in what I will call “resonance focus” between the styles. While one should feel an amount of resonance throughout the oral cavity, this is a sensation in the mouth that is more heightened in a single area over all others, and could be perceived as “where all the action is.” When switching from jazz to classical playing, this focused area of resonant turbulence in the oral cavity shifts location. In jazz playing, the resonance focus surrounds the mouthpiece and reed and also includes the area directly below the reed, behind the front bottom teeth. In classical playing, the resonance focus shifts up to the roof of the mouth where the soft palate meets the hard palate. It is this shift in the resonance focus that I am most conscious of now when I switch styles, as compared to my tongue position, which is more subconscious.

Rick VanMatre, Professor of Saxophone and Director of Jazz Studies at the University of Cincinnati’s College Conservatory of Music, points out the importance of tongue position and the role of the glottal opening in his sound production.

“In my own playing, I feel that in jazz, the front and middle of my tongue are slightly higher and arched more forward, and the back of my tongue is a little bit lower than in classical playing. Also, my glottal opening is a little smaller in jazz than in classical. . . I’m a believer that by having the front and middle of the tongue reasonably high, arched forward, and close to the reed (also making articulation easier), the sound is centered and more focused. The smaller distance

between the tongue and the reed creates some constriction, resulting in what is called the ‘Venturi effect’ in physics, in which the air speed is increased as it is forced through a smaller opening.”<sup>41</sup>

It is this “Venturi effect” (or the absence of it) that I think is crucial in creating a characteristic difference in sound between jazz and classical playing. The constriction between the tongue and the reed that VanMatre mentions is, to me, tangible and creates a unique sensation. In my own teaching I like to have my students imagine inflating a small balloon about the size of a large grape and putting it in their mouth so that it would fill the front portion of their oral cavity. The tongue naturally moves back in the mouth and the back of the tongue arches higher to accommodate the balloon. This would be similar to the classical oral cavity setting. Then, if they were to imagine using their tongue to push on the balloon, the back of the tongue would drop slightly and the front and middle would push forward in the mouth and slightly higher than in the previous position. The sensation of pushing on the balloon with one’s tongue, and feeling the slight resistance of the balloon pushing back is how I describe the sensation of the increased air pressure pushing back on one’s tongue as it moves closer to the reed.

The smaller glottal opening that VanMatre speaks of is another point where the air column is forced through a small opening, creating two separate points where the Venturi effect is produced. However it is achieved, it is this effect, similar to a garden hose spray nozzle, which results in a different kind of vibration and overtone thumbprint that is more widely accepted in jazz circles. VanMatre refers to it as a “zing” in the sound that creates “penetrating power.”<sup>42</sup> In my own exploration of classical playing, I had to learn to relax my throat and adjust my tongue position to eliminate some of the “zing” in order to create a slightly darker sound (by eliminating some of the higher

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<sup>41</sup> Rick VanMatre, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, September 18, 2009.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

overtones) in order to achieve a more uniform timbral thumbprint over the whole range of the instrument.

However, as many classical saxophonists might argue, there are times when it may be desirable to manipulate the oral cavity to some degree in order to speed up the air and add more “zing” to the sound. VanMatre suggests that it may be a situational adjustment, such as when a classical saxophonist needs more volume when playing a concerto in front of an orchestra, or to assist with altissimo note production.<sup>43</sup>

This being the case, it would seem that once a jazz player conquers the sensation of the classical oral cavity shape, it would be advantageous for them to already have a familiarity with the adjustments necessary to produce the “zing” factor. The difficult part is to learn how to call upon it only when it is desired and not out of subconscious habit. This, as Dr. Stephen Duke states, can be the “kiss of death between styles.”<sup>44</sup>

This modification of the oral cavity between styles is not a universally accepted principle. First, the exact tongue position (or concept of tongue position) seems to depend largely on the individual. While VanMatre mentions that in jazz playing, the front and middle of his tongue is arched forward in the mouth, Trent Kynaston writes that in jazz playing, “my tongue arches a bit more and as a result tends to be more back in my mouth.”<sup>45</sup> Other saxophonists such as Miles Osland, Professor of Saxophone and Director of Jazz Studies at the University of Kentucky, claim that there is no difference in the oral cavity whatsoever. Osland’s shift comes from the embouchure, and he states that,

“I think generally of the Eugene Rousseau ‘oo’ embouchure, though when I am playing classically I tend to roll my bottom lip in just a little on alto. When I play

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<sup>43</sup> Rick VanMatre, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, September 18, 2009.

<sup>44</sup> Stephen Duke, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, March 19, 2009.

<sup>45</sup> Trent Kynaston, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, February 13, 2009.

jazz, my bottom lip tends to extend outward to get more ‘meat’ on the reed which is more conducive for good subtone, which you would be using more in a jazz style. As far as my oral cavity is concerned, nothing really changes. My tongue is generally in the ‘he’ position and my airstream focus is the same.”<sup>46</sup>

When asked about the differences in timbre between styles, he says that “There are a lot of differences.”<sup>47</sup> He discusses the various mouthpieces and equipment changes that he makes depending on the situation, which would lead one to believe that other than his slight rolling of the lower lip in classical performance, the timbral differences are all due to equipment. Yet, he also states that,

“When you get to be my age, it’s all about ergonomics and what feels good, and the sound that I want to project is going to be in my ear anyway. I can really get away with playing jazz on any of my classical mouthpieces because it’s a ‘sound thing’ and I’ll make adjustments in the oral cavity. Those won’t be conscious adjustments; they’ll just be adjustments that I make because I have the sound in my ear.”<sup>48</sup>

This illustrates both the microscopic nature of these oral cavity adjustments and the power of timbral concept. Osland states that if he is required to play both classical and jazz on a single classical mouthpiece, there are adjustments he will make because he has “the sound in [his] ear.” He claims that they are not conscious adjustments, but that he modifies his oral cavity subconsciously in a way that allows him to achieve the desired result. This would lead one to believe that by changing his oral cavity to play jazz on a classical mouthpiece, he is searching for a physical sensation (and resulting timbre) that his jazz mouthpiece provides and his classical mouthpiece does not. It is certainly not inconceivable, then, that this sensation is not produced by his jazz mouthpiece alone, but that there is also an element of imperceptible physical adjustment in addition to the

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<sup>46</sup> Miles Osland, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, March 1, 2009.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

changing of equipment. The assertion that, “As far as the oral cavity is concerned, nothing really changes,” may be his perception, but perhaps the physical changes that are taking place are so minute and entwined in his aural concept that they become unconscious decisions. In other words, many have a hard time articulating the exact physical changes taking place between styles because they are relying on the aural cues of the instrument and resulting timbre, and subconsciously connecting the sensations required for its production without regard for the exact physical adjustments that are transpiring. Why? Because it does not matter...until one enters the pedagogical realm and is required to articulate these physical adjustments, but even then, what works for some is not what works for others. So, this illustrates the importance of listening to each style and developing distinct timbral concepts aurally, because ultimately, when one puts the instrument to his face, his ears should lead any adjustments in the oral cavity, conscious or not.

### Embouchure

Larry Teal defines embouchure as “the formation of the lips around the mouthpiece together with the surrounding physical factors which affect tone production. These include the muscles of the lips and chin, the tongue, and the bony structure of the face.”<sup>49</sup> In this document, I have divorced discussion of the tongue position from the discussion of embouchure in order to examine its significant role in oral cavity adjustments, offering the opportunity to examine easily visible physical adjustments (embouchure, including lips and facial muscles) and invisible or less-visible adjustments (oral cavity and tongue) in separate contexts. It should be noted that the two are related and can work together in modifying the vibration and resulting overtones, but that adjustments may be made independently.

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<sup>49</sup> Teal, *The Art of Saxophone Playing*, p.37.



While we saw in Patnode's study that saxophonist's perceptions of his tongue position could, in fact, be just the opposite of its actual position, it would be difficult to achieve similar results in a study of the visible embouchure. Someone who rolls his lower lip completely out when playing, for example, would have a hard time convincing anyone that he believed it was actually rolled in. The real issue with embouchure is not that one is unaware of what he is doing, although to a certain degree it can be difficult to determine exactly how much certain facial muscles are flexed or relaxed. Rather, the embouchure is a highly debated matter of personal artistic taste and physical comfort that, like the oral cavity, is modified and adjusted in a way that will produce a desired timbre. As Rick VanMatre suggests,

“The whole concept of embouchure can be thought of as a ‘continuum.’ At one end is subtone tenor notes, for example, and at the other end would be high notes on classical clarinet. Look at the range of possibilities in between – lead alto vs. ‘cool jazz’ alto, different approaches to jazz clarinet (Eddie Daniels vs. Buddy DeFranco), crossover soprano, classical alto in a chamber music setting vs. concerto with orchestra, etc. Every instrument and style of playing has its own niche, and ultimately what it comes down to is artistic choice. So, every spot on the continuum corresponds to a certain amount of jaw pressure, more or less of bunching of the lower lip, how much reed to take in the mouth, etc.”<sup>50</sup>

As with the oral cavity, there are a number of approaches that can be successful, though each approach will affect the timbral thumbprint in a different way and is an extremely personal choice. The decision on which approach to use can often be made aurally through experimentation to see which position is most aurally pleasing and comfortable, and this can change, given different playing situations.

Teal provides a widely adopted embouchure concept that I feel works well in both styles, and is affectionately known as the “ring of muscles” or “wheel” approach. In this concept, the lip muscles are drawn in evenly from all sides, similar to the “spokes of a

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<sup>50</sup> Rick VanMatre, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, September 18, 2009.

wheel, which fan out from the hub.”<sup>51</sup> I like to think of this approach as using the lips to imitate the closing of a drawstring bag. Either way, this circular concept does two things. First, it reduces the excessive vertical pressure that many young students use in their embouchure which causes the lower lip to exude a great deal of force across the entire reed surface, thus dampening the vibration of the reed to an undesirable degree. Second, by the nature of the circular embouchure shape wrapped around the rough semi-circular shape of the mouthpiece and reed, it shifts the pressure points in the lower lip to the sides of the reed, which were determined to be the most optimum points of contact in a study conducted by Mary Purdes at Illinois State University in 1954.<sup>52</sup> This frees up the reed vibrations in the middle, producing a more resonant sound.

The easiest way to form this embouchure is to think of a syllable or word that is used in speaking to set the lips in the proper position. Miles Osland refers to a commonly used method which he credits to Eugene Rousseau in which you would say “oo” as in saying the word “cool.”<sup>53</sup> I like to use the “w” sound, as in saying the word “weather,” as I feel that it puts my lips in the proper position and also exerts the proper tension in my facial musculature. Whatever word or syllable is used, the idea is to achieve a similar shape with the lips to achieve optimum contact with the reed.

While several saxophonists use this approach universally in classical or jazz playing, there are modifications to embouchure that many make for one style or the other. Some common modifications include rolling the lower lip in (further covering the lower teeth) or rolling it out, using varying degrees of pressure or embouchure firmness, taking in different amounts of the mouthpiece, and in some cases, using a “double-lip”

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<sup>51</sup> Teal, *The Art of Saxophone Playing*, p.41.

<sup>52</sup> Mary Purdes, “Lip Control in Saxophone Performance,” M.A. Thesis, Illinois State University, 1954, p.39-40.

<sup>53</sup> Miles Osland, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, March 1, 2009.

embouchure in which the top teeth do not touch the mouthpiece. According to a conversation that Tom Walsh had with jazz saxophonist Antonio Hart, this double-lip embouchure was used by some of the early jazz players, including Johnny Hodges and Ben Webster.<sup>54</sup>

Over the course of my research, I found that many saxophonists, including Russell Peterson, Trent Kynaston, Stephen Duke, Miles Osland and Tom Walsh choose to roll their lower lip out slightly for jazz when compared to classical playing. Peterson explains his choice, stating,

“I’m much more open on my jazz set up. I was never taught that, I just started opening up the more I listened to players I liked. I also roll my bottom lip out, so there is less lip toward the tip of the reed. I think this opens the tone up, makes the reed even more vibrant and certainly much louder.”<sup>55</sup>

I’ll never forget a lesson I had with Trent Kynaston when I was living in Western Michigan for a summer several years ago. I was just starting to develop as a jazz player, and at the time, my concept was a very dark, Stan Getz-style approach. Kynaston had me experiment with rolling my lower lip out a little (it was pretty far in at the time), and I was amazed at the difference in sound. It took several weeks before my facial muscles were used to the difference and were able to really help support the sound, but it truly opened up my mind to the timbral possibilities on the saxophone. Not only that, it allowed me to project my sound with greater authority and resonance. Currently, I use a circular embouchure somewhat close to the Teal method for both styles of playing, although I do notice that it is slightly firmer in my classical playing. As far as rolling my lip in or out, I’m sure there is a very slight modification between styles, but visually they look almost identical. The degrees of lip firmness, along with my oral cavity

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<sup>54</sup> Thomas Walsh, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, April 27, 2009.

<sup>55</sup> Russell Peterson, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, April 5, 2009.

adjustments, seem to substitute for the “rolling in” of the lower lip that other players use, and offer an alternative way to help me create the slightly darker classical sound that I aim to project.

Branford Marsalis, Michael Jacobson, Chris Vadala, and Rick VanMatre also use similar embouchures for jazz and classical playing in terms of the portion of lip being used and overall shape, and say that there is a bit firmer approach to the embouchure in classical playing. Marsalis offers,

“There are no embouchure differences. There is a change from a Selmer D to a C\* on the soprano, but that is for volume purposes. One of the hardest things to get used to is keeping the lip pressure on the reed constant in classical playing, even when playing low notes. In jazz, how the note arrives is not so important, so you can cheat to get it there through slides, growls or subtone. One of the best things I have learned in studying classical is constant lip pressure, often called breath control (why I’ll never know).”<sup>56</sup>

This constant lip pressure that Marsalis refers to is directly related to the idea of uniform timbre. In jazz playing, saxophonists often make minute adjustments to the pressure of their embouchure, firming and loosening in tandem with other adjustments in the jaw and oral cavity to create a slightly different palette of timbral colors. As Marsalis points out, this can be a challenge for jazz saxophonists who are learning to play classically. Habitual behavior that is engrained in the brain and reinforced over years of jazz playing prevents many saxophonists from perceiving differences. For example, if jazz players were to see a string of eighth notes descending into the lower register of the horn, they may have an automatic tendency to loosen the embouchure marginally as they descend. In the classical world, this would be frowned upon, as it would change the color of the low register, detracting from the uniformity. The detriment for jazz players is that this is a Pavlovian reaction, and the learning process becomes two-fold. They must first

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<sup>56</sup> Branford Marsalis, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, March 16, 2009.

be taught the skill and sensation of keeping uniform embouchure pressure in all registers, and then they must be taught the skill of resisting their “Jazzlovian” urges by developing their awareness.

Stephen Duke offers a compelling way to think about this difference when he says that “One way to think about approaching jazz style is that it is very much ‘at the mouthpiece.’ There is a great deal of jaw movement, dampening of the reed, and blowing against the mouthpiece. In classical playing, everything happens before the mouthpiece.”<sup>57</sup> This idea provides a conceptual focus for the saxophonist attempting classical repertoire, reinforcing the idea that the part of the mouth touching the mouthpiece must remain fixed. Whatever the concept of embouchure is for either style, it is almost universally accepted that the standards of classical saxophone playing require a fixed embouchure in order to play successfully in the idiom.

For many, the decision regarding embouchure is largely based on comfort. Rick VanMatre states that, “For some people, once you get used to the spot where your teeth hit the lower lip, it can be hard to make a change.”<sup>58</sup> He also suggests that another reason one may not choose to switch embouchure styles is if they play significantly more in one style than the other. He, for example, currently plays much more jazz than classical and offers this as a possible explanation for why he does not modify his own embouchure.<sup>59</sup>

One method that I used in developing my classical embouchure and oral cavity formation was to exaggerate the physical differences by taking in significantly less mouthpiece and imagining an extremely high tongue arch. This seemed to force my

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<sup>57</sup> Stephen Duke, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, March 19, 2009.

<sup>58</sup> Rick VanMatre, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, September 18, 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

embouchure to stay locked in position because if I moved too much I would lose the sound. It also eliminated excessive tongue movement because my tongue did not have anywhere to go without cutting off the air stream. By first exaggerating the differences, I was able to develop a feel for the different sensations and then was able to bring my embouchure and oral cavity position back closer to their original positions with a better understanding for the kind of uniform stability that is required in classical playing. In this way, I was able to eliminate any unnecessary movement in my embouchure and oral cavity, resulting in a more idiomatically accurate approach.

## CHAPTER IV: ARTICULATION

For the trained ear, it is often possible to identify a saxophonist as coming from either a jazz or classical background in the span of one note. Even if both players used a similar vibrato and timbre (which, coming from different backgrounds it is likely they would not), one should be able to detect primary aural cues in the attack transients. Both the attack and release of the note can speak volumes to the past experiences of the player. In general, what one will hear when listening closely to an experiment of this nature (using a single quarter note, for example) is that the jazz saxophonist will start the note with a soft noise before the actual tone is sounded, and the note (and air that creates it) will be stopped with their tongue re-touching the reed. Conversely, the classical saxophonist will start the tone cleanly without any precursory sounds, and will end the note by stopping the air only.

This is a simple way to describe the difference in basic articulation, but the actual process of re-learning articulation for a foreign style, one way or the other, is much more complex. The noise on the front end of the jazz attack is usually a combination of the air moving before the tone and a slightly larger amount of tongue that touches the reed. Stephen Duke offers some pedagogical advice on how to teach jazz players to eliminate the unwanted noise when playing classically.

“Now the other thing that is very important is if you ask a jazz player to start a note [with a breath attack], 99 percent will play [sings] ‘ffaaah.’ A well-trained classical player will play [sings] ‘aaah.’ They won’t have the ‘ff’ part in front of their sound. Many people view this as the jazz player lacking tone control, but that is false because the tone happens when it is supposed to happen – on the beat. Therefore he has tone control because he is doing what he intends. Now, if you ask jazz players to play a note without the ‘ff’ in front of the note, they can’t. They don’t know how to do that. We say, ‘you’re not controlling the sound because you’re not getting the tone when you start the air. Don’t move the air before the note.’ It can’t happen. You could ask a jazz player to do one hundred attacks and you will get air before the attack every single time. So, then you can say you’re obviously making the tone when you want but you’re preceding it with the air. In fact, most jazz players won’t even hear that air before the attack.

They'll say 'Wow, now that you point it out I do notice it. I've never noticed that before. That's interesting!' Then you can create a game by saying 'okay, start your air on one beat and then start the note on the next beat.' Most jazz players can do that easily. They can go [singing while snapping out a metronome pulse] 'ff-aaah.' The game continues with eighth notes [sings faster] 'ff-aaah.' Then continue with sixteenth notes, and thirty-second notes, so that the 'ff' gets shorter and shorter until finally, you ask them to play right on it and they play [sings] 'aaah.' Now within ten minutes, a major concept of classical music is learned. What's happened then, is that conceptually and technically, they have put a temporal shift on when the air starts and when the tone starts, and they can start playing with that timing. In order for a jazz player to change their concept of an attack (which is a major part of the problem) they must have this temporal shift to focus on when their tone is produced in relation to when their air starts to move."<sup>60</sup>

While the concept may be learned in ten minutes, the actual success of producing a tone cleanly and consistently without any noise may take longer for the jazz player. I found that this habit of producing precursory "noise" was present in both breath attacks and tongued articulation, and was something that required hours of practice to resolve. My own path to success began with a modification in the amount and location of tongue/reed contact. I realized that to make the classical articulations cleanly, I needed to touch my tongue (using the portion behind the tip and arching it up using the tip as a "pivot point," similar to Dr. Frederick Hemke's description in his *Teacher's Guide to the Saxophone*)<sup>61</sup> to the very tip of the reed, barely even making contact (or so I perceived). The comparable feeling that most accurately describes this sensation for me would be that of spitting watermelon seeds, and I am able to use this analogy to great effect with my students. It is that split second when the seed merely interrupts the flow of air, rather than stopping it entirely, which is akin to the brief interruption caused by the tongue. The tongue movement is incredibly light and quick, just like the seed.

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<sup>60</sup> Stephen Duke, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, March 19, 2009.

<sup>61</sup> Frederick Hemke, *Teacher's Guide to the Saxophone*, (Selmer, 1998), p.9.



In my jazz articulations, I was using slightly more surface area of my tongue (just behind the tip) on slightly more surface area of the reed (the tip and just behind it), which seemed to be partly responsible for the extra noise. Teal discusses this tongue noise, claiming that “Care must be exercised to avoid hitting the flat underside of the reed, for this will produce an indefinite ‘th-th-th’ sound.”<sup>62</sup> While I am certainly not covering the entire underside of the reed, there is just enough to produce idiomatically incorrect results in a classical approach that offers little latitude when it comes to precision. In the jazz idiom, a little more tongue on the reed is necessary at times. It is more pronounced in more aggressive attacks and other jazz-exclusive articulations, but can also be used in general with a lighter approach. Rick VanMatre seems to agree when he says that “In classical music, it could be said that the goal is to have as little of the tongue touch as little of the reed as possible; whereas in jazz, having more of a ‘blob’ of tongue touching more of the reed is probably a good thing, but only if it can be done in an extremely light way.”<sup>63</sup> VanMatre insists that in both classical and jazz articulation the tongue should be very light, except in special jazz accents or cutoffs. “Most intermediate and beginning jazz saxophonists,” he says, “need to work on getting their tongue lighter on the reed in both jazz and classical playing.”<sup>64</sup>

One question that some classical saxophonists may be asking themselves is, “How is the jazz player not even aware that they are making a sound in front of the tone?” It seems rather odd that performers who are so dedicated to their instrument as to learn the advanced art of improvisation do not have a basic awareness of all the sounds that come out of their saxophone. Even as someone guilty of this crime, I will admit I was a little

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<sup>62</sup> Teal, *The Art of Saxophone Playing*, p.82.

<sup>63</sup> Rick VanMatre, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, September 18, 2009.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

confused the first time this was pointed out to me. As I thought about it, however, I realized that it was not that I did not realize it was happening. It was that up until that point when I was seriously delving into classical study, I had no reason to change it. That is, the music I was playing until that point had not demanded such a pristine attack, and so it had never been a point of contention. Furthermore, the use of subtone in jazz playing is more prevalent than in classical playing and thus the “air” in the sound was more acceptable to my ears to begin with, even though it was not used all the time. Stephen Duke offers a rationale for why the two styles of articulation are different, which also relates to this idea.

“The conceptual difference between classical and jazz is that silent ambience that does not exist in jazz. So when you’re playing jazz, you’re often playing into a microphone, there is a drummer playing, a bass player playing, and there is always some other sound happening. People are drinking, ordering food, and there is always noise going on. As I tell people, one sound you will never hear at Symphony Center in Chicago is ‘Excuse me, may I have another drink here?’ You never hear that sound, and if you do you’re probably getting kicked out of there! The reason for that is because of the silent ambience. There is an incredible amount of time, money and research spent on the acoustics for halls that orchestras play in. Compare that with your typical jazz club where they have to add the reverb into the amplification. So, we’re not even talking about the same environment that they’re playing in which is another big part of how the two styles had to have been shaped. Look at the difference in concept between an orchestra hall and a jazz club. Now you have some idea of why the attacks and releases are so different in each style.”<sup>65</sup>

Another part of this puzzle deals with the equipment choices that saxophonists make in order to create the sound they desire and meet the dynamic demands in each idiom. My jazz mouthpiece, for example, has an extremely large tip opening when compared to my classical setup. By nature, it is more difficult for me to achieve the same pristine attacks on my jazz setup with the ease or speed that I am able to on my classical mouthpiece. This is a sacrifice that I make because, first of all, jazz music does not

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<sup>65</sup> Stephen Duke, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, March 19, 2009.

demand clean attacks in the way classical music does, or with the same frequency or velocity. Many jazz players attempting classical music (myself included) can struggle with the task of training their tongue to move as lightly and quickly as is necessary in much of the classical repertoire because there really is no comparable movement that occurs in jazz. Secondly, jazz music often has higher demands on the louder end of the dynamic spectrum than classical music does. This is particularly evident in big-band playing, in which saxophones are expected to match the Herculean dynamics of the brass and (often amplified) rhythm section. So, I sacrifice cleanliness and speed for volume and projection...and sound. The larger tip opening on my jazz mouthpiece also helps me achieve the timbre that I desire when playing jazz. Mouthpieces are a very personal issue for each saxophonist, but this is how I view some of the trade-offs that I make in my own equipment selection for each style.

Other than reducing the amount of tongue on the reed in my classical attack, I found that there was also an adjustment that needed to be made in the throat. In my interview with Stephen Duke, he helped shed some light on what I was experiencing. He explains,

“...in classical we use the throat to aid articulation. It’s not just air and tongue. There is a focusing point with the throat to shape the articulation. You don’t use the throat as much in jazz articulation. The tongue and the jaw replace the throat. Many people may disagree with the use of the throat and would debate this point, but that is because they don’t know what’s going on [laughs]. If you listen to any [classical] player, there is a shape to the attack that you can’t get from the tongue or air alone. We don’t feel what the throat does like we do with our lips, and that is why it is not understood.”<sup>66</sup>

After the awareness of the noise had taken place, I went to work making adjustments in my articulation style using different movements and placement of the

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<sup>66</sup> Stephen Duke, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, March 19, 2009.

tongue and intuitively incorporated some of the throat assistance that Duke mentions. I did not have any coaching per se, other than the assignment from the very patient Dr. Kenneth Tse to focus on that “noise” and eliminate it. It was experimentation with different positions and sensations that eventually led to what I now use to produce a clean attack. I found that by touching the tip of the reed with less of my tongue, the noise was significantly less prominent, but still there. It took a slight “holding of the air” in my throat until the precise moment when my tongue left the tip of the reed that eventually enabled me to get a truly clean attack. It seemed that in my jazz playing, I was letting all the air pressure build up right behind my tongue, so that as I was releasing my tongue from the reed, the air immediately started vibrating the reed, even before my tongue had fully disengaged from it. When using my throat, I fill my oral cavity with air, but the throat helps control the precise moment when the air is pushed forward into the instrument (rather than only the movement of the tongue). When combined with a lighter tongue, it allows the player to shape the articulation and begin the tone only when they desire, without any unwanted noise or “fuzz.” Once this was achieved, it took several days before it felt comfortable, but it was the awareness of what I was doing incorrectly in the first place that led to my ability to correct it.

Now, while this approach seemed to work for me, it does not mean that it is “the correct” approach. As Teal states, “An expert performer will usually base his advice on the system that he has found most successful for his personal needs.”<sup>67</sup> This means that there is likely more than one system that works. This is best illustrated in two articulation studies done by Valeri Conley and Scott Zimmer. In Conley’s study, she writes that one of her subjects chose the tip of the tongue for “regular” playing and just “below the tip” for jazz playing, remarking that “different styles of tonguing required

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<sup>67</sup> Teal, *The Art of Saxophone Playing*, p.79.

different amounts of reed contact.”<sup>68</sup> In Zimmer’s study, he found that on a particular set of jazz and classical exercises, “Subjects in jazz task [*sic*] articulated in the same region or closer to the tip of the tongue than subjects in the orchestral task. Subjects in the orchestral task articulated in the same region or farther back from the tip of the tongue than subjects in the jazz task.”<sup>69</sup>

So, it is apparent that the methods of articulation will vary for players in both styles, and may depend on physiological differences in terms of the size and shape of a person’s tongue, teeth, oral cavity, lips, and facial structure. When dealing with standard articulations in both jazz and classical styles, the actual amount of tongue on the reed may differ slightly (or sometimes not at all, depending on the saxophonist), but the perception of the difference may be heightened due to the use of certain “specialty” articulations that are native to one style and foreign to the other. As mentioned previously, there are situations in jazz where it is desirable to have a little more tongue on the reed, as in heavier accents, or in the technique of “ghosting” notes. Dr. Walsh explains,

“There are also some articulation techniques that are used more frequently in one style vs. the other. For example, the technique of ‘ghosting’ notes, which is sometimes referred to as ‘half tonguing’ or ‘muffle tonguing’ is generally not used in classical playing, but it is essential for getting an authentic jazz sound. ‘Half tonguing’ is where the tongue is placed on the reed but some sound is allowed to occur. It is analogous to humming, where you are basically singing with your mouth closed. It is also similar to saying, ‘nnnnn.’ One way this technique can be used is on the opening four notes of ‘Au Privave,’ playing ‘dah-n-doo-dot.’”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Valeri Conley, “A Pedagogical Investigation of Saxophone Articulation,” M.M. Thesis, Bowling Green State University, 1986, p.34.

<sup>69</sup> Scott Zimmer, “A Fiber Optic Investigation of Articulation Differences Between Selected Saxophonists Proficient in Both Jazz and Orchestral Performance Styles,” D.M.A. Dissertation, Arizona State University, 2002, p.298.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas Walsh, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, April 27, 2009.

Other saxophonists I interviewed described this effect as well, though it goes by many names. “Doodn” tonguing (Jacobson), tongue “muting” (Peterson), “dud-n” tonguing (Romain), and “dun” tongue (Osland), all refer to essentially the same thing. In my own playing, the position of the tongue that is required to use this technique efficiently in jazz is slightly different from a classical articulation. This correlates with the position described previously, regarding the shift in oral cavity and tongue position from classical to jazz playing to create a different timbre. The angle of the tongue shifts slightly as it flattens out somewhat (when compared to the classical position) and arches forward, bringing a greater surface area of the tongue within closer proximity of the reed, making the “dampened” effect readily accessible. Conversely then, my classical tongue position with a higher tongue arch moves in at the tip of the reed in a marginally more perpendicular angle than the slightly more parallel jazz approach.

The other “Jazzlovian” habit that is difficult to break occurs at the end of a tone and involves releasing the sound by stopping the air (classical) instead of stopping the reed with the tongue (jazz). This change in the method of release is, according to Miles Osland, “the biggest difference between the two styles and should be the first thing to teach students going from one style to another.”<sup>71</sup> Duke recommends that the easiest way to do this when initially learning the concept is to reverse your air, or inhale when you want to release a note.<sup>72</sup> My own journey to breaking this habit involved writing the syllable “ah” in my music over any note that I would habitually stop with my tongue. The issue with this is that old habits can become so engrained that even after someone initially points them out, one’s awareness can be clouded by compulsive behavior and one can go on making mistakes without even noticing. I had several lessons with Dr. Tse

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<sup>71</sup> Miles Osland, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, March 1, 2009.

<sup>72</sup> Stephen Duke, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, March 19, 2009.

in which it seemed that in every other measure he was stopping me for this flagrant violation. After several days of this, I began to start correcting myself. That is, my self-policing mechanism was kicking in due to an increased awareness, which is an often neglected but necessary element of learning a new style. For many classical players attempting to play jazz, the reverse is true, in that reapplying the tongue to the reed to end a note when they are playing in a jazz style does not come as naturally. As Dr. Duke states, it is all about the compulsive application of inappropriate technique. Even when we want to make the correction, the years of training in a specific style of music can form habitual tendencies that are seemingly impossible to break.

An awareness of our compulsive habits must be the primary goal of the player approaching a foreign idiom, and can be difficult to achieve without the help of a teacher with discerning ears. Once the awareness is developed, with regard to not only attack transients but to multiple aspects of playing, then saxophonists are in a position to correct the stylistic inconsistencies that are now apparent to them. Another issue dealing with articulation that relates to this concept of awareness is one of performance practice: that jazz players are expected to add in a great deal of personal interpretation to the notated music they see on the page. Specifically, it is rare that articulations are meticulously notated for the jazz player, and they are expected to add their own in a way that is consistent with the norms of the idiom. Classical music, on the other hand, is often notated precisely as the composer wants it to be played, with articulations, dynamics, and other aspects of the music predetermined and laid out explicitly for the player. This creates the issue that many jazz players will play classical music and make up their own articulation patterns for the music they are reading, ignoring all or many of the written slurs or articulation directions. Similarly, classical saxophonists often take jazz music at face value, usually over-using the tongue or putting slurs in the wrong places. The idea of bebop tonguing, in which a jazz player will inherently tongue the upbeat, slurring into the downbeat in a string of eighth-notes, is often lost on the classical player attempting

jazz, and they will habitually tongue the downbeats, slurring into the upbeats. This results in what Dr. Walsh calls “humpty-dumpty swing.”<sup>73</sup> This placement of the articulation provides a naturally occurring accent pattern, which is more traditionally on the upbeat in jazz, resulting in a greater amount of syncopation. Thus, when it occurs on the downbeats it comes across as somewhat “square” sounding. It is an awareness of these habits that will allow performers to modify their playing to correctly fit the idiom. Otherwise, the habits will continue, and despite a musician’s best efforts to cross over, the “unnoticed mistakes” from poor awareness will prevent him from truly being at home in the new style.

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<sup>73</sup> Thomas Walsh, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, April 27, 2009.



## CHAPTER V: VIBRATO AND INTONATION

### Vibrato

It is difficult to assign a prescription for vibrato for either style, because even within each idiom it is a choice guided by personal taste and ensemble appropriateness, resulting in a wide spectrum of usages. To generalize, we could say that classical vibrato is often faster and more consistent than jazz vibrato. By consistent, I mean that the vibrato is employed evenly throughout a note and the spectrum of accepted speeds is much narrower in classical playing. In jazz playing, the rules are much more relaxed and differences in vibrato can easily be chalked up to “personal style.” Contemporary music in both idioms seems to favor more straight tone, although there remains a certain expectation of vibrato usage in at least small doses in classical playing that does not really exist in jazz playing. In other words, to hear a jazz saxophonist play without an ounce of vibrato would be less anomalous than to hear a classical saxophonist do the same. In addition, jazz vibrato can be used in a wide variety of styles, including slow, lingering pulsations, quick “shake” style terminal vibrato, and everything in between. Classical vibrato does have a variety of idiomatically acceptable uses, just not nearly the range found in jazz. However, it should be noted that vibrato in either style should be a musical choice and not a necessity, or as Ramon Ricker says, “it’s not just flipping a switch and having it run like a motor on a vibraphone.”<sup>74</sup>

One of my misconceptions as a novice classical player (before I had really done enough listening) was that vibrato should be used on any and all “longer” notes in classical playing. I have learned that oftentimes this can depend on dynamics. There are several situations, particularly with very soft dynamics in classical playing, in which straight tone is far more effective than using vibrato. Dr. James Romain states that in

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<sup>74</sup> Ramon Ricker, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, February 7, 2009.

classical playing, “Vibrato must always be ‘married’ in character to the dynamic, as these two elements are integral to making sense in changes of musical intensity.”<sup>75</sup> While I am sometimes wary about using the word “always,” I will admit that this is a helpful suggestion when trying to conceptualize what a musical use of vibrato might be.

Personally, I enjoy using a fair amount of straight tone in my playing, perhaps due in part to my jazz background, but I also enjoy the way it sounds and the contrasting emphasis it gives my vibrato when I choose to use it.

In my early attempts at classical playing, I found that while I was trying to speed up my vibrato and make it more consistent, the depth was still far too wide. In retrospect, this may have had something to do with my particular aural model of classical saxophone vibrato not being the best choice. This is an instance where if I had truly done as much listening as I should have from the beginning, I would have likely found better models and (hopefully) would have made the necessary physical adjustments to make my vibrato more idiomatically correct. Later on I learned how to adjust my vibrato to narrow the depth to a more suitable amount. In fact, the best suggestion I received for this was from Dr. Tse, in which he had me imagine doing just the opposite of what normal vibrato mechanics would suggest. Rather than dropping my jaw and returning it to the home position, he had me imagine raising it and lowering it to the home position. In this case, while I perceived that I was actually raising my jaw, in reality I was merely keeping the “home” position more focused and decreasing the amount of movement, resulting in a controlled vibrato with a narrower depth. This helped me to achieve a vibrato that some players refer to as being “in the sound.” While the physical mechanics of vibrato are essentially the same in all idioms, the movements required to produce a more classically

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<sup>75</sup> James Romain and Greg Banaszak, “A Lesson with James Romain,” *Saxophone Journal*, v.34/n.2 (2009): p.34.

oriented vibrato are more refined and demand a uniformity and endurance that is seldom found in jazz.

In addition to thoroughly listening to a wide variety of classical saxophonists to model vibrato, some saxophonists cite other instrumentalists or even vocalists as their inspiration. Branford Marsalis lists Kathleen Battle, Kiri Te Kanawa, Gundula Janowitz, Placido Domingo, and Pavarotti as some of his classical vibrato influences.<sup>76</sup> I think it is tremendously helpful to listen to vocalists' use of vibrato in both classical and jazz music. For me, the way I use vibrato in my saxophone playing is really an extension of how I would be singing the notes. It seems that the differences between classical and jazz vibrato are more apparent if one were to imagine a classically-trained vocalist singing jazz without changing vibrato, or vice versa. I have experienced examples of each, and neither was very enjoyable. Each style of music requires a contextual assessment of "appropriate" vibrato usage. The key for jazz saxophonists approaching classical music, then, is discovering what their classical "voice" sounds like, while simultaneously fitting within the latitudes of the idiom.

### Intonation

One of the great advantages and pitfalls of the saxophone is the ease with which someone can put it to their lips and create a sound. I can remember the thrill of assembling my first saxophone, purchased from a neighbor's garage sale, and the elation with which I first "made music" on it. The saxophone is an intoxicatingly easy instrument to play...poorly. To play it well requires, among other things, a heightened sense of pitch and intonation. H. Benne Henton, a legendary saxophone soloist with the John Philip Sousa Band, was once asked in an interview, "Why are saxophones as a whole more often played out of tune than any of the other instruments?" His reply was,

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<sup>76</sup> Branford Marsalis, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, March 16, 2009.

“Saxophones, as a rule, are more often out of tune than other instruments because they were played out of tune. Being flexible, the intonation of saxophones depends upon the ability of the performer to anticipate the proper pitch of the tone and make it just as a singer or violinist does. There is no such thing as a fixed scale on the saxophone. Some positions can be varied in pitch more than a half tone.”<sup>77</sup> World renowned saxophonist and pedagogue Jean-Marie Londeix also comments on the importance of the saxophonist’s role in controlling pitch.

“Ear-training is as basic to the musical education of the saxophonist as it is to the violinist or to any other instrumentalist. It should be undertaken as early as possible in the performer’s musical education in order to prove false the notion that it is the instrument which produces the note. On the contrary, the saxophone only produces the approximate note; it is up to the instrumentalist to render each note with precision, to refine it, and relentlessly correct it by using the lips, within the musical context. Only in this way will accuracy of the highest degree be obtained.”<sup>78</sup>

This being the case, it is not hard to imagine that along the spectrum of intonation from the “Are you serious?” to the immaculate, there are an almost infinite number of accuracy levels. Obviously, good intonation is a necessary quality in all realms of professional playing. However, the focus on absolute precision in classical playing demands a higher level of intonation awareness and execution. Again, as with articulation, the issue that presents itself for a jazz player approaching classical saxophone music is one of awareness. As Dr. Walsh states, “While jazz players also strive to play in tune, not all develop their sensitivity to intonation to the most refined

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<sup>77</sup> Michael Eric Hester, “A Study of the Saxophone Soloists Performing With the John Philip Sousa Band, 1893-1930,” D.M.A. Dissertation, The University of Arizona, 1995, p.61.

<sup>78</sup> Jean-Marie Londeix (Translated by William and Anna Street), *Hello! Mr. Sax*, (Alphonse Leduc, 1989), p.40.

level. Some jazz-oriented players, then, would need to develop a more refined sense of intonation as part of developing their ability in the classical idiom.”<sup>79</sup>

This issue of intonation awareness becomes increasingly perplexing, because unlike articulation or timbre, it does not have to do with idiomatic appropriateness. Intonation issues found with some jazz players are not an intentional extension of the music; playing slightly out of tune does not convey a more characteristically “jazz” sound. While jazz does incorporate some intentional modifications to pitch through bends, scoops, or falls, for many jazz saxophonists there exists an underlying awareness of intonation that is simply not as refined as a comparably experienced classical saxophonist.

In my own experience, there are a couple of reasons for this, other than the simple answer that classical music places more of an emphasis on exceptionally precise intonation. One of the reasons is the amount of jaw movement found in jazz playing. Changing the shape of the oral cavity and embouchure not only affects timbre, but it can also easily affect intonation. Some of the more common occurrences of this are found in jumping octaves (up or down), and in playing contrasting dynamic levels. I know that personally, I found that my lower mid-range was often flat, especially when approached from a higher pitch by a leap of a fifth or more. I feel that this was partly due to my tendency to relax my embouchure in the lower register, and when asked to adjust quickly, I would often overshoot my mark.

Also, dynamically speaking, if I were playing in a lower register at a soft dynamic level, it was often flat, due to my tendency to use subtone in a similar jazz situation. I remember the “aha!” moment I had when I first felt the sensation of playing in the low register with a true classical approach. It felt so odd at first to firm up my embouchure in

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<sup>79</sup> Thomas Walsh, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, April 27, 2009.

the low range, but when combined with the proper classical arch in my tongue with the tip lowered for voicing, there was a new kind of “pure” feeling resonance in my oral cavity that produced clean tones that were in tune at any dynamic in the low end of the horn. At the same time, if I were playing softer dynamics in the upper register, they were usually sharp, which I was also eventually able to remedy through consistent embouchure training and alternate fingerings. Many of these pitch discrepancies were not on my radar whatsoever, and it was a bizarre feeling to have someone point them out and then wonder, “How did I not hear that?”

The other reason is that due to the intonation demands of classical playing, there are a number of alternate fingerings that can aid intonation in various situations (including the sharp pianissimo notes in my higher register), which are somewhat commonplace in the classical saxophone community but largely unused by many jazz players who have not had classical training. It is common for saxophonists in both idioms to use adjustments in embouchure to correct intonation, but sometimes that is not enough. In some instances, these fingerings are used to help certain notes that are ubiquitously out of tune on most saxophones, like the written C#5 which is usually quite flat with the standard “wide open” fingering. Others are used to temper intonation that might have issues as a result of dynamics, such as playing a written F6 at a very soft dynamic level, which is usually extremely sharp. There is an extensive fingering chart found in Londeix’s book, *Hello! Mr. Sax*, which illustrates corrective fingerings to raise or lower pitches.<sup>80</sup> Another technique that is used far less frequently in the jazz world involves alternate fingerings for producing the written pitches D5, D#/Eb5, and E5 by using various palm key combinations without the octave key. These are not used to “correct intonation” necessarily, but to provide either more consistent tone color

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<sup>80</sup> Londeix, *Hello! Mr. Sax*, p.43.

(depending on dynamics, adjacent notes, etc.), or in certain situations, to allow for greater technical fluidity and velocity by nature of moving fewer fingers.

If jazz players can successfully practice with an immutable jaw and develop a working knowledge of some alternate fingerings and their proper application, then they have won half the battle with intonation. The other arguably more difficult step is to build their awareness of and sensitivity to intonation as a whole, and this is something that really takes the perceptive ear of a good teacher to help with. I found that in my own development of this awareness through my study with Dr. Tse, it not only improved my classical playing, but my jazz playing as well.

There is also a text by Trent Kynaston called *The Saxophone Intonation Workbook* that is incredibly insightful and helpful, using a play-along CD of saxophone drones to aid in the aural and physical memorization of tone color and sensation of pitches throughout the range of the instrument. From a career standpoint, even if a jazz saxophonist were to never seriously pursue classical performance professionally, the benefits of heightened sensitivity to intonation are inarguable. As Stephen Duke said, “You can get away with a lot more pitch discrepancies in jazz than you can in classical music, but not if you’re playing studio work.”<sup>81</sup> To be taken seriously as a high-caliber musician, superior intonation awareness is paramount, regardless of style. As one will see, equipment selection can have a significant impact on intonation as well, adding yet another reason why intonation awareness may not be as developed in jazz players.

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<sup>81</sup> Stephen Duke, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, March 19, 2009.

## CHAPTER VI: EQUIPMENT

Equipment selection encompasses a highly personal set of choices that are driven by the level of ease with which, when combined with the physical makeup and playing tendencies of the individual, the equipment allows him to execute what he needs to musically with the sound that he desires. This includes the selection of reeds, mouthpieces, ligatures, necks and saxophones themselves. For many serious saxophonists, different musical situations require different equipment. While the others are certainly not inconsequential, the mouthpiece is probably the most significant piece of equipment in switching idioms, as it can instantly and drastically alter the overtone thumbprint and affect response and intonation.

For many performers, jazz music requires more projection and tonal flexibility than classical music. As a result, many jazz mouthpieces are crafted with higher baffles and larger facings, or tip openings, than classical mouthpieces. Classical music requires more even and consistent intonation (less flexibility), a slightly darker overtone presence (in most cases), and an incredible ease of attack in order to facilitate extremely soft dynamics including the ubiquitous *niente* attacks and releases. Thus, many classical mouthpieces are crafted with lower baffles and smaller tip openings. These are the most basic generalizations, and there are a number of other factors that go into mouthpiece production, including chamber size and shape, rail thickness, facing length, and materials used, but a thoroughly in-depth discussion of mouthpieces is a thesis in itself. Trent Kynaston offers a rule of thumb in the relationship between mouthpiece design and intonation when he writes that “Generally speaking, the larger the facing and the brighter the sound characteristics, the more difficult it is to control pitch.”<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Trent Kynaston, *The Saxophone Intonation Workbook*, (Advance Music, 2006), p.12



For many saxophonists who switch mouthpieces for different styles, the different construction of each mouthpiece allows them to execute what they need to musically with greater ease. Jim Romain recalls jazz saxophonist Dick Oatts telling him the importance of “having the right tool for the job.”<sup>83</sup> This is a favorite phrase of my dad’s as well, and it certainly applies to saxophone equipment. In my own mouthpieces, I tend to avoid the extremes on either end, though there are differences between my classical and jazz setups. My jazz mouthpieces do not have a significantly high baffle, and the slope (or shape of the baffle from tip to chamber) is fairly smooth, unlike some high baffle mouthpieces with what I like to call “Grand Canyon” drop-offs. I like to play jazz mouthpieces with slightly wider tip-openings, which made the adjustment to classical mouthpieces more difficult for me. I tried several classical mouthpieces, living with some for extended periods of time to try to get used to them. I eventually found my current classical setup, a *Rousseau NC4*, which has a slightly larger tip opening than many other classical mouthpieces I tried, but is still significantly smaller than my jazz mouthpiece.

In testing the *Rousseau* mouthpieces, I had eight “identical” mouthpieces to compare, yet I only found one that seemed to mesh well with my physiology to execute what I needed and desired to do with ease. This illustrates the incredible impact even minute changes on the structural dimensions of a mouthpiece can have, which is why many choose to use different mouthpieces to meet the requirements of different styles of playing. Playing different mouthpieces for jazz and classical music can also aid in the mental separation of the two styles. In other words, the two mouthpieces can be perceived as two different “instruments,” creating a clearer idiomatic distinction in the mind.

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<sup>83</sup> James Romain, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, March 10, 2009.

This does not mean that a single mouthpiece cannot be used to play both styles; just that for many, switching makes it easier to get the desired results. In fact, a few professional saxophonists do not switch at all on certain horns. Branford Marsalis (C\* on alto),<sup>84</sup> Miles Osland (S-90 on soprano),<sup>85</sup> and Chris Vadala (C\* on soprano)<sup>86</sup> play both jazz and classical music with mouthpieces more traditionally used only for classical playing. Historically, other jazz players, including Paul Desmond and Joe Henderson, have also used classical mouthpieces for jazz.<sup>87</sup> Most players who use a single mouthpiece for both styles use a classical mouthpiece, as it is easier to alter the oral cavity to facilitate greater projection and that Venturi “zing” desired in jazz than it is to rein in a jazz mouthpiece for classical playing. These players also cite a desire for a slightly “darker” jazz sound that the classical mouthpiece offers.

While a few players use the same mouthpiece for both styles, they are certainly in the minority. However, some less-experienced players believe that by purchasing a classical mouthpiece, they will automatically be able to play classically, or by purchasing a jazz mouthpiece, they will automatically be able to play in a jazz style. Ramon Ricker mentions how some high school saxophonists will go out and buy drastic mouthpieces with a lot of edge that are far too “over the top, even for jazz.”<sup>88</sup> While many educators and clinicians can relate to this, possibly rolling their eyes at the thought of it, this illustrates the point that the key to playing in a specific style is not found in equipment alone. In no way does equipment substitute for listening. All of the various topics

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<sup>84</sup> Branford Marsalis, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, March 16, 2009.

<sup>85</sup> Miles Osland, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, March 1, 2009.

<sup>86</sup> Chris Vadala, E-mail correspondence with Joel Vanderheyden, February 8, 2009.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ramon Ricker, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, February 7, 2009.

covered thus far in this document must collectively be explored to truly achieve idiomatic accuracy. As we saw in Hasbrook's study, it is possible to play with the correct mouthpiece, but through the process of incorrect voicing, produce an idiomatically incorrect tone. The whole approach must be considered, and not merely the equipment. This is why some saxophonists are able to play both styles on the same equipment. They have put the countless hours into listening and exploring the intricacies of their physiology through experimentation and aural modeling, enabling them to make adjustments to create different timbres that are idiomatically appropriate.

A noticeable aural difference between jazz and classical mouthpieces, stemming from the baffle, chamber and tip opening differences, is one of volume. Not only do jazz mouthpieces create a slightly different timbre, but most are capable of easily producing sound at a higher dynamic level. As a result, many jazz players appreciate the extra decibels they are granted with their mouthpieces, particularly when they are competing with a loud brass section or amplified rhythm section in a big band. However, the jazz mouthpieces provide this benefit at the cost of losing some of the extremely soft dynamics that many classical mouthpieces produce with ease, and this is why it is nearly impossible to do classical music justice on a jazz setup. Miles Osland conducted an informal study with some of his students at the University of Kentucky, in which they tested the dynamic capabilities of jazz and classical mouthpieces.

“I did a study with some of my students that used a decibel meter to measure the dynamic range of our classical mouthpieces versus our jazz mouthpieces. The decibel meter was placed six feet from the bell of our saxophones, and I'd have them play their low Bb as loud as possible and then any note as soft as possible on each setup. The dynamic decibel range on both jazz and classical mouthpieces was about 70 decibels. For classical mouthpieces, the average range was from about 10 to 80 decibels. Now, remember, 100 decibels is like a loud rock concert, but again, the meter was only about six feet away from the bell. The jazz mouthpieces averaged a range from about 30 to 100 decibels. Now, you have the same dynamic range of 70 decibels for both mouthpieces, but the softest you can play on a jazz mouthpiece is going to be about 15 to 20 decibels louder than the softest you can play on a classical mouthpiece. You always strive to have a large dynamic range regardless of style, and through this study I found that you actually

have the same range on either setup. They just start and end at different levels.”<sup>89</sup>

Aside from mouthpieces, the other pieces of equipment involved in playing the saxophone can also affect response and timbre to varying degrees. Reeds can be the bane of most saxophonists’ lives, as unlike the mouthpiece, ligature, neck or instrument, they are highly unpredictable in nature. While each saxophonist has their own favorite brand and method of dealing with their reeds, the goal is, as with all other equipment, to produce the sound and execution desired with the least amount of effort. In my own world of reeds, I tend to gravitate toward a single cut or “unfiled” reed with a thicker tip and flatter heart for jazz playing. I feel that they allow me to push the louder dynamic extremes while maintaining a fatter sound. Classically, I prefer a double cut or “filed” reed (also called a French cut) with a thinner tip and even taper. I find that the more even cut of the reed with the thinner tip allows for faster response and better timbral uniformity in all registers.

The role of the reed, for me, is most crucial in terms of response. The mouthpiece shoulders more of the burden of timbre (along with the player’s physical characteristics), though timbre is also affected to some degree with different reeds, an unfortunate fact that all saxophonists are aware of. My classical reeds produce a cleaner-sounding vibration with a more consistent response, which is more appropriate for classical playing. My current reeds of choice in jazz playing have a slightly dirty edge or buzz to them that I like in jazz playing (as opposed to my very clean-sounding classical reeds), and the response (and resulting timbre) seems more flexible, offering more tonal colors in a single reed. However, as with any piece of saxophone-related equipment, it must work in conjunction with all other aspects of the instrument, physiological traits, and sound

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<sup>89</sup> Miles Osland, Interview by Joel Vanderheyden, March 1, 2009.

concept. Each player is different and has different needs in a reed, and this is why there is currently such a great variety of reeds being produced.

As with reeds, I feel that the ligature primarily impacts response and feel, and is third on my list of equipment importance (behind mouthpieces and reeds). While there are minimal timbral effects based on ligature design and material, I feel that there is a greater perception of aural difference than actually exists due to the inexorable link between what we feel and what we hear as saxophonists. Just as the vibrations of our own voice resonating in our body can cause us to perceive our voice as having a slightly different quality than what others hear (and what is captured on recordings), the vibrations and response of our equipment colors our perception of what really comes out of the saxophone.

In classical playing, the demands for subtlety in dynamics and speed of articulations require a ligature that will allow the reed to vibrate incredibly easily. For this reason, I find that using a ligature with minimal contact points and an extremely light construction works best to free up the reed to vibrate with the least amount of effort, and after some experimentation, settled on a *Charles Bay* ligature for my classical playing. Trent Kynaston suggests some other ligatures with good response, including the *Olegature*, *Ultimate Ligature*, *Vandoren Optimum*, *Vandoren Master's Inverted Ligature*, and others, asserting that when the reed and mouthpiece are allowed to resonate more freely, it has a positive impact on refining and centering pitch.<sup>90</sup>

Saxophonists have long debated a number of varying theories on the effects which neck and horn styles and materials have on producing a more desirable tone, and as with most equipment-related issues, it is a highly individualized and subjective topic. Certain aspects that are considered include materials (silver-plating, gold, lacquer type, raw brass,

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<sup>90</sup> Kynaston, *The Saxophone Intonation Workbook*, p.13.

etc.) and the design and weight of the instrument (heavier vs. lighter metals, bore measurements, etc.). While I do believe that the dimensions of an instrument or neck can significantly impact the timbre (and intonation), I feel that, like the ligature, the materials used in their construction have more of an impact on the response and resulting “feel” for the player. More than any other piece of equipment, the mouthpiece is really where the key to idiomatic tone production lies, because it can really be seen as an extension of the oral cavity in the way that it helps shape the direction and speed of the air, vibrating the reed in a manner that creates a unique timbral thumbprint.

In a way, Osland’s example of the decibel ranges of mouthpieces made for either style represents a microcosm of the overarching comparison of saxophone playing in the two idioms. As with the decibel ranges, there is a tremendous amount of overlap in terms of general technique and sound production, but it is that 15 to 20 “decibels” on either end of the spectrum that really brings unique life to each style. The extremely refined control it takes to produce the softest dynamics on a classical mouthpiece mirrors the level of control that is required throughout that idiom. It seems that as classical saxophone music evolves, it strives to push the envelope of the technical capabilities of the instrument, demanding complete mastery of the full range of the horn as if it were being played on a keyboard instrument where every tone is sounded with complete precision. This creates a level of “fussiness” over equipment-related issues that becomes necessary when playing classically, and may be somewhat foreign to the traditionally “laid back” jazz player. The demands of jazz saxophone music, while they overlap to a great degree, can be somewhat more forgiving in terms of precision. However, the dizzying speed of improvised creative thought, along with the raw power and tendency to push the instrument to the absolute brink of its timbral capabilities exemplify hallmarks of the modern jazz approach. When approaching either style, the targeted sound and technical requirements should be thoroughly engrained in the player, with the equipment merely serving as the shortest path from concept to realization.

## CHAPTER VII: PANEL QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES/INTERVIEWS

### Panel Selection

In selecting panelists for this project, I felt that it was important to have a variety of professional performers and educators with varying backgrounds and approaches to the instrument. While I felt it was imperative for each panelist to have experience with both classical and jazz styles, I also wanted the panel to represent the full spectrum of dualistic approaches to the saxophone. In other words, I was aiming to capture insight from those who play some classical but significantly more jazz, as well as those who play some jazz but significantly more classical, and everything in between. For these reasons, I felt that there was no real “objective” manner in which I could construct such a panel (such as, “All Big Ten University saxophone professors,” or “All performers registered with both NASA and [now defunct] IAJE”), and so I set out to hand-select and capture the opinions of those who not only had significant national reputations within the saxophone community, but those who I thought would best be able to articulate the differences between the two styles, providing a beneficial document and resource for saxophonists. By no means is this list a comprehensive one, though it is complete regarding this document’s aforementioned objectives. I arrived at the present list of panelists through discussions with colleagues, saxophonists, and some of the original panelists themselves. I wish to thank all those who contributed to this selection process, and hope that the subsequent interviews are as enlightening to all of you as I found them to be.

### Interview Method

In gathering input from my panelists, I constructed a 14-question questionnaire that was distributed to each saxophonist via e-mail. In order to best meet the needs of each panelist, I offered two options for collecting responses – I would accept their

responses via e-mail or would conduct an interview over the phone. For those who selected the email option, I typically asked several follow-up questions via e-mail after receiving their initial responses. Their answers to these follow-up questions were then added and built into their initial responses, and the entire document was then sent back to them for any additional editing. For those who chose the phone interview option, I gained permission from them to record our interview, and then transcribed the audio recording, making minor edits (grammar, etc.). I then sent the interviewee the transcription to make further edits before creating a final draft. The method of data collection (phone or e-mail) is indicated at the beginning of each set of responses.

### Questionnaire Responses

#### **Frank Bongiorno**

##### Brief Bio

Frank Bongiorno is Professor of Saxophone and Jazz Studies Coordinator in the Department of Music at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, where he has taught saxophone as well as jazz studies since 1982. During his time at UNCW, his saxophone and jazz students have received national and international recognition by such organizations as Down Beat magazine and Jazzfest USA, among others.

As an active recitalist, orchestral soloist, jazz artist, and clinician throughout the United States and abroad, Bongiorno's performances have taken him to Berlin, Boston, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Chicago, Montreal, New York, Tokyo, Nuremberg, Montreux (Switzerland), Graz and Salzburg (Austria), Valencia (Spain), Montréal, Pesaro (Italy), and Ljubljana (Slovenia). He has performed solos with various professional and college ensembles such as the Orchestra Filarmonica Marchigiana (Italy), Shreveport Symphony, Wilmington Symphony Orchestra, Auburn University Wind Ensemble, Williams College Jazz Ensemble, and Northern State College Jazz Ensemble, among others. In addition, Bongiorno performs regularly as a member of the renowned Ryoanji Duo (saxophone & classical guitar), as well as with his jazz group. Other performing credits include performances as a supporting musician for the Four Tops, Carol Channing, Red Skelton, the North Carolina Symphony, Kenny Rogers, Frankie Vallie, Johnny Mathis, Steve Lawrence and Eydie Gorme, as well as for the movie sound track of *Chasers* and an instructional video called *Sing Like a Pro*.

Bongiorno's solo compact disc recordings include the critically acclaimed *Classic Saxophone* and *Classic Saxophone, Vol. 2: Musica da camera*, as well as *Images*, as a member of The Ryoanji Duo. He has also recorded a jazz play-along CD of original jazz



compositions as well as a master class CD on learning to improvise using transcriptions for *Jazz Player Magazine* and a saxophone vibrato master class CD released by the *Saxophone Journal*.

He has numerous publications including saxophone transcriptions of "Classical" music, original compositions for jazz combo, paper presentations at the Eighteenth Annual International Association for Jazz Educators Conference and the Second Annual Boston Saxophone Workshop & Contemporary Woodwind Seminar, as well as over 150 articles and reviews in such publications as the *Saxophone Symposium*, *Saxophone Journal*, *North Carolina Music Educators Journal*, the *National Association of College Wind & Percussion Instructors* and *Popular Musicians*. Bongiorno currently writes CD reviews for the *Saxophone Journal* and is the coordinating editor of saxophone reviews for the *Saxophone Symposium*. He has been featured in a front cover interview of the January/February 1993 issue of the *Saxophone Journal* and is listed in the *International Who's Who in Music, Seventeenth Edition* and the *Outstanding Musicians of the 20th Century*.

(Answers collected via e-mail on March 24, 2009)

***How does your playing change conceptually when switching between classical and jazz?***

Conceptual changes are stylistic (e.g., idiomatic rhythms and articulations in jazz) and physical (e.g., embouchure flexibility and air flow).

***What are the differences (if any) in your embouchure/oral cavity when approaching each style?***

While the throat/oral cavity is used in both for note voicing, I tend to think of warmer air for classical, generated from the back of the oral cavity, and slightly cooler air for jazz, with a focus on the front of the oral cavity. The air flow is directed into the instrument different ways. Front of the mouth suggests a more streamline approach whereas the tongue is flatter allowing the air to move from the back of the oral cavity to the front of the oral cavity seemingly quicker. In classical, the tongue seems to be slightly arched and the air flow maneuvers around it so it does not feel like it is being blown as directly. Of course, I have no physical proof of this, but it is what I perceive as a player and describe when I teach.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to timbre (tone) in each style?***

See above. In the end, I prefer a warm, rich tone, but it can be dictated by the equipment used. That is, warm dark tone for both, but more resistance for classical, and less resistance for jazz projection. Classical mouthpieces tend to provide resistance because of the smaller tip opening and/or facing, among other mouthpiece attributes, and causes a back pressure with the air flow. I believe this resistance is necessary for the tone quality to be compact and more focused for a classical saxophone tone. On the other hand, a more open facing allows the air flow to flow freely into jazz mouthpieces. While focus is still important for the jazz tone, it is achieved by other means, such as the jazz saxophonist's embouchure.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to articulation in each style?***

Almost always legato in jazz with an emphasis on an articulated upbeat, slurred to a legato down beat. Classical is generally detached. Both styles inflect the contour of the line, with jazz emphasizing the peaks using accents and classical using tenuto (gross generalization, but significant).

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to vibrato in each style?***

Minimal vibrato in jazz (e.g., at the end of a note) and used according to style as well as situation (e.g., playing lead or as a soloist). In classical, it is synonymous with the tone, and regular, but used in varying ways according to intensity, dynamics, range, and style, among others.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in jazz who are attempting to play convincingly in the classical idiom?***

The proper use of the tongue placement. In jazz, the tongue tends to be more on the reed for articulation, while it is a back and forth motion in classical. Other problems deal with appropriate equipment and the front/back of oral cavity discussed above.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in classical saxophone who are attempting to play convincingly in the jazz idiom (not including improvisatory skills)?***

Same as above, but in the opposite direction. Also, general rhythmic tendencies such as the subtle emphasis of the upbeat instead of downbeat.

***What is the primary physical and/or conceptual challenge you have encountered as a player when switching between the two styles?***

Air flow and oral cavity juxtaposition between the two styles.

***Which style presents more difficulties for you personally? Why?***

Neither style presents more difficulty, however the command of certain techniques can become challenging if the time is not spent on its mastery (e.g., classical altissimo, improvisation in jazz).

***When you initially began playing the saxophone, did you have a teacher whose instruction methodology leaned more toward one style or the other, or was it a blend of the two?***

Blend of two styles. In fact I played a Meyer mouthpiece for both styles in high school fairly successfully, but I wouldn't recommend that now.

***When teaching young students, what methodology do you recommend?***

My approach to teaching saxophone is to first learn the instrument, regardless of style. This will require developing a good tone, pitch, proper posture, hand position, good technique, etc. The vehicles for which I use to teach these concepts can be either style, for either student.

***What setup (mouthpiece, reed, ligature, instrument) do you use for each style? Why?***

Jazz - Beechler 6MS, Rico Jazz Select 3Hard, and Eddie Daniels ligature. I like the control, balance and projection.

Classical - Selmer C\*\* with Vandoren 3 reeds and Rovner ligature. Control in all registers, especially extremes, and warm tone.

***Is there a setup that works well for both styles? Why or why not?***

Meyer 5M can work, but in the end I recommend specializing your equipment for optimum sound production in each style.

***Who are your primary influences for each style in terms of sound concept?***

Marcel Mule and Phil Woods.

## **Stephen Duke**

### Brief Bio:

Steve Duke is widely known for his work as an accomplished classical and jazz saxophonist and for performing new music and computer music. He is especially recognized for his contemporary improvisations. As a teacher he is recognized for developing jazz and classical crossover performance pedagogy and for the application of the Feldenkrais Method in learning to reduce stress in music performance. Steve Duke currently serves as a Distinguished Research Professor and Professor of Music at the School of Music at Northern Illinois University.

Duke received a broad training in classical and jazz music ranging from study with leading orchestral musicians on flute, clarinet and oboe to studying jazz with Joe Henderson and Joe Daley. He received a Bachelor of Music and Master of Music at the University of North Texas. Duke also has studied extensively on ways to reduce tension in music performance and is a Guild Certified Teacher in the Feldenkrais Method.

He has performed at numerous jazz festivals and with notable jazz artists including Joe Williams, Ella Fitzgerald, Roland Hanna, Zoot Sims and others. He released his first solo album *Monk By 2* on the music of Thelonious Monk on Sony/Columbia. Currently, he performs with his trio, The Steve Duke Trio, in the Chicago area.

Steve Duke's classical performance ranges from orchestral music to computer music. He has commissioned and premiered over 20 acoustic and electro-acoustic solo pieces, and is the only American performer to have premiered two works that have received top awards from the prestigious *Institut international de musique électroacoustique de Bourges*.

Duke is known for his pedagogical innovations in jazz and classical performance and in reducing unnecessary stress in performance. He wrote the first article in crossover style technique and developed the first music curriculum in the Feldenkrais Method as a way to reduce unnecessary tension and improve awareness in performance.

(Answers collected via phone interview on 03/19/09)

***How does your playing change conceptually when switching between classical and jazz?***

Talking about “concept” is a slippery slope. It’s very difficult for us to relate to concept, because you may be dealing with someone learning something totally new. There are a number of folks like Moshe Feldenkrais and all the people involved with cybernetics who talk about the open-loop systems. We can have a concept or perception of something or an action of it. The clearest way I have found to address performance, which is an action, is with an action. That affects the concept. For example, a jazz player (who plays jazz with a mature style in a convincing manner) will have certain things that are habitual and will automatically do these things when they are trying to play classical music that don’t work. When they begin to understand *how* to do things differently, they begin to hear different things and their concept shifts. So, concept and action are really the same thing. They are not separate things like popular ideas about mind and body. When we try to separate concept from action we can get into some very confusing vocabulary and ideas.

I wrote a controversial article on jazz and classical technique that was published in 1988 in which I said that the issue is not about “correct technique.” It is about “appropriate technique.” Classical music is not “correct” technique. It is correct for classical music. That was so upsetting to so many saxophone players who taught in studios throughout the country, I can’t even tell you. It made me infamous overnight. Now, I think we understand that to be true, that technique and style go together. Still today, you find people saying that jazz players who play classical music unconvincingly have technical deficiencies, but that classical players who play jazz unconvincingly have “conceptual” deficiencies. Well, really it’s the same thing!

One of the problems for classical saxophonists is trying to teach classical saxophone to a jazz player because they don’t understand what the jazz player is doing, and vice versa. This is because each player doesn’t understand the technique that the other is using. So, most times, the student is left to their own devices and is forced to beat their head against a wall for two or three years until they can figure it out. Thankfully, this is something that, in the right environment, can be learned very quickly. Style is very easy to learn. Improvisation is a little more difficult to learn.

***What are the differences (if any) in your embouchure/oral cavity when approaching each style?***

One way to think about approaching jazz style is that it is very much “at the mouthpiece.” There is a great deal of jaw movement, dampening of the reed, and blowing against the mouthpiece. In classical playing, everything happens before the mouthpiece. I utilize the flat-lip embouchure where the embouchure is rolled out. I think that is very important. What I teach is that the lip should be rolled out for jazz playing to aid in the dampened articulations and I will also have students anchor tongue in jazz playing because it gives you more flesh to work with. The tongue can go in a lot of places (anchor-tonguing or otherwise) and still be effective.

The most important thing here is about compulsive behavior. We have certain ways of doing things, and regardless of what the situation is, we're going to do it that way. That is the kiss of death between styles. It's also what gets players injured, and can be the reason why performances are ineffective, because they don't know how to be spontaneous and react to the performing situation. You can work up and cut the diamond on your sonata, and still go out there and not sound very good because you're not present, and you can't adjust the tiny things that will be different in front of an audience. So it's the compulsive behavior that we're really trying to get away from and this has to do with that little joke that we keep telling ourselves and kidding ourselves with, which is "I'm doing this because I want to." Well, if you don't have a choice, you're not doing what you want! So don't kid yourself that you're doing it because that's what you choose. It's that choice that I feel is important for jazz players not to focus on studying only jazz.

Inevitably, if there is going to be any work for a saxophone player twenty or thirty years from now, when that student is 40 or 50 years old, it will be different than what they are playing now. One of the great reasons to learn classical music, aside from a thousand years of history, is that it is such a radically different technique. It is a radically different way to play the instrument, not to mention that it emphasizes certain things like blend and tuning. You can get away with a lot more pitch discrepancies in jazz than you can in classical music, but not if you're playing studio work. So, if there is going to be a radically different style, then you have to have perspective of what you're doing to be able to incorporate a new style into your playing. If you have no perspective of what you do, then that market that you would want to have as a player won't be available to you.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to timbre (tone) in each style?***

We're not looking at classical tone or jazz tone because tone is what we do with the sound. There have been many studies from 1960 on, about differentiating the tone of one instrument from another instrument when you remove the attack transients. The studies show that you can't tell the difference between instruments. In other words, if you took a tone from like pitched instruments without vibrato, and played the same pitch on a flute, trumpet, violin, French horn and an oboe (clarinet is a little bit unique because of its overtone system), you would be hard-pressed to tell which instrument is being played without hearing the attack and release. About ten or twelve years ago, I decided to do a study of my own to test the difference between classical and jazz tone on the saxophone. I recorded several musicians playing a steady tone (omitting attacks and releases) from baritone, tenor, alto and soprano saxophones playing the same note (classical and jazz), and threw in a French horn and a clarinet and something else just to keep everybody honest and then played it back at a NASA [North American Saxophone Alliance] conference. There were 98 percent incorrect answers. They couldn't tell the difference between a jazz and classical tone. So, this tells you that it's what changes in the tone that allows us to identify the tone. In other words, the tone is the style. The style is the tone. It's not a "jazz tone." It's how that tone changes by how you play it. If you add a certain type of vibrato, you instantly know it's a jazz tone. If you add a certain type of attack, you instantly know it's a jazz tone. In fact, without the attacks and vibrato you can't tell the difference between a classical soprano and a jazz bari! So, what are we really talking about here? I think it's important to be clear about what we're really

talking about so that you can avoid bickering over “right and wrong” because neither style is what you’re really addressing.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to articulation in each style?***

I think one of the most important parts of switching between styles, especially from jazz to classical are the attack transients. That is not a term we use very often, but that is the accurate term for what we are doing and if we use that language it is much easier. Attack transients refer to what happens at the beginning of the note and what happens at the end of the note. This is a really important part of understanding classical and jazz style. In order to understand what a jazz player is doing when they are trying to play classically, you must first understand what a jazz player is doing. There are three types of articulation that a jazz player will use. One is tongued, one is slurred, and the other is dampened. The dampened articulation does not exist in classical music except as an extended technique. For example, in jazz we use the tongue with the third (dampened) articulation, but in classical we use the throat to aid articulation. It’s not just air and tongue. There is a focusing point with the throat to shape the articulation. You don’t use the throat as much in jazz articulation. The tongue and the jaw replace the throat. Many people may disagree with the use of the throat and would debate this point, but that is because they don’t know what’s going on [laughs]. If you listen to any [classical] player, there is a shape to the attack that you can’t get from the tongue or air alone. We don’t feel what the throat does like we do with our lips, and that is why it is not understood. You may have an articulation in classical music that is really pointed like [sings] “tda” similar to a brass player. French horns typically do this, and that is one of the problems they have with blending in woodwind quintets because woodwinds don’t do that. Then there is the gentle attack like [sings softer] “la” that is shaped. You don’t have that in jazz. One of the things that has to happen for a jazz player to understand the concept of a classical attack is to understand how the throat affects the attack. So, one of the things conceptually, is to understand how the tone begins.

Now the other thing that is very important is if you ask a jazz player to start a note [with a breath attack], 99 percent will play [sings] “ffaaah.” A well-trained classical player will play [sings] “aaah.” They won’t have the “ff” part in front of their sound. Many people view this as the jazz player lacking tone control, but that is false because the tone happens when it is supposed to happen – on the beat. Therefore he has tone control because he is doing what he intends. Now, if you ask jazz players to play a note without the “ff” in front of the note, they can’t. They don’t know how to do that. We say, “you’re not controlling the sound because you’re not getting the tone when you start the air. Don’t move the air before the note.” It can’t happen. You could ask a jazz player to do one hundred attacks and you will get air before the attack every single time. So, then you can say you’re obviously making the tone when you want but you’re preceding it with the air. In fact, most jazz players won’t even hear that air before the attack. They’ll say “Wow, now that you point it out I do notice it. I’ve never noticed that before. That’s interesting!” Then you can create a game by saying “okay, start your air on one beat and then start the note on the next beat.” Most jazz players can do that easily. They can go [singing while snapping out a metronome pulse] “ff-aaah.” The game continues with eighth notes [sings faster] “ff-aaah.” Then continue with sixteenth notes, and thirty-second notes, so that the “ff” gets shorter and shorter until finally, you

ask them to play right on it and they play [sings] “aaah.” Now within ten minutes, a major concept of classical music is learned. What’s happened then, is that conceptually and technically, they have put a temporal shift on when the air starts and when the tone starts, and they can start playing with that timing. In order for a jazz player to change their concept of an attack (which is a major part of the problem) they must have this temporal shift to focus on when their tone is produced in relation to when their air starts to move. A classical player always has a very clear image of what that tone is going to feel like before they start moving the air. The jazz player usually starts the air and then forms his concept of when he wants the tone. There is nothing wrong with that, because if you articulated “classically” it would sound terrible in jazz. This leads to the problem that the classical player can’t play in a jazz style, which is also a conceptual “technical” deficiency.

Once the attack concept has been learned for the jazz player, the next step is the other attack transient – the end of the note. I use the words “attack transient” because that is the transition between silence and sound. In other words, it’s the things that change that we’re really dealing with. The conceptual difference between classical and jazz is that silent ambience that does not exist in jazz. So when you’re playing jazz, you’re often playing into a microphone, there is a drummer playing, a bass player playing, and there is always some other sound happening. People are drinking, ordering food, and there is always noise going on. As I tell people, one sound you will never hear at Symphony Center in Chicago is “Excuse me, may I have another drink here?” You never hear that sound, and if you do you’re probably getting kicked out of there! The reason for that is because of the silent ambience. There is an incredible amount of time, money and research spent on the acoustics for halls that orchestras play in. Compare that with your typical jazz club where they have to add the reverb into the amplification. So, we’re not even talking about the same environment that they’re playing in which is another big part of how the two styles had to have been shaped. Look at the difference in concept between an orchestra hall and a jazz club. Now you have some idea of why the attacks and releases are so different in each style.

The releases in classical playing have to be open. The easiest way to achieve that is to reverse your air [sings] “daah” [inhales] and breathe in. You get an instant and free ring in the tone. Then to learn to taper it down and also to get the opposite of that which is the *niente* breath attack, takes quite a bit of refining. In my experience, that is something that can be learned in about one semester. If someone is extremely dedicated, it may be about eight weeks. Once they have accomplished this, they have tackled about 70 percent of the difference between classical and jazz. It is that *niente* attack and release that is so critical to being able to blend with any other classical instrument. If they can learn to do that, they can pretty much play in a concert band and feel like they fit in. Forget the solo pieces; you need to at least get the saxophonist in an ensemble like band or quartet where they will be playing as a member of a solid classical section because the director will feel like they are contributing. [Band] Directors are often frustrated with jazz players in their ensemble because they don’t know how to control the instrument for classical music. Quartet is the best way to learn that control, because then you can really get into the details like attacks and releases.

The next part then, is to get beyond the lyrical part to the rhythmic part of how the air must be changed very quickly for accents. The jazz player is so used to pressing the

note. They'll go [sings from loud to soft] "deeeeee" down to pianissimo, and of course they lose it at the end. So, the idea when we're playing in a rhythmic style [sings] "dee - yah-dah-tah-dah" or something like that, is that you begin the attack and then you let it go. You're just relaxing. Everything is just the change in the air at the attack. That's all you're concerned about, so everything else just pops after that. The rhythmic style, interestingly enough is learned after the lyrical style. Lyrical styles are easier to understand once they [jazz players] get the attack and release, and then it's the concept of how the energy or flow happens with a rhythmic style or fast style. That is extremely different between classical style and jazz style, because in a jazz style ballad they will often use the differentiation in the attack and release. Where it really changes and where they should not use it [in jazz playing] is when it gets fast. So you have in a jazz style [sings] "daht-dee-yat-un-dat-un-daht" versus [sings] "dah-dah-dah-dee-dee" with the air changing. So, it's the air and the throat with the tongue that will determine that rhythmic style, not the doodle tongue where you go [sings] "daht-daht-dah-dah" and the tongue dampens and undampens the reed and people think you get what is an accent or a tongued note. Well, it's not a tongued note, it's a variation of a slurred note. So, I tell my students that you actually have four levels of tonguing in jazz. One is tongued, one is slurred, one is a dampened tongue, and then you have the *release* from a dampened tongue. Those are the four basic levels of the presence of a note in jazz. With classical playing, you don't have the dampened sound, so the question is going to be, "how do you shape the attack of the attacked note?" and "how much do you taper that note?" or "does that note lead into another note?" The key there is to get really relaxed, freed air to get really responsive. Part of it is the concept of a spread tone in classical music being critical for executing very fast, articulated passages. You can't play, for example, soft spread. It can't be done. Go to your horn and try to make an ugly tone on a pianissimo. It's impossible to do because there's not enough in that sound to do anything with it. The critical thing, then, is to learn to spread the tone and understand that you don't make a "tone" when you're soft or when you're trying to play very fast. You're really trying to get response. If you get caught up in making "good tone" in these situations, the attack or response of the pianissimo or allegro becomes lethargic. In this case, a beautiful tone isn't always effective.

The other concept that can be difficult for a jazz player is that there is no "motor" rhythm. There is no popular dance or swing quality in classical music. Everything flows together and is not layered on top of an understood beat. One of the things a jazz player will always do when playing classical music is to try and find a "beat." Well, there is no beat. I was just working with a player yesterday on the Schumann *Romances*, and I said "You're trying to find the beat. There is no beat." There is only a flow. So, if you understand that there is only a flow and that you're just playing in time with the flow with the piano, then you're not looking to be so rigid with your time and you'll play together better. Jazz players [in playing jazz] don't have to reach a consensus with each note, they just have to *feel* the beat together. This time element can be difficult to get used to. Now, in large ensemble playing this is less of an issue, because we don't have as much of that "flow" in large ensembles where everyone is usually keeping more strict time. If you get into solo playing or quartet playing, that is a different story. They have to be able to affect each other's flow of the pulse. Jazz players don't feel comfortable doing that. In other words, you need to have a consensus time *flow*, not a consensus time



*feel*. Time in classical music is a flow versus a rhythmic motor feel in jazz. Jazz is really a stratified, varied music on some basic principles like time, beat and harmony, and we are always varying or stratifying that more and more. In classical music, it's more about consensus. You don't stratify on top of what somebody else is doing. That is considered not playing together. So, you must give up your individual input on that level to find a consensus. Now, in chamber music, you can have more of an individual influence, but you still have to adjust what you are doing to the flow of what is going on. For example, if someone doesn't have a good articulation, and they are coming in late on their articulations, it messes up the time, because nobody else understands their flow. Then you have everyone coming in late and no one can agree on where the "beat" is.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to vibrato in each style?***

In general, there is less vibrato in jazz compared to classical playing.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in jazz who are attempting to play convincingly in the classical idiom?***

[See above]

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in classical saxophone who are attempting to play convincingly in the jazz idiom (not including improvisatory skills)?***

One of the most difficult things for a classical player to achieve is an easy swing feel that isn't too labored. It can also be difficult for classical players to understand that often times in jazz, precision is not the ultimate goal.

***What is the primary physical and/or conceptual challenge you have encountered as a player when switching between the two styles?***

The only reason something would be more challenging is if it is a particular skill that I haven't been working on recently.

***Which style presents more difficulties for you personally? Why?***

I don't think that way, because I have been playing both styles for so long.

***When you initially began playing the saxophone, did you have a teacher whose instruction methodology leaned more toward one style or the other, or was it a blend of the two?***

One of my first saxophone teachers back in 1965 was one of Fred Hemke's graduate students from Northwestern. When I got to college in 1972, I was one of the first students to work with Jim Riggs at North Texas. Back then, lessons at the college level were exclusively classical. I had spent some time with other instructors learning jazz and have since spent a great deal of time dedicating years to each style.

***When teaching young students, what methodology do you recommend?***

I have been influenced by people like Feldenkrais, in that my philosophy deals more with the question of "How does the person work?" rather than how a "method" works. For most people, their baccalaureate experience is that basic, broad foundation of

what the music is about and then they choose what they want to do. One of the things that I don't agree with is taking that baccalaureate degree and turning it into a specialized, performance focus. I think that is a mistake, because the performance requirements change and it's important to have that diverse perspective, even if you only study classical music for a couple years. Not only will it help your playing, because there will be little things that you will use, but it also gives you perspective on how to learn something new and different. I see this as a major change in the way that saxophone is taught today, in that more and more players who are talented in jazz only want to study jazz and only want to go to schools that will only teach them jazz. I think that this is not a good thing in the long run for the saxophone twenty or thirty years from now. I don't see the same issue, personally, with most classical saxophone students, though I do see it with certain studios. I had a student come up to me the other day that said "All these saxophonists play classical saxophone but all their records are jazz!" They listen only to jazz, but they only play classical.

I think that what has happened among saxophone teachers is that there is a desire to have it separated. I think there is a desire to protect the classical saxophone tradition and there is a fear of it being swallowed by the jazz programs. I feel that. Not everywhere, but I feel it within some people, where there really isn't an integration within some of the teachers. They really want to stake out their territory. There are some reasons for that, including the fact that the system supports that and rewards them for being experts at what they do, but I've never been that kind of musician. It's always been a point of contention in saxophone studio teaching, and even the jazz musicians are angry about all those years of being suppressed out of the system. There is a lot of water under the bridge there. The odd part about this is what your paper is suggesting and what I also think, which is that most saxophone teachers have to deal with both [styles] in their studio. When you get to the bigger universities, though, they separate it. So, the leadership in this area [playing both styles] is not coming from the leading schools, it's coming from the secondary schools that have to address both. The system rewards this separation that is found in the bigger schools. It's kind of unfortunate, because you have students going to bigger schools who are then left to their own devices to try and make those bridges. Of course the teachers there are saying that this is what the standards are in their area. This is a problem.

So, for what it's worth, if a saxophone student comes to Northern [Illinois University], and they go into music education, they are required to pass a proficiency in both jazz and classical saxophone in my studio. Everyone must learn both at a proficiency level, not just "hey, you need to study this," or "I encourage you to do it," but "you have to meet a standard or you're not getting a degree." I've asked professors at other institutions, including those who teach both jazz and classically, if they have a proficiency requirement in jazz and no one does. I asked them why not, and the answer was always the same – "Politically, it's suicide. I can't do it because the woodwind faculty at my school would freak out." The way I was able to introduce the proficiency requirement at Northern is, well first of all I've been here a long time so I can do what I want [laughs], but also because I said, "Look, this is the dominant professional and artistic standard of the saxophone. You would never teach something on your instrument that wasn't the dominating professional and artistic standard." The saxophone doesn't exist in orchestra as a full time position anywhere, so that is not the dominant

professional and artistic standard. My students do not perform their jazz proficiency for the woodwind faculty, they do it for me. The reason for that is that the other woodwind faculty members don't feel qualified to make that evaluation – and that's fair. They don't feel that they can adequately assess a student playing bebop jazz when they don't play that style of music. The next part was to get the jazz faculty to listen to the music education student juries. It goes both ways. My argument with them was, if you want jazz to be more mainstream, then you should have to listen to the music education students. They agreed with that. So, all of my students take a classical and a jazz jury, every semester. It's not a big deal. Everybody does it. My students go to other schools for graduate work and they think it's very strange that jazz and classical playing are separated. They don't know what to think about it. One thing that I think really needs to change is that the saxophone studios need to enforce in their standards of how they evaluate students, the professional and artistic standards of the instrument. It is not acceptable to blow that off.

***What setup (mouthpiece, reed, ligature, instrument) do you use for each style? Why?***

Alto (Classical) – Selmer C\*

Alto (Jazz) – NY Meyer

Tenor (Classical) – Vandoren

Tenor (Jazz) – Otto Link

I tend to use more “medium” jazz setups that aren't too drastically different from my classical mouthpieces.

***Is there a setup that works well for both styles? Why or why not?***

In my experience, any mouthpiece can work for any style, but there are some that certainly make each style easier to execute. For example, my NY Meyer can play a pretty good niente, but I don't use it for classical playing because it is easier to do it on my C\*.

***Who are your primary influences for each style in terms of sound concept?***

Cannonball Adderley, Stan Getz and Phil Woods are three of my primary jazz influences. Don Sinta and Mathieu Dufour (principal flute, Chicago Symphony Orchestra) are tremendous classical influences. In general, I like to study the approach of non-saxophonists in the classical idiom to help shape my own classical voice. Johnny Hodges, in my opinion, was the most brilliant interpreter of music on the saxophone in any style. His tone, timing, and huge dynamic contrast were just incredible. He is a musician that deserves to be revisited by classical and jazz saxophonists alike.

## **Michael Jacobson**

### Brief Bio

Michael Jacobson joined the Baylor University faculty in 1984, and is currently Professor of Saxophone and Music Technology. He holds degrees from Arizona State University (Bachelor of Music in Theory and Composition, and BM in Jazz Performance), Indiana University (Master of Music in Saxophone Performance), and the University of Texas at Austin (Doctor of Musical Arts in Performance with a Jazz Emphasis). Indiana University also awarded him their prestigious Performer's Certificate. His classical performance has taken him all over the world and earned him grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. His CD recording of John Harbison's *San Antonio*, issued in 1999 on the AUR label, was a first round Grammy Award nominee in the category "Best Instrumental Solo Performance without Orchestra."

Works have been written for him by such notable composers as Fisher Tull, Walter Hartley, Richard Willis, Charles Young, and Scott McAllister. He is active as both a clinician and adjudicator on a regional and national scale. He is a regular columnist for the *Saxophone Journal*, and also authored a column dealing with Music Technology in *Jazz Player* magazine from 1993-1997.

In addition to his work in saxophone performance and pedagogy, Dr. Jacobson is very active in the field of music technology. He designed and teaches much of the technology curriculum now offered in the Baylor School of Music. He is a clinician for the MakeMusic Corporation, and frequently conducts clinics and workshops on both Finale music notation software, and SmartMusic Studio intelligent accompaniment software.

Before joining the Baylor faculty in 1984, Dr. Jacobson was a professor at Mansfield University in Mansfield, Pennsylvania, where he was the Director of Jazz Studies and Professor of Saxophone. He is past President of the North American Saxophone Alliance, and was also Region 4 Director (1984-1994) and Membership Director (1980-1984) of the organization. Equally conversant in the jazz idiom, Dr. Jacobson has toured or performed with entertainers such as Bill Cosby, Lou Rawls, Sammy Davis Jr., and The 5th Dimension, among many others.

(Answers collected via e-mail on March 5, 2009)

### ***How does your playing change conceptually when switching between classical and jazz?***

Voicing changes. I voice a concert A (alto) when playing classical, and a concert Eb when playing jazz. The classical voicing is a third below the top end of the mouthpiece (C), and the jazz note is a third above the bottom end - assuming one can play an octave range.

### ***What are the differences (if any) in your embouchure/oral cavity when approaching each style?***

I do not change embouchure. See previous question for oral cavity.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to timbre (tone) in each style?***

Classical tone is more controlled with more consistent and refined timbral qualities, while my jazz tone is larger, rougher, and in some respects more spread and less contained.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to articulation in each style?***

Jazz commonly involves tongue releases for note endings, classical does not. I also incorporate "doodle" tonguing - more accurately called "doodn" tonguing for woodwinds, "doodle" is more associated with brass playing - and the use of ghosted-notes. I use the doodn tonguing for ghost-note effects, and for elements of style related to the swing feel.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to vibrato in each style?***

Classical vibrato is narrower in the approach that can be applied. It is more consistent, and has less variance involved than the approach I use in jazz. Jazz vibrato is generally slower, wider, and involves more effects that relate to beginning the vibrato after the initiation of note (although I do this to some extent in classical, it is in more limited circumstances, and with a more conservative application), and might involve changes in speed and width. The "terminal vibrato" effect can also be applied, which is a very fast, shake-like vibrato at the very end of a note.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in jazz who are attempting to play convincingly in the classical idiom?***

Controlling pitch and timbral changes. This usually relates to voicing changes that involve what would relate to a higher mouthpiece note, and one that is consistent and steady in pitch.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in classical saxophone who are attempting to play convincingly in the jazz idiom (not including improvisatory skills)?***

The same voicing issues addressed above, yet in reverse. Also incorporating idiomatic use of effects such as articulation, appropriate embellishments (applied in apropos situations), negotiating swing at different tempi, and playing with a different tonal concept. Most of these relate to lack of familiarity and listening on the part of students attempting jazz (many think it is more fun to play than listen to).

***What is the primary physical and/or conceptual challenge you have encountered as a player when switching between the two styles?***

Changing setups (mouthpiece/reeds) and equipment (I play different instruments also between the two styles) sometimes results in embouchure irritation. But the fact I do not change my basic embouchure approach makes this less of a consideration than for some.

***Which style presents more difficulties for you personally? Why?***

They both involve challenges that are unique to the idiom. If I were to choose one, I would pick jazz because of the element of improvisation which takes a LOT of practice to be proficient and convincing.

***When you initially began playing the saxophone, did you have a teacher whose instruction methodology leaned more toward one style or the other, or was it a blend of the two?***

My teachers were all initially classical in their concepts and approach. It was not until I got to college that I actually studied jazz in an academic environment, and then it was with players who were not saxophonists. At that point (college), I also studied jazz saxophone with players who were exclusively jazz saxophone performers.

***When teaching young students, what methodology do you recommend?***

I teach young students a classical approach exclusively. When they have mastered tonal control of the instrument, and have adequate technique and can play at LEAST all of their major scales, I encourage them to develop at least generic skills in jazz (not necessarily involving improvisation), although I leave that decision ultimately up to the student.

***What setup (mouthpiece, reed, ligature, instrument) do you use for each style? Why?***

Classical:

Selmer C\*, Vandoren #4 reeds or Rico Reserve # 3 1/2, Bonade inverted ligature.

Jazz:

Meyer 7 (opened up slightly with hand work), Vandoren Java #3 or Rico ZZ Jazz #3, standard ligature.

I use these setups because they work for me, and I know what to expect from them. I do not like experimenting with equipment. I am more a believer that tone production is a result of concept and not equipment, and that the more a performer experiments with equipment changes the more confused they become.

***Is there a setup that works well for both styles? Why or why not?***

A jazz player that is very confident with their concept and approach can perform effectively on a classical setup - I have seen this done by a number of jazz performers. It would be MUCH harder for a classical player to perform well on a jazz setup.

***Who are your primary influences for each style in terms of sound concept?***

Classical: Eugene Rousseau, Donald Sinta

Jazz: Cannonball Adderley, John Coltrane, Joshua Redman

## Trent Kynaston

### Brief Bio

Trent Kynaston is a recognized artist in classical and jazz music and has performed throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, Central America, South America, and Asia. A professor of music at Western Michigan University, he teaches saxophone, jazz studies, and performs as a member of the Western Jazz Quartet, a resident faculty ensemble in the School of Music. He holds degrees from the University of Arizona in Tucson and the coveted gold *Medaille d'Honneur* in saxophone and chamber music from the Conservatoire National de Musique de Bordeaux, France. Kynaston is the recipient of Down Beat magazine's annual Achievement Award for Jazz Education, and the Outstanding Service Award and Dean's Outstanding Teaching Award from the WMU College of Fine Arts. He received the Western Michigan University Distinguished Teaching Award in 2007, and was WMU's 2008 "Professor of the Year."

Professor Kynaston has published numerous compositions, books, and articles on various aspects of music, and is recognized world-wide for his jazz solo transcription books. He has performed and toured with numerous internationally recognized jazz artists, including Art Farmer, Red Rodney, Urbie Green, Billy Hart, Mark Murphy, Stefon Harris, Kenny Werner, and Randy Brecker. His recordings include Live at the Akwarium Jazz Club (Warsaw, Poland) on Koch Jazz International, Firebird on SMR (listed in the January 2000 issue of Down Beat Magazine as one of the best CD's of the 90's), Blue Harts on SMR, Turtles (with Randy Brecker) on Polonia, The Waning Moon on Mercury, Sabine's Dance on Sea Breeze Jazz, and Mayan Myths on Sea Breeze Jazz.

(Answers collected via e-mail on February 13, 2009)

***How does your playing change conceptually when switching between classical and jazz?***

Right brain to left brain and back again.

***What are the differences (if any) in your embouchure/oral cavity when approaching each style?***

I have my lower lip out a tiny bit more for jazz, and my tongue arches a bit more and as a result tends to be more back in my mouth.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to timbre (tone) in each style?***

For jazz I think more of the presence of attack and energy in the sound, for classical more of the body of the sound (texture) and how the attack enhances/fosters that.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to articulation in each style?***

Articulation is the biggest difference for me in delineating the styles. The main difference in playing effectively in a baroque style or be-bop, say, is articulation. There

are obvious tone differences, but they are usually the result of the articulation style and equipment.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to vibrato in each style?***

I use what I call vibrato “in the sound” for classical and more vibrato on the sound for jazz. Vibrato is certainly a more prominent feature of my classical sound than jazz, where I use very little in a terminal style.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in jazz who are attempting to play convincingly in the classical idiom?***

Time to effectively practice both - Usually determined by performance opportunities.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in classical saxophone who are attempting to play convincingly in the jazz idiom (not including improvisatory skills)?***

Articulation and ghosting notes properly, and finding a good jazz set up that will compliment the other.

***What is the primary physical and/or conceptual challenge you have encountered as a player when switching between the two styles?***

None really. I’ve done it for so long I don’t even think about it anymore.

***Which style presents more difficulties for you personally? Why?***

Jazz, because although I’ve played both since high school, classical was the focus for all my true formative years. Jazz only became my primary focus in my mid 30’s.

***When you initially began playing the saxophone, did you have a teacher whose instruction methodology leaned more toward one style or the other, or was it a blend of the two?***

In high school I always had teachers who were great jazz players who just tried to teach me to play the saxophone. They used both styles in their teaching approach from the very beginning.

***When teaching young students, what methodology do you recommend?***

I teach the saxophone first – good embouchure, breathing, developing an individual sound based on individual physical make up, etc., and all styles as a means of putting it to use.

***What setup (mouthpiece, reed, ligature, instrument) do you use for each style? Why?***

Selmer Super Action 80 (series 1) Alto

Classical – alto – Selmer S-190 with Hemke 3 ½ reeds (I also have an older S-80 C\* I like for chamber music)

Jazz – Bamber 6 - Jazz and Rico Royal 3 ½’s (I don’t play much jazz on alto anymore)

Ligature – Bay gold plated for classical and Francois Louis Ultimate for jazz.



I own 2 Selmer Mark VI Tenors – one make in the early 70's – silver plated – originally owned by Stan Getz; and a gold plated VI that I bought while in High School in 1963. I had it gold plated 10 -12 years ago.

Classical – tenor – Rousseau 4R – Hemke 3 ½'s

Jazz – Link 7\* (Millennium 2000 edition) Louis Ultimate ligature, Rico Jazz Select filed 3 mediums

Soprano – Keilworth SX-90 – black lacquer - Selmer S -80 C\* for both classical and jazz. Ultimate ligature with either Hemke 3 ½'s for classical, Vandoren (Blue box) 3 1/2's for jazz

***Is there a setup that works well for both styles? Why or why not?***

I can play jazz on my classical mouthpieces but lose the edge/projection. I don't find any other negatives, though.

***Who are your primary influences for each style in terms of sound concept?***

I would say that my sound on each instrument/style is rather personal, but I grew up listening to Getz, Cannonball, Trane, and everyone that followed. Classical influences were mostly early classical recordings: Rascher - Grand Award Artists recordings; Mule - Selmer recording; Sinta - American Music; Hemke - Contest Music, The American Saxophone, Music for Tenor Saxophone; etc.

## **Branford Marsalis**

### Brief Bio

World-renowned saxophonist Branford Marsalis, born in 1960, has always been a man of numerous musical interests, from jazz, blues and funk to such classical music projects as his Fall 2008 tour with Marsalis Brazilianos. The three-time Grammy winner has continued to exercise and expand his skills as an instrumentalist, a composer, and the head of Marsalis Music, the label he founded in 2002 that has allowed him to produce both his own projects and those of the jazz world's most promising new and established artists.

The New Orleans native was born into one of the city's most distinguished musical families, which includes patriarch/pianist/educator Ellis and Branford's siblings Wynton, Delfeayo and Jason. Branford gained initial acclaim through his work with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers and his brother Wynton's quintet in the early 1980s before forming his own ensemble. He has also performed and recorded with a who's-who of jazz giants including Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Herbie Hancock and Sonny Rollins.

Known for his innovative spirit and broad musical scope, Branford is equally at home on the stages of the world's greatest clubs and concert halls, where he has performed jazz with his Quartet and his own unique musical approach to contemporary popular music with his band Buckshot LeFonque. In recent years, Branford also has become increasingly active as a featured soloist with such acclaimed orchestras as the Chicago, Detroit, Düsseldorf and North Carolina Symphonies and the Boston Pops, in a

growing repertoire that includes compositions by Copland, Debussy, Glazunov, Ibert, Mahler, Mihaud, Rorem and Vaughan Williams.

As Marsalis continues to establish his presence in the classical realm, his propensity for innovative and forward thinking compels him to seek new and challenging works by modern classical composers. One such composer, Sally Beamish, after hearing Branford perform her composition “The Imagined Sound of Sun on Stone” at the 2006 North Sea Jazz Festival, was inspired to reconceive a piece in progress, “Under the Wing of the Rock,” which he premiered as part of the Celtic Connections festival Beamish’s home country of Scotland in January 2009. This performance followed on the heels of his two month classical tour with the Philharmonia Brasileira in a program featuring the music of Brazil’s master composer Heitor Villa Lobos and his friend, French composer Darius Milhaud, allowing the saxophonist the opportunity to more thoroughly engage the music and make it his own.

Marsalis is also dedicated to changing the future of jazz in the classroom. He has shared his knowledge at such universities as Michigan State, San Francisco State, Stanford and North Carolina Central, with his full quartet participating in an innovative extended residency at the NCCU campus. Beyond these efforts, he is also bringing a new approach to jazz education to student musicians and listeners in colleges and high schools through Marsalis Jams, an interactive program designed by Marsalis in which leading jazz ensembles present concert/jam sessions in mini-residencies. Marsalis Jams has visited campuses in the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Southeast and Southwest, and established an ongoing Marsalis Berklee Jams series with the Berklee College of Music in 2008.

These diverse interests are also reflected in Marsalis’ other activities. He spent two years touring and recording with Sting, and was the musical director of *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* for two years in the 1990s. He has collaborated with the Grateful Dead and Bruce Hornsby, acted in films including *Throw Mama from the Train* and *School Daze*, provided music for *Mo’ Better Blues* and other films and hosted National Public Radio’s syndicated program *Jazz Set*.

Whether on the stage, in the recording studio, in the classroom or in the community, Branford Marsalis represents a commitment to musical excellence and a determination to keep music at the forefront.

(Answers collected via e-mail on March 16, 2009)

***How does your playing change conceptually when switching between classical and jazz?***

One is one and the other is the other. Because I spend so much time listening to both, I treat them as languages. Things that work in one language do not work in the other. It’s a matter of understanding tone and context.

***What are the differences (if any) in your embouchure/oral cavity when approaching each style?***

There are no embouchure differences. There is a change from a Selmer D to a C\* on the soprano, but that is for volume purposes. One of the hardest things to get used to

is keeping the lip pressure on the reed constant in classical playing, even when playing low notes. In jazz, how the note arrives is not so important, so you can cheat to get it there through slides, growls or subtone. One of the best things I have learned in studying classical is constant lip pressure, often called breath control (why I'll never know).

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to timbre (tone) in each style?***

I play the way I hear the music within the context of what I'm doing. In both, I attempt to eschew a bright sound.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to articulation in each style?***

Major differences in articulation. Classical music requires more technical precision. Where they are the same is, one must develop a personal style within the context of the musical style. Jazz allows for a less technical approach (Ornette Coleman), whereas classical does not. Going further, jazz technique is often based on patterns and scales that are preferred by the particular player. Playing a composer's piece is a different animal, which is why the more technically advanced jazz players of today struggle with classical music. Personal technique is very different from actual technique.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to vibrato in each style?***

Very different vibrato between each idiom. Simply said, jazz should sound like jazz, and classical should sound like classical. Learning the vibrato from Lester Young, Ben Webster, Coleman Hawkins, Charlie Parker, Coltrane and Wayne Shorter helped me with jazz. Learning the vibrato patterns of Kathleen Battle, Kiri Te Kanawa, Gundula Janowitz, Placido Domingo, and Pavarotti helped me with classical.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in jazz who are attempting to play convincingly in the classical idiom?***

Jazz musicians who have made a point of listening to the amount of music that one should listen to in order to actually improvise should have no problems at all, except for the technical side. Since most do not, the difficult part is sounding like a classical musician (not necessarily a classical saxophonist). This is mostly an issue of syntax, as I like to call it. It's impossible to play either style convincingly unless you know what they are supposed to sound like. And the best way to do that is through a steady diet of listening.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in classical saxophone who are attempting to play convincingly in the jazz idiom (not including improvisatory skills)?***

I think the problem is much the same as the modern jazz player. Classical saxophonists that I have met (and read up on in blogs) tend to listen only to recordings that affirm their musical choices (read: other classical saxophonists). The hardest part would be sounding like a jazz player. Not impossible, but very difficult, unless one is willing to play the types of gigs that would aid in the understanding.

***What is the primary physical and/or conceptual challenge you have encountered as a player when switching between the two styles?***

My biggest difficulty was technical, since I was not a practicer when I was younger. I had already decided to emulate singers, and that was a matter of listening enough. I eventually had to take lessons (with Harvey Pittel) to figure it all out. With Harvey I worked on everything: raising the horn for breath control, tonguing, balance, harmonic balance, you name it.

***Which style presents more difficulties for you personally? Why?***

I don't really have stylistic issues. Contemporary music is difficult for me, due to its lack of melody. I often struggle for musical purpose when a piece has no obvious melody. When they do, the "modernness" of the piece is no issue for me.

***When you initially began playing the saxophone, did you have a teacher whose instruction methodology leaned more toward one style or the other, or was it a blend of the two?***

I was playing in the marching band and stage bands, as well as playing in an R&B band in high school. My band director, Mr. George Marks, was a stickler for proper embouchure and technique, but he did not lean one way or the other.

***When teaching young students, what methodology do you recommend?***

I make them listen to a ton of recordings, and work with technical issues. I try to encourage my students to avoid learning patterns altogether. If they learn them, chances are they will continually rely on them, as is often heard on modern jazz recordings, to predictable effect. That being said, jazz students should study with a classical instructor almost immediately. My brother Wynton used to say that classical music helped him to develop actual technique, as opposed to personal technique.

***What setup (mouthpiece, reed, ligature, instrument) do you use for each style? Why?***

Alto is a Selmer C\* for both idioms. Soprano is a Selmer D for jazz, C\* for orchestra. Tenor is a Lebayle 9, and I do not play it classically.

***Is there a setup that works well for both styles? Why or why not?***

Alto, yes. I have a specific sense of how I want my instrument to sound, regardless of genre.

***Who are your primary influences for each style in terms of sound concept?***

Answered that one earlier regarding vibrato, though here are some influential classical saxophonists: Harvey Pittell (sound), Stephen Pollock (sound, vibrato, interpretation), Arno Bornkamp (sound, vibrato, interpretation), Tim McAllister (sound), Doug O'Connor (sound), James Houlik (sound, interpretation), Erik Rönmark (tone, interpretation).

## Miles Osland

### Brief Bio

Miles Osland has distinguished himself as an educator, recording and performing artist, author, arranger and composer. Currently the Director of Jazz Studies and Professor of Saxophone at the University of Kentucky, he has appeared throughout North and South America, Europe, and Asia as a guest conductor, performer and clinician for Selmer Saxophones and Bay Woodwind mouthpieces. His compositions and arrangements, available through Walrus Music, have been recognized and supported by fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Kentucky Arts Council, and by numerous other arts foundations.

Sea Breeze Jazz Records, one of the most respected labels in jazz, has submitted nine of his recordings, including Saxercise and My Old Kentucky Home, for Grammy nominations. His recording for Open Loop Jazz Records, *An Old Speckled Hen at Snapes Malting*, was inspired by his experiences while performing in England. The debut recording by the Osland Saxophone Quartet has been hailed by the *Saxophone Journal* as “a great example of the century of music to come,” and was featured on NPR’s nationally syndicated classical radio show Performance Today. Their latest recording is a 2-CD set titled *Commission Impossible*. A masterful compilation, it spans ten years of music making by OSQ and documents the repertoire written for and commissioned by the Quartet.

Three books authored by Mr. Osland are available through Dorn Publications and his scholarly work (which includes over 75 published articles and reviews on saxophone technique and jazz improvisation) can be found in a variety of publications including *Downbeat*, *Jazz Educators Journal*, *Jazz Player Magazine*, *Saxophone Journal*, *Selmer Woodwind Notes* and *Windplayer Magazine*. He has three books/CD’s published by Warner Brothers titled: *Solo Transcriptions and Performing Artist Master Class CD*; *The Music of Bob Mintzer*, *The Music of Nestor Torres* and *The Music of Eddie Daniels*.

Professor Osland holds a Master’s degree from Eastman School of Music and his major teachers have included: Ramon Ricker & Gary Foster (saxophone), Charles Bay (clarinet) and Jim Walker (flute).

(Answers collected via phone on March 1, 2009)

### ***How does your playing change conceptually when switching between classical and jazz?***

It all has to do with the individual topics covered below, including articulation, vibrato, tone, mouthpiece/setup and reeds. For me, half the battle is making sure that you’re stepping up to the plate with the right equipment. I always tell the parents of my beginning students who balk at the idea of having to purchase a C\* or Larry Teal mouthpiece for \$100 or more that they would easily pay that much for their child to have the right tennis shoes. You wouldn’t go on the tennis court wearing bowling shoes. I’m basically a classically trained flutist, first and foremost and I have a degree on clarinet

and the saxophone and jazz have just always been there, so the idea of proper equipment has been engrained in me from the very beginning.

***What are the differences (if any) in your embouchure/oral cavity when approaching each style?***

I think generally of the Eugene Rousseau “oo” embouchure, though when I am playing classically I tend to roll my bottom lip in just a little on alto. When I play jazz, my bottom lip tends to extend outward to get more “meat” on the reed which is more conducive for good subtone, which you would be using more in a jazz style. As far as my oral cavity is concerned, nothing really changes. My tongue is generally in the “he” position and my airstream focus is the same. The “he” position is something that I’ve heard both Dave Liebman and Eugene Rousseau talk about. The way I teach it is that there are two parts to the tongue – the front and the hump. The correct position for the hump is what is known as the “he” position. If you naturally say the word “he” you should feel the sides of your tongue up against your top molars. One of my pet peeves is that most saxophonists learn tonguing with the syllable “ta” and this moves the tongue out of the “he” position. I like using the syllables “dee” and “tee” for a more articulated staccato style because that keeps the hump in the correct position.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to timbre (tone) in each style?***

There are a lot of differences. However, on soprano I made a conscious decision about five to ten years ago that I hated the sound of Kenny G and most jazz soprano saxophone players. It just sounded like a bright squawking duck most of the time. I had been playing in a lot of classical quartets and I have a really good classical sound, so I decided that that was going to be my soprano saxophone sound, using the same mouthpiece and reed combination for both styles. The only problem with that is if I am playing lead alto/soprano in a jazz band and I need to be heard, the classical mouthpieces aren’t as conducive to projecting or attaining the volume of jazz mouthpieces and that is a compromise. You’re compromising the sound for volume or projection, so if I am in that situation, I just make sure that I have a microphone. For alto, I have a small group jazz mouthpiece, a big band/funk style jazz mouthpiece, and a couple different classical mouthpieces. This way I have an array of three or four different mouthpieces for alto depending on the style and situation. The spectrum goes from very dark with my classical setup to brighter and more projecting with my big band setup. I’ve got a Larry Teal mouthpiece for the buttery, warm classical playing without much for altissimo demands. I’ve got an S-90 190 that I use for basically everything classical because, for me, it has a lot more versatility in terms of altissimo and it doesn’t sacrifice the tone that much. I’ve got a hard rubber Meyer that I’ll use for small jazz group playing and for most of my big band playing I use a gold-plated Charles Bay 7. Sometimes though, I’ll play for my students the Meyer versus the Bay, and a lot of them will say that the Bay actually sounds darker than the Meyer. I came to this after about forty years of mouthpiece “soul-searching,” and what’s nice is that I’ve been using pretty much the same mouthpiece and reed combinations for about the past ten years. When you get to be my age, it’s all about ergonomics and what feels good, and the sound that I want to project is going to be in my ear anyway. I can really get away with playing jazz on any of my classical mouthpieces because it’s a “sound thing” and I’ll make adjustments in the

oral cavity. Those won't be conscious adjustments; they'll just be adjustments that I make because I have the sound in my ear.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to articulation in each style?***

The main difference is what I call a "back side" articulation like with a marcato accent. In jazz, you have the front side which is the attack, and then you have the back side where the tongue comes back in contact with the reed to cut off the note. You'll have marcato accents in classical playing, but most of the time your staccato articulations are with breath staccato in which there is no back side to the articulation and the stopping of the air is what ends the note. I think that is the biggest difference between the two styles and should be the first thing to teach students going from one style to the other. It can be especially difficult going from classical to jazz because classical players are not used to having their tongue on the reed so much of the time, whereas jazz players just need to be reminded not to have their tongue on the reed as much when playing classically. The front side articulation remains the same for me in both styles and I use the "tee" or "dee" syllables as I discussed earlier. The placement of the tongue on the reed also remains the same in terms of amount of contact and point of contact, unless I'm going for a certain effect. For instance, people call it many different things, but I refer to it as the "dun" or "sub" tongue. Rick VanMatre calls it the "muffle" tongue, Dave Liebman calls it "tongue-on-reed" technique, but it deals with having the tongue on the reed while the note is still sounding. A lot of people cheat and move their tongue to the side when doing this, but as far as I'm concerned there should be no difference in the placement of the tip of the tongue for all articulations including legato, staccato, marcato and even the "dun" tongue. If you naturally say "tee", "dee" or "dun" it is still the same portion of the tip of your tongue that touches the roof of your mouth without the mouthpiece in, so when you put the mouthpiece in your mouth the tip of the reed should simply replace the roof of your mouth.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to vibrato in each style?***

This varies greatly not only between classical and jazz but also within different styles of jazz. I'm from the school that vibrato shouldn't be there all the time. It should be used as a musical tool, so that means that there is a lot of straight tone with vibrato being used in a musical way, no matter what style you're playing. What changes from style to style is the speed and the depth of your vibrato. The only way to understand this is to listen. I was lucky in that very early on I listened to the different vibratos of Johnny Hodges, David Sanborn, Charlie Parker, Cannonball Adderley, and more contemporary classical players like Eugene Rousseau and Otis Murphy, and out of that I came up with my own style that I try to always use musically.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in jazz who are attempting to play convincingly in the classical idiom?***

The biggest challenge for jazz players is getting the right sound in their head. The typical jazz player who has spent their whole career playing on a Meyer 6 or 7 mouthpiece for example, and then tries to play a classical mouthpiece such as a C\* or Larry Teal will find that there is a total stoppage of air due to the increased resistance from the significantly smaller tip opening. This is something that you need to get used to

because that's what the sound requires. A lot of people have real trouble dealing with that. Going from classical to jazz setups, many players feel that they can finally play and put air through the horn. Jazz mouthpieces tend to be much more free-blowing with wider tip openings. I did a study with some of my students that used a decibel meter to measure the dynamic range of our classical mouthpieces versus our jazz mouthpieces. The decibel meter was placed six feet from the bell of our saxophones, and I'd have them play their low Bb as loud as possible and then any note as soft as possible on each setup. The dynamic decibel range on both jazz and classical mouthpieces was about 70 decibels. For classical mouthpieces, the average range was from about 10 to 80 decibels. Now, remember, 100 decibels is like a loud rock concert, but again, the meter was only about six feet away from the bell. The jazz mouthpieces averaged a range from about 30 to 100 decibels. Now, you have the same dynamic range of 70 decibels for both mouthpieces, but the softest you can play on a jazz mouthpiece is going to be about 15 to 20 decibels louder than the softest you can play on a classical mouthpiece. You always strive to have a large dynamic range regardless of style, and through this study I found that you actually have the same range on either setup. They just start and end at different levels.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in classical saxophone who are attempting to play convincingly in the jazz idiom (not including improvisatory skills)?***

A lot of it has to do with style, feel and phrasing, which all come down to articulation. Another one of my big pet peeves is that you'll look at a jazz saxophone soli and there are no articulation markings whatsoever. You have to somehow make that sound correct and how do you do that? Well, you're going to be slurring a lot of notes and accenting the right notes. How does a classically trained player know how to do that? Well, it has to come from years and years of listening to it and doing it. Just from a written standpoint, that is the biggest challenge and when you get into improvisation that is a whole different thing that takes years of theory, scale to chord relationships, learning patterns, licks and transcribing master musician's solos.

***What is the primary physical and/or conceptual challenge you have encountered as a player when switching between the two styles?***

I've always had pretty decent altissimo, but I think my greatest challenge is to pull off some of the real contemporary classical literature that requires a great deal of getting around up there. Not just playing a note here or there for effect as in a jazz solo, but actually playing scales up in the altissimo range. There is so much more of that in the contemporary classical literature, whereas from a jazz or improvisatory standpoint there is not as much. Charlie Parker maybe played a couple of altissimo A's in all of the Verve recordings.

***Which style presents more difficulties for you personally? Why?***

The most challenging for me is the contemporary classical saxophone literature. The hardest thing that I've ever had to perform, practice and record was the Mike Mower Concerto that he wrote for me. It has everything on the planet earth, especially in the cadenza on the third movement. Why was it challenging? The practice time! We only



have so many hours in the day, and with some of those licks if you take a day off it's like starting all over again. In contrast, once you learn Giant Steps it's like riding a bike.

***When you initially began playing the saxophone, did you have a teacher whose instruction methodology leaned more toward one style or the other, or was it a blend of the two?***

I started on flute at age 10, added the saxophone at age 11 and the clarinet at age 12. The inspiration for this was my teacher Dick Harvey, who was a heavy doubler doing shows and studio work and who could also play all of the standard literature. I was born, lived and raised in San Diego, CA and studied with Dick from age 10 through high school. He has passed away now, but he was one of the very first alto players in the Airmen of Note. I have sworn off the clarinet now for the most part, but I do play it when I play in the Kentucky Jazz Repertory Orchestra which is an orchestra that recreates all the repertoire of bands from the 1920's through about the 1950's. On one concert I might need to sound like Artie Shaw or Benny Goodman and recreate the written, transcribed solos by those players. So, I still keep the clarinet up, but I've mostly been focusing on flute, soprano and alto lately. I did my undergraduate work in Studio Performance at Cal State Northridge and my Master's in Jazz and Contemporary Media at Eastman. At both places I played all three instruments, but the main focus during my undergraduate work was on clarinet, and at Eastman it was saxophone. The flute has always been there, and since it was my first instrument it always feels like I'm coming home when I put the flute to my face, but if I don't do long tones every day, the flute is the first thing to go! I want to sound like a flute player when I play the flute. I've had many lessons with Jimmy Walker, and some of my favorite saxophonists that play flute are the ones that really sound like flute players. Lew Tabackin for example, or even earlier recordings of Don Menza playing flute are just amazing.

***When teaching young students, what methodology do you recommend?***

I think that in the beginning stages you need to focus totally on a classical methodology. This also depends on when the students are starting as well. I was lucky enough to get started at 10 years old and these days students don't usually start that early. By about the mid-teens, if students are interested in jazz they'll be playing in pep band or jazz band at school and then, as long as they're progressing well enough with their classical studies, you've got to integrate jazz into your teaching.

***What setup (mouthpiece, reed, ligature, instrument) do you use for each style? Why?***

Soprano (both styles): Selmer Series III Black Lacquer, S-90 190 mouthpiece, Bay ligature, 3.5 Vandoren blue box reed

Alto (classical): Selmer Series III Black Lacquer, S-90 190 mouthpiece (sometimes Larry Teal), Bay ligature, 3 Vandoren blue box reed

Alto (small group jazz): Selmer Series III Black Lacquer, Meyer 7 medium small chamber (custom Babbitt facing), Bay ligature, 3-4 Vandoren Java **Tenor** reed (recommended to me by Jeff Coffin)

Alto (big band/funk): Selmer Series III Black Lacquer, silver neck, gold-plated Charles Bay 7 metal mouthpiece, 3 Vandoren Java alto reed

I use these different setups for the simple reason that they feel good for the particular styles that I play in. There are many different philosophies, some of which believe that you should only have one mouthpiece, but for me, intermittently changing four different mouthpieces for different situations is no big deal.

***Is there a setup that works well for both styles? Why or why not?***

My soprano setup is the same in each style, but there isn't really a comparable setup for me on alto. I can get a pretty decent classical sound on the Meyer because I've got it in my head and I make the necessary adjustments to get in the ballpark, but I won't have the delicacies in terms of articulation and volume that I can get with the S-90. I can also get a pretty decent jazz sound with my S-90, but it will lack the projection necessary for the jazz idiom.

***Who are your primary influences for each style in terms of sound concept?***

For jazz influences, my big three are Johnny Hodges, Cannonball Adderley and David Sanborn. Of course Charlie Parker is in there too, but he used 5 [strength] reeds, and I just really like the smooth cleanliness of Cannonball's sound in particular. Classically I grew up listening to a lot of the early Eugene Rousseau recordings. Recently I've been listening to a lot of Otis Murphy, and if I could even come close to his sound it would be a good day!

## **Russell Peterson**

### Brief Bio

An accomplished classical/jazz saxophonist, bassoonist and composer, Russell Peterson holds degrees from Youngstown State University (Ohio), Le Conservatoire de Bordeaux (France), and Bowling Green State University (Ohio), where he studied with Dr. James Umble, Donald Byo, Jean-Marie Londeix, Dr. Jeffery Lyman and Dr. John Sampen. Winner of numerous prizes, including the top prize at the International Geneva Saxophone Concours (Switzerland), and first place winner of the MTNA National Music Competition, Mr. Peterson has soloed with orchestras in the United States as well as Europe, including the Dana Chamber Orchestra (USA), Concordia Orchestra (USA), Bowling Green Philharmonic (USA), L'Orchestra de la Suisse Romande (Switzerland), Collegium Musicum, Basel (Switzerland), The Fargo-Moorhead Symphony Orchestra, The Contra Costa Chamber Orchestra (USA), The Orchestra Conservatorio Superior De Música (Spain), The Western New York Chamber Orchestra (USA), and The St. Petersburg Philharmonic (Russia).

Mr. Peterson is an active chamber musician, performing extensively throughout Europe and The United States with The Transcontinental Saxophone Quartet, and is currently also performing with the Hard-Bop Jazz Saxophone Quartet in Fargo-Moorhead. The Hard-Bop Quartet's first CD release, *Don't Step on Your Neck*, is available on Sea-Breeze records and the TSQ's debut CD, *Mountain Roads*, is available

on Albany Records. Russell's first solo CD, *American Breath*, is now available on Barking Dog Records and features the music of Maslanka, Bell and Peterson. As an orchestral player, Russell has served as bassoonist with several symphony orchestras, and is currently principal bassoonist with the Fargo-Moorhead Symphony, as well as bassoonist with the Fargo-Moorhead Symphony Wind Quintet.

Mr. Peterson has performed with some of the most notable artists in the business: Phil Woods, Manhattan Transfer, Dave Weckl, Peter Erskine, Henry Mancini, Gregg Bissonette, Ray Charles, Wayne Newton, Bill Watrous, Gregg Field, Frankie Valli and the 4 Seasons, Maureen McGovern, Samuel Sanders, The Eroica Trio, Will Kennedy, Frankie Avalon, Nick Brignola, Zoro, Ignacio Berroa, Terri Lyne Carrington, and the Four Tops.

As a composer, Russell has premiered his "Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra" with Joel Revzen and the Fargo-Moorhead Symphony Orchestra in 2000, as well as his "Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Percussion Orchestra" at Concordia College with the Tri-College Percussion Ensemble, which GRAMOPHONE Magazine (Feb. 2003) noted: "Peterson's own 16-minute Concerto, featuring Spanish rhythms and a lovely second-movement duet with vibraphone, is an effective vehicle for his striking command of color and dynamics. The highly-charged sound is riveting..."

Mr. Peterson has served on the faculty at Youngstown State University (Ohio), The University of Toledo (Ohio), Minnesota State University Moorhead, The Interlochen Summer Arts Camp (Michigan), The International Music Camp, and is currently instructor of Saxophone, Bassoon, and Jazz studies at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota.

(Answers collected via e-mail on April 1, 2009)

***How does your playing change conceptually when switching between classical and jazz?***

I change many things when switching. First of all my horns, my mouthpieces, reeds, embouchure, tonguing, even bottom lip. The only thing I keep the same is my fingers! I'll be more specific below.

***What are the differences (if any) in your embouchure/oral cavity when approaching each style?***

I think my embouchure/oral cavity changes the most when I switch. On my classical alto setup (Selmer S-90 190 mouthpiece, Vandoren 3 1/2 reed), when I play the mouthpiece alone, I get a concert A. On my jazz mouthpiece (Vandoren A-55) I get an E-F concert below. On my tenor, I get a concert D-Eb. So I'm much more open on my jazz set up. I was never taught that, I just started opening up the more I listened to players I liked. I also roll my bottom lip out, so there is less lip toward the tip of the reed. I think this opens the tone up, makes the reed even more vibrant and certainly much louder.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to timbre (tone) in each style?***

My classical tone I would describe as striving for: “smooth, dark, focused, warm.” I’m still looking for a bit of edge at times, but I really am looking for a clean, noise-free tone. No air, no water, no fuzz, no noise in the sound.

My jazz tone is very different. I’m striving for “bright, edgy, projecting.” I’m still looking for all dynamic ranges, even piano! But most of the time, I’m playing lead alto in a big band, and need to cut. I’m playing alto in a funk band and need to project. I’m playing alto and tenor with a jazz quintet and need to project over the rhythm section (sometimes without a mic). I listen to lots of funk and rock players – as well as more bebop type players, so my tone tends to be a bit on the loud and bright side. I know there are thousands of tone concepts out there, this is just mine.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to articulation in each style?***

I tend to do lots of tongue ‘muting’ as I call it. Again, no one ever taught this to me, I just heard guys do it and started imitating. I put a bit of tongue on the corner of the reed, so it’s still vibrating, but it’s been muted a bit. When I release my tongue, I get a nice, fat accent. I think this is the best way to ghost a note and accent others. I never do this in classical. Also, I use the “jazz articulation” often (tonguing off-beats, slurring to downbeats). In general, I don’t make notes as short in jazz as I do in classical. I clip staccato notes in classical, but not in jazz. I also never use tongue mute on the reed in classical as I do in jazz. It’s hard to describe, but the two articulations are quite different.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to vibrato in each style?***

My classical vibrato is normally sixteenth notes around quarter note = 70-80. It’s usually starting at the beginning of a note and will taper off if it’s the end of a phrase. I do use lots of straight tone in classical, as I think the ear can get tired of the “vibrato always on”. I think of vibrato more as an accent, rather than a steady pulse that doesn’t change. I also try to “tuck” my vibrato inside the sound, and not let it start really interrupting the tone.

My jazz vibrato I use much less often and is slower. And I tend to sneak it in after a note has been held for a moment. Especially in jazz ballads, I normally will bring vibrato in late on a note. I would say I use very little vibrato in jazz, and when I do use it, I normally don’t like the sound of it (especially in listening back to recordings). It, of course, depends on the style of the tune, etc. But in general, I would say I use much less vibrato in jazz.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in jazz who are attempting to play convincingly in the classical idiom?***

I think it’s the embouchure/oral cavity issue. Most jazz players have a hard time getting a good classical tone because they are too open. The mouthpiece on an A concert is a good place to start. Also, it’s okay in jazz to have some fuzz in the sound, a bit of water, some “stank” (as we used to call it). But to me, a good classical tone is totally noise free. This takes lots of embouchure control and being very picky with reeds.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in classical saxophone who are attempting to play convincingly in the jazz idiom (not including improvisatory skills)?***

Again, the embouchure. For a good jazz tone, the mouthpiece pitch needs to open up lower than classical. Also, the articulation that I described earlier is very difficult for classical players. The “tongue mute” concept is almost never used in classical. Also, classical players generally don’t listen to jazz players, so the style is always a mystery. Jazz articulation is tricky (tonguing off-beats, slurring to downbeats). I also roll my bottom lip out in jazz. This would be taboo in the classical world, but it really helps to open the jazz tone up.

***What is the primary physical and/or conceptual challenge you have encountered as a player when switching between the two styles?***

I change instruments, mouthpieces, reeds, ligatures. Also, the embouchure change is very drastic. I’m really transformed into a different person in jazz. The mind set is so different; you need to be freer and less controlling of your environment. I love both styles, and I think it’s very difficult to switch between the two convincingly.

***Which style presents more difficulties for you personally? Why?***

Both have their own issues. In classical, I need to have a good, quiet, flexible reed. I need to be very warmed up and very well rehearsed. In jazz, I need to have a good, vibrant, flexible reed. I need to be mentally focused – a different focus than classical. I find that if my reed is giving me a big tone, I get inspired from the sound and can really get musically and emotionally into the music. This is sometimes tricky, as I am usually running to a jazz event without much warm-up time.

I guess one of the problems I run into is when I’m not practicing one or the other. I find that if I’m practicing lots of classical, my jazz sound and technique feels pretty good. But, if I’m doing lots of jazz, I don’t think it helps my classical. Therefore I find myself practicing mostly classical. I find that it keeps my fingers clean, embouchure in shape, air support good, etc...

***When you initially began playing the saxophone, did you have a teacher whose instruction methodology leaned more toward one style or the other, or was it a blend of the two?***

When I was just starting out, I worked with ‘classical’ players. When I was around 16, I found a few jazz players (in the Cleveland area) who I started working with. They never told me any of these embouchure things, but I heard the way they played and their sounds and realized there’s a whole different game out there. I was amazed at how different classical to jazz sounds were. I guess I still am.

***When teaching young students, what methodology do you recommend?***

I almost always start students with the traditional “classical” set up. I think we need to get things in tune, good sounding, clean articulations, etc. Then it’s safer to introduce a jazz mouthpiece that takes a bit more control. They are louder and brighter, and as I say “With great big, loud mouthpieces comes great responsibilities!” They are more difficult to control, so I find it’s best to introduce after a good embouchure is established.

***What setup (mouthpiece, reed, ligature, instrument) do you use for each style? Why?***

**Classical:**

Alto, Selmer Super Action 80 Series II, Selmer S-90 (190), Vandoren 3 1/2, Winslow ligature

Tenor, Super Action 80 Series II, Selmer C\*, Vandoren 3/12, Winslow ligature

Soprano, Yamaha 62, Selmer E, Vandoren 31/2, Winslow ligature

**Jazz:**

Selmer Mark VI alto saxophone (180,xxx)- Vandoren A-55 mouthpiece with a Rico Plastic cover 3 – 1/2

Selmer Mark VI tenor saxophone (91,xxx) - Jody Jazz DV 7\* mouthpiece with a Vandoren v-16 3

Yamaha YAS-62 soprano saxophone – Claude Lakey 7\* mouthpiece, Lavoiz hard

***Is there a setup that works well for both styles? Why or why not?***

Not for me. I'm a bit of a 'gear junkie' I guess, because I really need my set up to play with any comfort. I've heard stories of guys who can pick up any mouthpiece and reed and sound great. Not me!

***Who are your primary influences for each style in terms of sound concept?***

Classical: Marcel Mule, Jean-Marie Londeix, James Umble, Nobuya Sugawa, Tim McAllister...to name a few.

Jazz Alto: Cannonball Adderley, Sonny Stitt, Kenny Garrett, David Sanborn, Eric Marienthal...to name a few.

Jazz Tenor: John Coltrane, Michael Brecker, Ed Calle...to name a few.

**Ramon Ricker****Brief Bio**

Ramon Ricker is Senior Associate Dean for Professional Studies, Director of the Institute for Music Leadership and Professor of Saxophone at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY, USA. As a senior administrator at Eastman, Dr. Ricker has been instrumental in shaping Eastman's innovative Institute for Music Leadership, with its Arts Leadership curriculum that offers courses in entrepreneurship, careers, leadership, performance, contemporary orchestral issues and musician's injury prevention and rehabilitation; and its Center for Music Innovation that helps student's inventions and ideas become realities. He is also Editor-in-Chief of Polyphonic.org, an Eastman sponsored website for professional orchestra musicians. He has been a full-time Eastman faculty member since 1972 and was the first titled saxophone professor at the School. His former students comprise a virtual who's who in the saxophone world. For nine years he served as Chair of the Department of Winds, Brass and Percussion (1989-98), and in 2000-01 Chaired Jazz Studies and Contemporary Media and co-Chaired the same in 2001-02. His association with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra first began as a clarinet soloist in 1972. In 1974 he won a position in the RPO as a member of the clarinet section, and continues to play in the orchestra today. He served on its Board of

Directors from 1997-2005. He frequently performs as a guest saxophone and clarinet soloist and clinician in high schools and colleges throughout Europe and North America, and his books on jazz improvisation and saxophone technique as well as many of his compositions are looked to as standards in the field, with over 140,000 copies sold worldwide including translations into French and Japanese. He has performed and contracted the music for hundreds of television and radio commercials and themes, including national accounts for ABC, NBC, HBO and Arts and Entertainment. As a composer and arranger he has been honored by grants from the National Endowment, New York State Council on the Arts, Creative Artist Public Service, Meet the Composer and ASCAP. His arrangements have been commissioned by the Rochester Philharmonic, and the American, Atlanta, Cincinnati and North Carolina Symphonies, and his works are published by Advance Music (Germany), Alphonse Leduc (Paris), ATN (Tokyo), Alfred (USA) and Jamey Aebersold (USA).

(Answers collected via phone on February 7, 2009)

***How does your playing change conceptually when switching between classical and jazz?***

It's all about making sure you get into the style. Even within jazz there are different stylistic considerations, such as shorter notes for funk playing. It's not only about getting your head into the style in which you are playing. It's about having an awareness of what that style really is. A lot of jazz players for example, can think they're playing in a classical style, but it really doesn't come off well because of certain things they may not even realize they aren't doing well. This is also true with classical players trying to play jazz. Just because you play jerky rhythms doesn't make it swing. It's all about being aware of what is stylistically correct, and that awareness is something to really think about. I used to spend every summer in Germany working with the Eastman Philharmonia in Heidelberg. I had German friends and was learning to speak German. Once I was at a party, and after some of the guests left a woman said to me, "Boy, did you hear that guy's accent? It was so different! What a different dialect!" And I thought, no, it just sounded like German to me! You see, I couldn't detect the difference in the dialects. It still sounded like German, but to her it sounded odd. It's similar to how we can hear people who are from Canada or Minnesota pronounce certain words. The accent we hear gives us clues to their background. Many people just don't get to that level of awareness in music. It's all about having the proper "accent" or dialect when you are playing different styles of music.

***What are the differences (if any) in your embouchure/oral cavity when approaching each style?***

Well, I think with classical playing it's more focused. There is a lot of "ghosting" of notes in jazz, which necessitates some jaw movement, and with classical playing the idea is to avoid a lot of motion in your embouchure. In jazz playing, the throat is also more open as opposed to the classical approach. I think the focus and approach in each style is led more by feel and by the ear. The physical aspects follow from that.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to timbre (tone) in each style?***

A jazz sound generally has more edge to it. Sometimes, high school kids will go out and buy a drastic mouthpiece with a lot of edge, and that can go over the top, even for jazz. In classical playing, you don't want that "buzz" or edge in the sound. My personal sound on classical saxophone is probably brighter than most, but not as bright as the "French School."

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to articulation in each style?***

Classical articulation is more defined on the front end of the note. In jazz, it's usually not as defined, unless you're playing in a funk style with shorter, clipped notes to get that "tight" sound in a horn section. In general, the tongue is not as predominant in jazz. It's usually used in a very light, legato style. In classical, there is more of a "bounce" to the note. Sometimes jazz players will overcompensate when trying to play in a classical style and you'll hear them tonguing too heavily, and other times it can be too light. Usually they are at one of the extremes on the spectrum.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to vibrato in each style?***

In general, vibrato should be used as a color. You should be able to go fast, slow, narrow, or wide. It shouldn't be like flipping a switch – always on, all the time, especially when playing in ensembles and trying to blend with other winds and strings. The saxophone can really stick out if it wants to, and it's important to get inside the sound of the ensemble. I try to play with a discreet vibrato. In other words, a vibrato that blends well with other instruments. For example, last night with the Rochester Philharmonic we did a Bernstein concert and played *On The Town* in which I doubled saxophone and clarinet. I doubled saxophone and bass clarinet on the *Symphonic Dances From West Side Story*, and we also did *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs*, which has five saxophones. In the solo passages you can do anything you want, but with other instruments you can't use a big, wide open vibrato. You've got to blend with other people, and a soloistic vibrato won't lend itself well to good ensemble blend. Vibrato is very different than it was 20--30 years ago. With classical players it used to be very predominant, but now I think many view it the same way that I do, in that it's not just flipping a switch and having it run like a motor on a vibraphone. Even flutists play quite a bit of straight tone when you really listen to them.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in jazz who are attempting to play convincingly in the classical idiom?***

The classical approach has to be more "perfect". It can be compared to the precision of a fine watch. In jazz the demands of intonation and other aspects can be chalked up to a "personal sound" where with classical playing you're aiming for an ideal in which each note is clear and connected with a consistently beautiful sound and perfectly in tune. In jazz, for many people, the importance is placed on what kind of hip, harmonic things you can improvise and the characteristics of your personal sound which, in some cases, can even be kind of ugly! Now in that case, I'm talking about students learning to play the music. The top jazz saxophonists can really play the instrument. Bob Mintzer, Joe Lovano, Michael Brecker, Chris Potter, Walt Weiskopf for example, can really play the instrument. The different styles dictate "rules" about what is really



important. A classical player may work for half an hour just getting a single phrase right, but a jazz player probably wouldn't spend a half an hour to refine the head of a bebop tune. They're more likely to spend practice time on improvisation.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in classical saxophone who are attempting to play convincingly in the jazz idiom (not including improvisatory skills)?***

The jazz sound concept and use of vibrato are the most challenging for classical players. In jazz there is much less vibrato and much more straight tone. Also, the idea of swinging notes can be difficult. The whole objective in classical playing is to play evenly from the top to the bottom of the horn. When playing a jazz line, different notes shouldn't necessarily all come out the same dynamic level or with the same emphasis. Just listen to Charlie Parker and all the "ghosted" notes that you hear in his playing. So, if a classical player just goes out and picks up the Charlie Parker *Omnibook* and starts playing, it will sound nothing like the original recording, especially if they haven't listened to it. That is why listening is so crucial and should be emphasized when studying jazz. I would say the reverse is probably true for jazz players approaching classical playing.

***What is the primary physical and/or conceptual challenge you have encountered as a player when switching between the two styles?***

Players from my era usually learned and performed both styles of music, often at a high level for what was going on during that time period. Eddie Daniels, for example, is a great saxophonist, and Bob Mintzer can really play the clarinet. Today the two "branches" of this tree have grown farther and farther apart, so there are people on the classical side doing unbelievable things with extended techniques, altissimo, slap tonguing, and performing very difficult repertoire. On the jazz side, we have some tremendous improvisers, even at a very young age. We had a student audition yesterday to be a freshman and I'm telling you he was unbelievable! He was all over the horn, even playing lines up in the altissimo range, and he was just 17 years old. So, the two schools have really split apart which makes it difficult for somebody to try and do both at a very high level. A surge in improvisation proficiency has taken place in roughly the last 30 years or so, with the growth in jazz instruction in school music programs and with the advent of jazz instructional methods and CDs. Kids have become very good improvisers, but sometimes other skills have weakened. Sight-reading is an example. They often have great ears and can hear anything, but they may not be a very good reader. Also, the art of doubling has gone down significantly. It's difficult now to find students that really dedicate time to doubling skills, whereas doubling used to be the norm because degrees in saxophone did not exist in many schools in the United States until around the 1960's. Prior to that you would have to major in clarinet or flute and play saxophone on the side. I started on clarinet around age 10 and when I was 16 I took up the saxophone and five weeks later played my first gig. From then on I always played jazz on saxophone and classical music on clarinet, and that was typical for a lot of musicians. At that time you didn't find too many saxophonists playing that as their only instrument. I contract a lot of gigs in upstate New York, and I can't really hire many college kids that can handle a book with flute and clarinet in it. So, there is a market for good doublers, and if they are in a big city, they can do very well.

***Which style presents more difficulties for you personally? Why?***

On the classical side, the really pyrotechnical things like the Lauba etudes would be a challenge for me to put together. First of all, I don't have the time anymore to learn how to do that stuff. I can get around in the altissimo range fairly well, and have even done some records with extended techniques, but some of these pieces today have really pushed the boundaries. I played the Denisov and similar repertoire when they were considered cutting edge, but today it's standard fare. Jazz presents its own difficulties for me in terms of the exceptional harmonic language and technique in improvising that has developed in the past ten or twenty years. I think this is true for most people, though, in that your strengths as a musician are the things that you learn when you're younger.

***When you initially began playing the saxophone, did you have a teacher whose instruction methodology leaned more toward one style or the other, or was it a blend of the two?***

My clarinet teacher got me going on the saxophone, and after continuing for a while on my own I eventually took some jazz lessons with some local jazz musicians. It was always separate for me in that I played classical music on clarinet and jazz on saxophone, though I did play some Dixieland music on clarinet. Then after I was at Eastman and was teaching clarinet, many students wanted to study with me on saxophone. I wasn't as well versed with the classical saxophone repertoire other than standards like the Ibert, Glazunov and Creston, so I ended up getting a grant to study with Jean-Marie Londeix in 1976. I spent a summer studying with him in Nice, which was a great thing for me. I also had experience playing other woodwinds including flute and oboe, and my degree from Michigan State was in woodwind performance, though I don't do too much of that any more. Today my focus has shifted based on the evolution of my musical involvement over the years. With the flute and oboe, I had excellent instruction in Baroque and Classical music and had a good concept of those styles. At the point when I studied with Londeix, I knew music. I was just trying to learn repertoire.

***When teaching young students, what methodology do you recommend?***

I haven't personally taught young students in 30 years, but I would encourage them to listen and be open to all kinds of music, and to work on producing a good, in tune sound. Scales, intervals, and overtones are also an important aspect of instruction. I would also introduce improvisation to get them comfortable creating their own music and not just reading it all the time. I would also stress the importance of using their ears, and work on playing in all, or at least many, different keys. This can be done with simple nursery rhymes or other familiar melodies that the student recognizes and can sing from memory. I would have them learn these simple melodies in various keys on their instrument to develop their ears and connect that to the physical aspects of the horn. A lot of teaching places too much emphasis on the mathematical instruction of rhythmic values and "typing" or pushing buttons at certain times. I think realizing that the notated music on the page is a representation of a melody that can be sung can actually lend itself to more musical playing and improve the learning process. I would also have students compose simple melodies to further encourage the creative aspects of music. I've actually done this, where I'll play a vamp on the piano with some suspended chords and give them a scale and say go for it. Some of them really get into it, and it's more fun that playing "dah, 2, 3, 4, rest, 2, 3, 4."

***What setup (mouthpiece, reed, ligature, instrument) do you use for each style? Why?***

I'm not the type of guy who switches setups very often. I've been using most of my mouthpieces and instruments for at least thirty years.

Classical Alto: Selmer C\*\* mouthpiece (round chamber), Vandoren 2.5 to 3 reeds

Jazz Alto: NY Meyer 7, Vandoren V16 2.5 to 3 reeds

Jazz and Classical Tenor: Brilhart 6\* (thin tip with serial number on side) with LaVoz Medium reeds

Jazz and Classical Soprano: Selmer F round chamber, Vandoren 4 reeds (usually worked down a little)

***Is there a setup that works well for both styles? Why or why not?***

There have been jazz players that have played classical mouthpieces, like Joe Henderson who played a Selmer C\*. I'm not that familiar with all the new types of mouthpieces that are out there today, but I think it just depends on what your concept is.

***Who are your primary influences for each style in terms of sound concept?***

In classical saxophone, there's really no single person. Londeix had a big influence on me, but it was on his artistry, work ethic and enthusiasm for life rather than the way he played. I know that some schools are known for a certain style of playing and equipment use—a "Rascher" style for example. I don't think I have professed a certain style to my students. I like them to find their own voice and become their own teacher and not come out in a "cookie cutter" fashion. I try to teach them the saxophone, open up their minds and ears to all kinds of styles and let them figure out what kind of music they want to play. I think my concept is just overall good wind playing. In jazz, I used to listen to Jan Garbarek a lot, and still do. I like elements of everybody – Mintzer, Lovano, Brecker, but I've probably been influenced by more non-saxophonists. I know musicians who get into one particular player for extended periods. To me that's like eating only potatoes at every meal. I want a varied diet that includes all music genres.

**James Romain****Brief Bio**

Dr. James Romain serves as Associate Professor of Saxophone and Assistant Director of Jazz Studies at Drake University in Des Moines, IA. He was the first saxophonist to be awarded the Doctorate of Musical Arts degree in Performance and Literature from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he was a student of Professor Debra Richtmeyer. While at UIUC, he was awarded the Cooke Fellowship, served as teaching assistant for the saxophone studio, and won the woodwind concerto competition. At UIUC, Dr. Romain co-founded the Red Onion Saxophone Quartet, an ensemble that has taken prizes in regional North American Saxophone Alliance competitions and was awarded the silver medal at the 2001 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition. He has performed with the Des Moines Symphony Orchestra, the

Illinois Symphony Orchestra, the Champaign-Urbana and U of I Orchestras, and in numerous master classes.

In July of 2003, Dr. Romain premiered a new sonata by Chinese composer Jian-Jun He at the World Saxophone Congress, and recorded that work for a compact disc that was released in China. In 2006, at the 14th World Saxophone Congress in Ljubljana, Slovenia, he gave the European premieres of Mark Engebretson's *SaxMax*, and of Bill Dougherty's *Howl*. At the 15<sup>th</sup> World Saxophone Congress, held in Bangkok, Thailand in 2009, Dr. Romain presented the Asian premiere of Eric McIntyre's *Secondary Impressions for Baritone Saxophone and Piano*, and presented two works for jazz saxophone quartet as a member of The New Third Stream.

In May of 2007, James Romain joined his Drake colleagues in Mexico City as Artist in Residence at *la Academia de Música 2007*. They presented daily master classes at the *Escuela de Musica Vida Y Movimiento* at the *Centro Cultural Ollin Yoliztli*, and participated in daily rehearsals at the *Instituto de Humanidades Y Ciencias (INHUMYC)*. In July of 2009, he presented the Asian premiere of Eric McIntyre's *Secondary Impressions* for baritone saxophone and piano, as well as performing with the New Third Stream, a jazz saxophone quartet, on two newly-commissioned works for the ensemble.

James Romain is an active chamber musician. He is currently the baritone saxophonist with the Oasis Saxophone Quartet, also featuring Dr. David Camwell from Simpson College, Prof. James Bunte from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and Prof. Nathan Nabb from Morehead State University.

As a jazz saxophonist, Romain is the lead alto saxophonist of the Des Moines Big Band. He has also performed with Clark Terry, Ron Miles, Eric Gunnison, and at the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland. Dr. Romain holds prior degrees from the University of North Texas, where he was a teaching fellow and a student of Professor James Riggs.

Dr. Romain's artistic mission focuses on fostering the establishment of the saxophone as a medium of serious musical expression, and actively contributing to the establishment of a substantial body of serious music for the instrument, through individual commissioning of composers, consortium commission projects, and the presentation of these works to the public through recitals, concerto performances, and recording projects. James Romain is a Conn-Selmer Artist, and performs exclusively on Selmer Paris saxophones. As a Rico Artist, he also performs on Rico Reserve and Jazz Select Reeds. Dr. Romain serves as Membership Director for the North American Saxophone Alliance.

(Answers collected via e-mail on March 10, 2009)

***How does your playing change conceptually when switching between classical and jazz?***

In classical performance, the parameters are narrower, and the practices more clearly defined. Tone, phrasing, vibrato, articulation, dynamics—all must connect up with an established tradition of concert music. This is also true in jazz, but the parameters are broader. In jazz, individuality has long been considered an asset. In classical performance, emphasizing individuality may be a liability, depending upon the

context. The intentions of the composer become paramount, and the performer is a conduit. The success of the performance hinges upon how well the performer transmits the work of the composer. Personal interpretive decisions are very real—and important—but are subtle. In jazz performance, the contribution of the performer—their improvised creative statement—is paramount, and the tune is generally considered a vehicle for that expression.

***What are the differences (if any) in your embouchure/oral cavity when approaching each style?***

I play “lower” in the sound in my jazz playing. In practical terms, this means that, while I blow a mouthpiece pitch on classical alto between a B and Bb, I blow around an F when I’m playing jazz, and push the mouthpiece in to compensate. Playing higher in the pitch gives my classical playing a stability and purity that works in that arena. In jazz, I want pitch flexibility and a fat tonal resonance. The support comes not from the face, but almost entirely from a powerful airstream support. The role of the embouchure is more active in my classical playing. As for oral cavity, I play with a higher tongue arch (‘eee’) in general in classical, and more of a medium arch in jazz playing “ayyy” or “ahhh.”

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to timbre (tone) in each style?***

This is linked directly to the embouchure/oral cavity considerations indicated above. Even if I have to play jazz on my classical setup, I’ll push way in and open up, playing lower within the sound. While equipment helps, this is the primary controller of tonal differences between the two.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to articulation in each style?***

In classical, I aim for clarity, delicacy, speed, and a wide variety of articulations to meet the demands of the repertoire, including extended techniques (slap, smack, etc.). In jazz, the aims are different. Certainly, clarity and consistency are also very important, but there is also the fact that the tongue is used differently in jazz, as the ‘dud-n’ tonguing technique (dampening/muffling the reed without stopping the vibration) is very important, especially in uptempo bebop playing.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to vibrato in each style?***

Production is the same (jaw), but rate and amplitude vary much more widely in my jazz playing. In general, the vibrato is somewhat slower, and may start later in the note (terminal vibrato). It also depends very much on which jazz sub-style I’m dealing with. If I’m playing a Johnny Hodges ballad, I’m emulating a very different vibrato than I would use for lead alto on a Thad Jones chart, for example.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in jazz who are attempting to play convincingly in the classical idiom?***

To strip their playing of pitch inflection habits (scooping); to cultivate a light, clean, and extremely even finger technique; to learn to use vibrato appropriately; articulation speed and clarity; to develop subtle control of dynamic nuance; and to develop a refined sound that is able to blend with other instruments in a concert setting.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in classical saxophone who are attempting to play convincingly in the jazz idiom (not including improvisatory skills)?***

To learn (appropriate) pitch flexibility; to develop a more flexible approach to vibrato, perhaps more rooted in popular singing than in strings or classical voice; tongue-dampening articulation usage; volume and projection that will successfully compete with the brass in a big-band setting.

***What is the primary physical and/or conceptual challenge you have encountered as a player when switching between the two styles?***

I've always done both—and have always wanted to. Really, improvisation is the biggest challenge, as it is a life-long process of listening and assimilation.

***Which style presents more difficulties for you personally? Why?***

I suppose that the expectations of “perfection” in the classical arena can make performing somewhat more nerve-wracking. A wrong note in an improvised solo is not as wrong as a wrong note in a published sonata.

***When you initially began playing the saxophone, did you have a teacher whose instruction methodology leaned more toward one style or the other, or was it a blend of the two?***

I was lucky to have an outstanding saxophone teacher, David Hagner, who was very adept at both ‘sides’ of the horn. He made me a cassette recording in 9<sup>th</sup> grade that I still have—Daniel Deffayet on one side, and Phil Woods on the other. What better examples could I have had early on? Later on, my college teachers, Ruben Haugen at Minnesota and Jim Riggs at the University of North Texas, were outstanding saxophonists and musicians who were entirely comfortable in the classical or jazz arena, and their example was paramount.

***When teaching young students, what methodology do you recommend?***

For students working on both (most of mine), I split lesson time 50/50 between jazz and classical, though that may vary depending upon their upcoming performances, etc. On the classical side, I provide technical exercises and overtone and tonal development studies, and also use etudes and repertoire appropriate for the student’s individual level. On the jazz side, I often use Jerry Coker’s Patterns for Jazz as foundation-building material, Aebersold’s Play-Alongs (esp. Vols. 3 and 54), transcription assignments, and vocabulary found from many sources. Recently, I’ve been making use of Steve Neff’s excellent II-V-I patterns (major and minor) found on [neffmusic.com](http://neffmusic.com)

***What setup (mouthpiece, reed, ligature, instrument) do you use for each style? Why?***

The list is long, and found at [www.jimromainmusic.com](http://www.jimromainmusic.com) under setup. I play in many different contexts (classical recitals, concerto soloist, pit orchestras, small-group jazz, big-band jazz), and have gravitated towards different equipment that I feel best allows me to access the sound that I find best-suited to each. The list is below:

## CLASSICAL SETUPS:

### Classical Soprano Saxophone:

Selmer Serie III #600260 with sterling silver curved neck  
 Vintage Selmer Soloist-Style C\* or Vandoren Optimum SL3 mouthpiece  
 Winslow Ligature  
 Rico Reserve #3 reeds  
 Vandoren Hygrocase

### Classical Alto Saxophone:

Selmer Serie III Millennium Edition #613717 (#413 of a limited edition of 474) with sterling silver neck and Ton Kooiman Forza thumb rest  
 Vandoren Optimum AL4 or V5 A28 mouthpiece  
 Vandoren Optimum ligature with #2 plate  
 Rico Reserve #3 reeds  
 Vandoren Hygrocase

### Classical Tenor Saxophone:

Selmer Super Action 80 Serie II #424829  
 Morgan 3C, Morgan 6L, or Vandoren V5 T20 mouthpiece  
 Vandoren Masters or Optimum ligature with #2 plate  
 Rico Reserve #3.5 reeds

### Classical Baritone Saxophone:

Selmer Super Action 80 Serie II Matte finish #631713  
 Ton Kooiman Forza thumb rest  
 Vandoren Optimum BL3 mouthpiece  
 Vandoren Optimum ligature with #2 plate  
 Rico Reserve #4 reeds  
 SaxRax Stand

## JAZZ SETUPS:

### Jazz Soprano Saxophone:

Selmer Serie III #600260 with straight neck  
 Otto Link "Slant Signature" 7\* (.063")  
 Selmer 2-screw stock ligature  
 Rico Jazz Select 3M or 3H Unfiled reeds

### Jazz Alto Saxophone (Big Band lead alto):

King Super 20 #336316 (1954) with Gloger sterling silver underslung neck  
 RPC 95F (Gary Foster model) (.095") mouthpiece  
 Vandoren Optimum ligature with #1 plate  
 Rico Jazz Select 3S Unfiled reeds

### Jazz Alto Saxophone (Chamber/small group):

Selmer Mark VI #181270  
 Vintage NY Meyer Bros. 4M Medium or current-production Meyer 6M mouthpiece  
 Vandoren Optimum ligature with #1 plate  
 Rico Jazz Select 3M Unfiled reeds

Jazz Tenor Saxophone (Big Band):  
 King Super 20 #320875 (1952)  
 Conn 'Connqueror' 30M #304397 (1941)  
 Otto Link "Slant Signature" 7, Brilhart "Hard Rubber" 7\*, Tenney Jazzmaster 7\*, Otto Link "Double-Ring" Super Tone Master 6 (Brian Powell-.104")  
 Vintage Harrison ligature  
 Rico Jazz Select 3M Unfiled reeds

Jazz Tenor Saxophone (Chamber/small group):  
 Selmer Mark VI #69598  
 Otto Link "Slant Signature" 7, Brilhart "Hard Rubber" 7\*, Tenney Jazzmaster 7\*, Otto Link "Double-Ring" Super Tone Master 6 (Brian Powell-.104")  
 Vintage Harrison ligature  
 Rico Jazz Select 3M Unfiled reeds

Jazz Baritone Saxophone:  
 Selmer Super Action 80 Serie II Matte finish #631713  
 Ton Kooiman Forza thumb rest  
 Otto Link "Slant Signature" 7  
 Stock ligature  
 Rico Jazz Select 3M Unfiled reeds

Clarinet:  
 Buffet R-13 with Ton Kooiman thumb rest  
 Richard Hawkins 'B' mouthpiece, handcrafted from Zinner blank  
 Vandoren Optimum ligature with #3 plate  
 Rico Reserve Classic #3.5+ reeds

Flute:  
 Yamaha 684 with EC head joint

Piccolo:  
 Yamaha 62 body with silver 82 head joint

***Is there a setup that works well for both styles? Why or why not?***

In my experience, no. While the primary difference is conceptual, the equipment can be either freeing or limiting with respect to that concept. Extreme examples include a high-school big-band section playing Selmer C\* mouthpieces and wondering why they cannot be heard. On the other hand, a concerto soloist using a Meyer 5M might be able to sell it, but will have a tone that is somewhat outside of the classical norm. If I HAD to play one mouthpiece for everything, I find it easier to make a classical mouthpiece



‘work’ in a jazz setting by using a different reed, embouchure, airstream. The opposite strikes me as more difficult. I would find it exceedingly difficult to use, for example, my RPC 95F in a chamber setting, as it would take a great deal of effort to ‘tame’ it for that environment. Fortunately, through a lot of trial and error, I have found setups that give me the sound I want, when I want it. Something that Dick Oatts has said about having the right tool for the job has always stuck with me.

***Who are your primary influences for each style in terms of sound concept?***

Classical: Claude Delangle, Debra Richtmeyer, Arno Bornkamp, Donald Sinta, Sigurd Rascher, Daniel Deffayet. Among saxophonists, I try to learn from a broad array of players, and not become overly entrenched in one sound, or paint myself into some dogmatic corner. Flexibility is key.

Jazz: Dexter Gordon, Johnny Griffin, Chris Potter, David Liebman, Cannonball Adderley, Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, Jan Garbarek, Michael Brecker. I find myself mostly listening to tenor players, as that instrument has such a profound legacy of artists who found their voices on it—and all very different ones.

**Chris Vadala**

Brief Bio

One of the country's foremost woodwind artists, Chris Vadala is in demand as a jazz/classical performer and educator. He has appeared on more than 100 recordings to date, as well as innumerable jingle sessions, film and TV scores, performing on all the saxophones, flutes, and clarinets.

Vadala appears regularly with the National Symphony Orchestra as a soloist and section player, and has also been a featured soloist with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Syracuse Symphony Orchestra, South Dakota Symphony, Alexandria Symphony, Quad City (IA) Symphony Pops, Delaware Symphony, Anchorage Symphony, Prince Georges (MD) Philharmonic, Ohio Valley Symphony, Williamsport (PA) Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, Rochester (NY) Philharmonic Orchestra, Richmond Symphony, Hudson Valley (NY) Philharmonic, Las Cruces (NM) Chamber Players, Milwaukee Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Buffalo (NY) Philharmonic, Oakland (CA) Symphony, Saint Louis Symphony, Prince George’s Philharmonic, and the Rochester (MN) Symphony Orchestra.

He has concertized as a soloist or ensemble performer nationally and internationally at the Kennedy Center, Corcoran Gallery, Phillips Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Library of Congress, Blues Alley, Strathmore Hall, Constitution Hall, Meyerhoff Hall, Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Radio City Music Hall, Lincoln Center, Heinz Hall, Symphony Hall (Boston), London Palladium, Umbria (Italy) Jazz Festival, Wien (Austria) Jazz Festival, Massey Hall (Toronto), Sydney (Australia) Opera House, Aspen, Vail, Ravinia, Chautauqua, Interlochen, Blue Lake, Disney World, Busch Gardens, Wolf Trap Farm Park, Universal Amphitheatre, Hollywood Bowl, North Sea Jazz Festival, Montreal Jazz Festival, World Saxophone Congress, United Nations Jazz

Festival (London), and Kool Jazz Festivals in NYC, Hawaii and Norfolk, to name only a few.

His performing career has been highlighted by a long tenure as standout woodwind artist with the internationally recognized Chuck Mangione Quartet, which included performances in all 50 states, Canada, Australia, Japan, Philippines, China, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Bermuda, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Dominican Republic, England, Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Netherlands, Poland, Belgium, and Switzerland, and performing credits on five gold and two platinum albums, plus two Grammys, one Emmy, one Georgie (AGVA) and one Golden Globe Award. In addition, he has performed and/or recorded with such greats as Dizzy Gillespie, Quincy Jones, B.B. King, Chick Corea, Ella Fitzgerald, Aretha Franklin, Placido Domingo, Sarah Vaughn, Natalie Cole, Herbie Hancock, Ray Charles, Stevie Wonder, Henry Mancini, Brian Stokes Mitchell, Doc Severinsen, Phil Woods, Joe Lovano, and many others. As one of the Selmer Company's most requested *Artist in Residence* clinicians, Mr. Vadala travels worldwide, performing with and conducting student and professional jazz ensembles, symphonic bands, and orchestras. Within the past five years alone, Mr. Vadala has appeared with over 200 groups across the nation and Canada, and has conducted 42 All-State, as well as numerous All-County and All-District Jazz Ensembles.

Professor Vadala is the Director of Jazz Studies and Saxophone Professor at the University of Maryland. Previous academic appointments include teaching studio woodwinds and conducting jazz ensembles at Connecticut College, Montgomery College, Hampton University, Prince George's Community College and Mount Vernon College, as well as Visiting Professor of Saxophone at the Eastman School of Music, 1995 and 2001.

A native of Poughkeepsie, N.Y., he graduated from the Eastman School of Music, earning the honor of the Performer's Certificate in saxophone as well as a B.M. in Music Education, received an M.A. in clarinet from Connecticut College, and pursued postgraduate study in woodwinds at Eastman.

(Answers collected via e-mail on February 8, 2009)

***How does your playing change conceptually when switching between classical and jazz?***

In general, it's an approach to tone, phrasing, articulation and style.

***What are the differences (if any) in your embouchure/oral cavity when approaching each style?***

Although I employ similar voicing registrations, I use a bit firmer embouchure for classical playing and slight adjustments in air speed and oral cavity openness in jazz playing. Even though the throat should not be constricted at anytime in any setting, I sometimes exaggerate the opening the back area ("balloonlike") to avoid any back pressure if I'm playing particularly hard and aggressively. I'm a firm believer of the "ah, oo, ee" oral cavity setting and tongue placement approach, based on the teaching of Joe Allard.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to timbre (tone) in each style?***

Generally, a warmer, darker and very centered classical sound versus a bit more edge and slightly higher harmonics in my jazz sound, i.e., accepted conformity versus a personal approach. By “accepted conformity” I am alluding to the tonal schools of classical saxophone playing (i.e., American (Sinta, Hemke, Teal, Leeson and disciples) vs. French (Mule, Deffayet, Londeix, etc.)). There are jazz "schools" like Bebop and Hard Bop vs. Cool but with more tonal variations and latitude. Jazz players have more latitude while classical players are expected to adhere to accepted standards and common practice.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to articulation in each style?***

I use T (Tah, Tee, Tut) in classical presentations (“attacks”) but D (Daht, Dit, Doo) in jazz. Tongue stops are often acceptable in the latter style. The first and last notes of a jazz phrase are often tongued. Jazz articulations, like sound bytes, can certainly vary from player to player, but conformity and agreement is necessary in sectional performance practice. Many players use “back accent” or upbeat articulations while others favor a more legato and slurred or even a staccato preference. Of course combinations of all these are employed. “Ghosting” is often a part of the jazz articulative process. Staccato notes are sometimes separated but fatter in jazz than their classical counterparts. Although many jazz articulations are precisely indicated, they may be unmarked and inferred.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to vibrato in each style?***

I use a more regulated, even classical vibrato, a la the Larry Teal “Art of Saxophone Playing” approach. My jazz vibrato is much more personal, often “terminal” or “warmed up.”

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in jazz who are attempting to play convincingly in the classical idiom?***

I advocate that one adopts a true classical “mentality” and be true to its proper idiomatic characteristics. An exactness of performance practice is demanded so avoid jazz inflections and nuances unless the music indicates such.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in classical saxophone who are attempting to play convincingly in the jazz idiom (not including improvisatory skills)?***

It’s important to establish a natural swinging persona that doesn’t sound labored or stiff. Body tension and lack of familiarity with the jazz idiom can be a detriment to success. Listen to good representatives and imitate!!!!

***What is the primary physical and/or conceptual challenge you have encountered as a player when switching between the two styles?***

Personally, having played both styles for such a long time, my primary challenge is to make sure I'm true to the demands music and approach it with integrity and conviction. The physical and conceptual demands depend on the performance requirements and the music at hand. It's a question of identifying what is required:

physical technique and stylistic concepts are essentially an automatic response to the musical selection.

***Which style presents more difficulties for you personally? Why?***

I teach and perform in both disciplines daily, but I find the precision and exactness of classical literature, where you seldom are allowed to take liberties, more challenging.

***When you initially began playing the saxophone, did you have a teacher whose instruction methodology leaned more toward one style or the other, or was it a blend of the two?***

My first private teacher was a doubler from NYC and was comfortable imparting information in both styles. Subsequently in college and thereafter, I studied with teachers who were primarily classical performers (Donald Sinta, William Osseck), jazz performers (Phil Woods) and those that were comfortable in both (Ramon Ricker, Al Regni).

***When teaching young students, what methodology do you recommend?***

Learn to play the saxophone, first and foremost. Get a good fundamental and traditional background with solid habits and concepts. I generally do not introduce jazz concepts until the student has a relatively good command of basic skills (good sound production and a reasonable command of technique), and vibrato should be added as an integral sound ingredient when the embouchure is secure and developed and there is an established core or resonance to the sound. I begin this process with regimented vibrato undulations on scales and long tones.

***What setup (mouthpiece, reed, ligature, instrument) do you use for each style? Why?***

For classical playing, I've been a longtime devotee of the Selmer C\* (soloist and LT models) family on soprano, alto, tenor and bari. Tonal preference and response were the major factors in this selection, and I only play hard rubber mouthpieces on both my classical and jazz set ups. For jazz, I use a Selmer C\* on soprano, a New York Meyer #5 or a Berg Larsen 90/0M on alto, an Otto Link #5\* on tenor and a Berg Larsen 110/0 on bari.

***Is there a setup that works well for both styles? Why or why not?***

As aforementioned, I use the same Selmer C\* mouthpiece on soprano sax for both classical and jazz playing. Jazz icons like Paul Desmond and Joe Henderson played standard Selmer mouthpieces and the great classical performers, Marcel Mule and Fred Hemke, played rather unconventional metal Selmer mouthpieces, so there are always exceptions to the norm.

***Who are your primary influences for each style in terms of sound concept?***

There are too many heroes to list, but certainly Donald Sinta and Jean Marie Londeix are a couple of my favorite classical players, and Cannonball Adderley, Charlie Parker, Sonny Stitt, John Coltrane, and Michael Brecker are huge influences. However, the first saxophonist to inspire me to play both styles as well as to double was the late great Al Gallodoro.

## Rick VanMatre

### Brief Bio

Rick VanMatre is one of the most eclectic saxophonists on the current jazz scene, and at the same time, he is widely recognized for bringing a unique, identifiable voice to each genre. His performances have included such varied ensembles as the Duke Ellington Orchestra led by Mercer Ellington, the Woody Herman Orchestra, avant-garde jazz recitals in Germany, Poland and Israel, contemporary Latin concerts with Roland Vazquez, and multimedia presentations entitled “Earthkind-Humankind” showcasing poetry, dance, and art. He has recorded as a featured jazz soloist with the Psycho Acoustic Orchestra, Latin X-Posure, the Kim Pensyl Group, and the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra, and performed with such artists as John McNeil, Bobby Shew, Tim Hagans, and Gene Bertoncini. As a classical saxophonist, he has appeared with the Rochester Philharmonic and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and as concerto soloist with the Illinois Philharmonic. He is also active as a conductor and has directed programs on American Jazz Radio Festival, NPR, and for artists like Eddie Daniels, Kenny Garrett, Slide Hampton, Joe Henderson, Ahmad Jamal, Dave Liebman, Jim McNeely, and Joshua Redman.

Mr. VanMatre makes his home in Cincinnati where he is Professor and Director of Jazz Studies at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. Recent concerts have included collaborations with Brazilian artists in the Sao Paulo area, and a recital at the World Saxophone Congress in Bangkok, Thailand. He has written for *Saxophone Journal* and is currently the Jazz Coordinator for the North American Saxophone Alliance. He has been named “Best Jazz Musician” by *Cincinnati Magazine*, called a “superb instrumentalist” by the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, and a “reed titan” by *Midwest Jazz* magazine. In reviewing the Chicago premiere of John Williams’ *Escapades for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra*, the *Chicago Star* wrote that “VanMatre’s art is without comparison; his technique exact, yet smooth, his expression poignant and personal.” He received the “Ernest N. Glover Outstanding Teacher” award from CCM and many of his former students are active performers throughout the nation or hold teaching positions at universities. Mr. VanMatre is an endorsing artist for Selmer Saxophones.

(Answers collected via phone on September 18, 2009)

### ***How does your playing change conceptually when switching between classical and jazz?***

Let me first say that music is music, and there are different parameters in all forms of art. In the case of classical vs. jazz saxophone, these parameters have significant overlap. The conceptual change might not be as much as one would think. If, for example, I’m playing jazz in a more contemporary, structured style that calls for a wide array of sounds, my frame of mind might not be all that much different than in

classical music. However, obvious stylistic differences do exist since jazz is about taking chances, emphasizing personality, and utilizing huge amounts of contrast. In classical playing, greater emphasis is placed on consistency and evenness. However, I prefer to think of these things in a unified way, rather than to focus on the disparities between the two. Even though they are truly different languages, there are many conceptual similarities.

For example, jazz players operate in a world where dramatic differences can be quite exaggerated - high/low, soft/loud, active/passive, or other parameters – more than in the classical world. However, if we are talking about the high-level artistry of great classical musicians, the contrast between *pp* and *ff*, or between *legato* and *staccato*, is a whole world unto itself. While the contrast may not be, in a gross sense, as much as a jazz saxophonist might use, it is still huge in the context of that particular language. So, this is why I prefer not to focus on the differences between the two styles but to find a universality of musical expression.

***What are the differences (if any) in your embouchure/oral cavity when approaching each style?***

One very prevalent technique is to roll out the lower lip more for jazz playing compared to classical playing. Personally, I don't roll in my lip for classical much more than for jazz, but that may be because I play so much less classical music than I used to. I know that many people do make this change and have great success with it. When I was young, I also played a lot of classical clarinet, for which rolling in is not as effective. Now, in my teaching, I have students experiment with rolling out vs. rolling in, but when it comes to the ultimate decision, I have a long talk with them about the advantages and disadvantages. For some people, once you get used to the spot where your teeth hit the lower lip, it can be hard to make a change.

There is also a difference in the amount of “bunching” versus the amount of “stretching” of the lower lip, for jazz vs. classical. Most saxophonists are more “bunched” in their jazz embouchure and use less jaw pressure than in their classical playing. However not everyone follows these methods. Paradoxically, classical players who subscribe to the historical “ring of muscles” method may actually play more loosely than some jazz players who prefer a contemporary approach using a firm and stretched lip with significant jaw pressure. Personally, I'm not a big fan of dropping the jaw, soft reeds, and exaggerated ring of muscles for either classical or jazz. But I certainly use a little less pressure for jazz. I also make a change in the corners and angle of my lower lip when switching between styles, though it is difficult to put this into words – I really need to demonstrate it to students.

The whole concept of embouchure can be thought of as a “continuum.” At one end is subtone tenor notes, for example, and at the other end would be high notes on classical clarinet. Look at the range of possibilities in between – lead alto vs. “cool jazz” alto, different approaches to jazz clarinet (Eddie Daniels vs. Buddy DeFranco), crossover soprano, classical alto in a chamber music setting vs. concerto with orchestra, etc. Every instrument and style of playing has its own niche, and ultimately what it comes down to is artistic choice. So, every spot on the continuum corresponds to a certain amount of jaw pressure, more or less of bunching of the lower lip, how much reed to take in the mouth, etc.

The oral cavity can also be fine-tuned for each instrument and style of playing along the “continuum.” In my own playing, I feel that in jazz, the front and middle of my tongue are slightly higher and arched more forward, and the back of my tongue is a little bit lower than in classical playing. Also, my glottal opening is a little smaller in jazz than in classical. Again, these are very personal things, and the degree of difference between the two styles varies greatly among players. I do think that the oral cavity, perhaps even more than embouchure, can be a real determining factor for the resulting tone.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to timbre (tone) in each style?***

I’m a believer that by having the front and middle of the tongue reasonably high, arched forward, and close to the reed (also making articulation easier), the sound is centered and more focused. The smaller distance between the tongue and the reed creates some constriction, resulting in what is called the “Venturi effect” in physics, in which the air speed is increased as it is forced through a smaller opening. To a certain degree, having this tongue position is desirable in both classical and jazz, but emphasizing the position even more in jazz seems to give the tone a bit more “zing.” Simultaneously, the back of my tongue is lower and the glottal opening is slightly more closed, thus bringing the pitch down slightly, and adding brightness and penetrating power to the sound. However, this is all relative. Some classical players modify their tongue or glottal position in order to get the kind of volume they need to play a concerto or to assist with altissimo notes. So, many of the supposed differences between the styles actually do have a great deal of overlap.

Of course, none of this matters compared to the importance of developing the ear. We can talk forever about these details of embouchure and oral cavity, but without internalizing these sounds intuitively as if speaking a language, no saxophonist will ever achieve great results.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to articulation in each style?***

The similarity is that they are both quite light (except for special techniques like tongue cutoffs in jazz, or “Japanese tonguing” in classical music). The key is working on the lightness of articulation in both styles. Legato is the key to contemporary jazz articulation, and by legato I mean a buttery “brush” tonguing or an “L” sound like “loo, loo, loo.” There is a misconception that classical tonguing is light and jazz tonguing is heavy, but that only applies to special accents or cutoffs in jazz. Most intermediate and beginning jazz saxophonists need to work on getting their tongue lighter on the reed in both jazz and classical playing. In classical music, it could be said that the goal is to have as little of the tongue touch as little of the reed as possible; whereas in jazz, having more of a “blob” of tongue touching more of the reed is probably a good thing, but only if it can be done in an extremely light way.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to vibrato in each style?***

In general, classical vibrato is faster and more consistent than jazz vibrato. There are many different styles within classical and jazz playing that determine the speed and depth of the vibrato, and you should absorb these models and ideas through listening.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in jazz who are attempting to play convincingly in the classical idiom?***

Jazz players usually have difficulty eliminating subtone and restricting jaw movement. They will also tend to lack clarity and delicateness in their articulation, and cut off notes with their tongue. The consistency and evenness of classical playing are the greatest challenge for the jazz player.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in classical saxophone who are attempting to play convincingly in the jazz idiom (not including improvisatory skills)?***

Classical saxophonists usually haven't found the right "oral cavity setting" that is appropriate for jazz, and as a result, there is no embouchure or equipment change that will help them achieve the idiomatic jazz sound. Since they can't quite shape the sound with their oral cavity, some try to compensate by playing an overly powerful mouthpiece that most top jazz players would consider too nasty sounding. Subtone is also difficult for most classical players.

***What is the primary physical and/or conceptual challenge you have encountered as a player when switching between the two styles?***

You worded this question really well – it's physical and conceptual! That almost answers the question right there in itself. Purely physically, if you're not putting enough hours into practice, you won't develop sufficient muscle-memory. If you don't have the concept - living, eating, breathing, sleeping a certain kind of music - then how can you hope to understand that language? That's the trick – finding the hours to practice and perform, and the hours to listen to others playing in each style.

***Which style presents more difficulties for you personally? Why?***

Following from the previous answer, it is whichever I am not doing as much of at the moment. For me, that would be classical, as I am currently playing much more jazz.

***When you initially began playing the saxophone, did you have a teacher whose instruction methodology leaned more toward one style or the other, or was it a blend of the two?***

I was very young when I began, so I was just learning fundamentals, but within a couple of years I studied with someone who did both. He was unusual in that he played classical clarinet in a major symphony orchestra, and also jazz saxophone in clubs.

***When teaching young students, what methodology do you recommend?***

I think it is important to definitely emphasize the fundamentals in the beginning (and even later at advanced levels for that matter). In the beginning of my teaching career, I was more of an ideologue about certain techniques, but as time has passed, I feel like there is more than one way to skin a cat. The approach to any art form is so personal, and is done for the love of art – not for a secure career - that I am now more hesitant to pre-determine my students' paths. I don't want to say "well, you've got to practice this first," or "unless you work on this exercise, you can't go on to the next exercise or new repertoire," or "unless you've done this much classical, you're not allowed to do jazz," or



“unless you do this much bebop, you’re not allowed to do post-Coltrane.” Of course, a good teacher must give some specific guidance in these areas, but the “rules” are outweighed by the passion that an individual student might have.

***What setup (mouthpiece, reed, ligature, instrument) do you use for each style? Why?***

Jazz Tenor – Link hard rubber and also a customized Selmer Soloist Short Shank mouthpiece, both refaced by Erik Greiffenhagen, LaVoz Medium or Medium Hard reeds, Vandoren Optimum Ligature (“wave” plate), Selmer Super Balanced Action 29,XXX saxophone, customized by Randy Jones of Tenor Madness

Classical Tenor – Vandoren T25 mouthpiece, various reeds, same ligature and horn, also a 61,XXX Selmer Mark VI

Jazz Alto – Selmer Reference Kookaburra Limited Edition, customized by Randy Jones of Tenor Madness, Meyer mouthpieces and Selmer (long shank) Soloists customized by Erik Greiffenhagen, LaVoz Medium reeds, Vandoren Optimum ligature (wave plate)

Classical Alto – Selmer 180 and a Rousseau NC4 mouthpiece, Vandoren 3 or 3.5 reeds, Rico Reserve 3.5 reeds, Vandoren Optimum ligature (wave plate)

Jazz Soprano – Selmer Mark VI saxophone, S80 mouthpiece (refaced by Brian Powell, high baffle), stock Selmer ligature that I have bent and customized to make sure it doesn’t squeeze the sides of the reed.

Classical Soprano – Same horn and ligature, but closer Selmer mouthpiece with less baffle

I go through phases where I’ll stay on the same setup for a long time, but I also like to have fun and work on customizing mouthpieces, etc. It’s kind of a hobby of mine. It can be a slippery slope, however, and I usually don’t recommend it to my students.

***Is there a setup that works well for both styles? Why or why not?***

There are “middle of the road” setups, but if you really want to capture the sound of each idiom, then I don’t think there is anything that will work great for both. I do not personally prefer a really wide open, high baffle, powerhouse mouthpiece for jazz, and my jazz setups are versatile enough to play “classically”, but they are not appropriate for traditional classical music. You can go a long way towards finding an idiomatic tone quality by the things you do with your oral cavity and embouchure (reeds help too), but I don’t think you can go all the way towards each style with the same mouthpiece. To achieve the super pianissimo attacks with incredibly delicate articulation in classical music on a jazz mouthpiece would be almost impossible.

***Who are your primary influences for each style in terms of sound concept?***

It’s hard to name favorites, because if I name 3 or 4 musicians, then I am leaving out dozens and dozens of others. I have many influences, and I try to get my students to emulate many different approaches as well. The goal is that they will find sounds they like, and eventually develop their own sound which will be an amalgam of these sounds plus something unique to them. Everyone knows that in jazz, transcribing (not necessarily writing down the notes, but copying by ear) is the key to learning style and harmonic vocabulary, and all these tonal, vibrato and articulation concepts we are talking about. No jazz teacher will have much success without emphasizing the importance of learning from the great masters. Of course, all great classical saxophone teachers also

emphasize the need to study the master classical saxophonists and their recordings. However, sometimes I feel that more classical teachers should encourage their students to literally transcribe classical recordings. Why can't you transcribe *Creston* in the same way that you transcribe *Confirmation*? Try copying the articulation and vibrato, the breathing, the exact crescendos/decrescendos, etc. As in jazz, if you copy only one artist, you'll be pretty one-dimensional. But, if you study how five great classical saxophonists interpret *Ibert*, and copy them all, you'll eventually end up finding your own voice whether you try to or not. In fact, the saxophonists (classical and jazz) who seek their own voice too early in their careers sometimes don't find it. It is difficult for me to name a handful of influences, because I have studied many players, which eventually resulted in my own concept. I don't feel comfortable establishing a hierarchy of influence when it has all melded together in a certain way that I can't really articulate.

But in summary, the most important thing for all of us to do is be guided by what inspires us. Some of the greatest jazz and classical saxophonists reached the pinnacle of the music world without studying any theoretical concepts. All of the analytical descriptions I give to students are only short-cuts for finding the artistic results we are all seeking in our individual ways.

### Thomas Walsh

#### Brief Bio

Thomas Walsh is Associate Professor of Saxophone and Jazz Studies at Indiana University in Bloomington, where he also serves as Woodwind Department Chair. A Yamaha Performing Artist, he is an active performer of jazz and classical music. He performs regularly with the Louisville Orchestra and on lead alto with the Steve Allee Big Band (Indianapolis). He has appeared as a solo recitalist, in chamber groups, jazz small groups, big bands, and Broadway shows. He has presented concerts and workshops across the United States, as well as in China, Brazil, Japan, Germany, Austria, Italy, Croatia, Slovenia, Azerbaijan, and Costa Rica. Walsh also performs regularly at conferences of the North American Saxophone Alliance and performed at the World Saxophone Congress in Montreal (2000) and Minneapolis (2003). From 2003 through 2006 he served as Treasurer for the North American Saxophone Alliance.

In spring 2008, Walsh gave the premier performance of Chris Rutkowski's Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Ensemble. At the 2004 NASA Biennial Conference (University of North Carolina at Greensboro) he gave the premiere performance of David Baker's Concerto for Jazz Alto Saxophone and Orchestra. His recording of the Baker Concerto with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra was released in Summer 2006 on Albany Recordings under the title *Paul Freeman Introduces David Baker, Volume XII*. Walsh is featured on two other recordings released in 2006: *Basically Baker* with the Buselli/Wallarab Jazz Orchestra (GM Recordings) and *Sky Scrapings: Saxophone Music of Don Freund* (AUR Recordings). In 2002, Walsh released his first jazz CD, *New Life*, on the RIAX label. His first classical saxophone disc, *Shaking the Pumpkin*, was released in 1998 on RIAX. About *Shaking the Pumpkin*,

*Saxophone Journal* writes, “Do not let this CD slide through your hands...Thomas Walsh is an exceptional performer and an outstanding saxophonist...It makes no difference which saxophone is in his hands, they are all equal clay to his touch.” His next classical CD, *Intersections*, is due for release in 2010.

Walsh has been on the faculty of the Jamey Aebersold Summer Jazz Workshops since 1991. He has also taught at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, Purdue University, and Millikin University. Walsh holds Doctor of Music and Master of Music degrees in Saxophone Performance and a Bachelor of Music in Jazz Studies from Indiana University where he studied with distinguished classical saxophonist Eugene Rousseau and renowned jazz educator David Baker.

(Answers collected via e-mail on April 27, 2009)

***How does your playing change conceptually when switching between classical and jazz?***

To play convincingly in a given style, we need to have an idea of how we want something to sound before we play it. As we play it, we have to listen and adjust what we are doing to fit this internal model. The internal model—our concept for how we want to sound—is based on our experience. The conceptual shift that happens from one style to the next is basically bringing up the memory of how to create a certain sound with specific expressive features in terms of tone color, vibrato, articulation, etc. Music is movement and movement creates feeling; feeling in turn creates mood. Accessing a memory of a specific stylistic expression is remembering what sort of movement needs to occur with each of the elements of style in order to create the desired mood.

The concept we have in our heads about each style is something we develop through listening and absorbing how master performers play in a given style. Then we have to practice these modes of expression so they are readily available—so we can call them up at will. Once we can call them up at will, accessing different styles is a matter of accessing the memory of what it feels like (physically and perhaps emotionally as well) to create that specific sound with those specific stylistic attributes. It is a bit like acting; we have to be able to get “in character” as it fits the situation—using a specific accent and appropriate mannerisms. The conceptual change when switching between classical and jazz, then, is a matter of bringing up the physical and emotional memories needed to create the intended style.

In interpreting written music, switching convincingly between jazz and classical idioms requires understanding of the notation conventions of each style. In particular, notated classical music usually includes detailed articulation markings that the performer should follow meticulously. In a jazz setting, however, the notated articulations often do not match what the composer or arranger wants. Rather, it is left to the players to interpret the notation by adding stylistically appropriate articulations. This creates difficulties for some players as they shift from style to style as many classical players are habituated to only reading what is notated, and many jazz players are used to ignoring the written articulation and supplying their own articulation. This is further complicated by the differences in how jazz and classical players handle staccato, legato, creating accents, etc.

Jazz, of course, includes improvisation in a way that is rarely found in the classical music that is studied and performed today. The conceptual approach to improvising is quite different from the conceptual approach to performing a set piece. The focus in jazz improvisation is on generating something in the moment, as we do in a conversation. It is spontaneous creation, though as in conversation we may say things we have said before. Performing a set piece, as in classical playing, is a process of reproducing something that has been practiced for many hours and we have somewhat of an ideal performance in mind that we are striving for.

Although there is a great difference between creating an improvisation and performing a set classical piece, one thing that should figure into any performance in any style of music is being responsive. The performers need to be responsive to the music they are playing, to each other, and to what is happening in the moment. It is the way the performer responds to what is happening that makes a performance either come alive or leave the listener cold. This is where there is spontaneity in all styles of music.

***What are the differences (if any) in your embouchure/oral cavity when approaching each style?***

For classical playing I use what I consider a “normal” embouchure, in terms of the shape of the embouchure and the amount of lower lip over the bottom teeth. This correlates more or less with what is found in Larry Teal’s *The Art of Saxophone Playing* and what is taught in *The Eugene Rousseau Saxophone Methods, Vol. 1*. For jazz, I use the same basic embouchure, but I use less lower lip over my bottom teeth; therefore, the lower lip dampens the reed less and the sound is brighter. Of course, in jazz I also employ subtone by dropping the lower jaw and pulling it back a bit, which is sometimes accompanied by taking less mouthpiece. If I utilize subtone in a classical context, I create it by either lifting my top teeth off the mouthpiece or by placing my tongue in the middle of the reed. Antonio Hart pointed out a couple of years ago that some of the early jazz players, like Johnny Hodges and Ben Webster, used a double-lip embouchure. I have been experimenting with this a little as a means of getting that kind of sound. Antonio Hart uses the double-lip embouchure some of the time and he said that other players, such as Branford Marsalis are using it as well, though I don’t know to what extent.

As for the oral cavity, my focus is lower for jazz. I use the mouthpiece pitch as a reference for determining the set of the embouchure and oral cavity. For classical alto, the reference pitch I use is concert A; for jazz I use concert F#. With my students, we sometimes use G. Referencing a lower pitch reflects a different set for the oral cavity and it results in a broader tone.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to timbre (tone) in each style?***

In a classical setting, with standard repertoire, my goal is a tone that is clear and pure with no distortion of any kind. In jazz, some distortion is desirable in the tone. You could say that my jazz tone has more “edge,” is brighter, has more energy in the upper harmonics, etc. than my classical tone. Conversely, you could say that my classical tone is darker, more pure, has little or no “edge,” etc. when compared to my jazz tone. Beyond that is the question of coloring the tone with effects like subtone, growling, flutter tongue, etc. In classical playing, naturally I only use these effects when they are called for by the composer, though I very rarely do choose to use subtone for very soft low register notes.

In jazz playing, there is a difference between playing in a big band, where mostly I would not use these effects unless they are called for, and combo playing, where I would use subtone and growling as they seem appropriate to me.

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to articulation in each style?***

The basic technique of articulation is the same. I personally use anchor tonguing for all of my saxophone playing (all styles and all members of the saxophone family). However, in my teaching, I try to account for physiological differences from one person to the next. Each player needs to find where his/her tongue naturally contacts the edge of the reed. Here again, I agree with Larry Teal's description of tongue placement found in *The Art of Saxophone Playing*. An important point that many saxophonists miss is that the tongue should only contact the edge of the reed. If the tongue contacts the flat part of the reed, it will create some degree of a "TH" sound. Slap-tonguing is another technique altogether. To date I am not able to slap tongue, so I don't use it in either style.

In discussing the way the tongue contacts the reed, is interesting to note that David Liebman teaches what he calls the "three on three" approach to tonguing. He states that there are three points on the reed the tongue can contact (tip of the reed, slightly further down the reed, and further down the reed) and three points of the tongue that can contact the reed (tip of the tongue, slight back from the tip, and further back on the tongue). I don't use this approach, per se, but if I want to get a more raucous articulation, I know I can place my tongue on the flat part of the reed. [I think Liebman's description can be found in a little book recently published by Aebersold called *Saxophone Basics* and probably in other publications of his, such as the DVD *Complete Guide to Saxophone Sound Production* and an older book titled *Developing a Personal Saxophone Sound* (Dorn Publications).]

Beyond the basic technique of tonguing, there are differences in the application of articulation from one style to another. For example, staccato eighth notes at a moderate tempo in the classical style sound more refined and stylistically appropriate if we release them with the air with a taper at the end of the note (as in "tah"). In the jazz style these are often cut off with the tongue for a more percussive effect (as in "dot"). There are also some articulation techniques that are used more frequently in one style vs. the other. For example, the technique of "ghosting" notes, which is sometimes referred to as "half tonguing" or "muffle tonguing" is generally not used in classical playing, but it is essential for getting an authentic jazz sound. "Half tonguing" is where the tongue is placed on the reed but some sound is allowed to occur. It is analogous to humming, where you are basically singing with your mouth closed. It is also similar to saying, "nnnnn." One way this technique can be used is on the opening four notes of "Au Privave," playing "dah-n-doo-dot."

***What are the differences (if any) in your approach to vibrato in each style?***

As with articulation and tone, the basic technique of vibrato is the same regardless of style. The application of vibrato can vary from piece to piece in the classical idiom and it varies from player to player in the jazz idiom. If we generalize, a basic classical vibrato is faster and narrower than a basic jazz vibrato, and the onset of the vibrato in classical playing is usually at the beginning of the note, while in jazz players often wait and start the vibrato a little later in the note's duration. Within each style, you could probably

demonstrate that there is a wider range of “acceptable” vibrato use in jazz than in classical saxophone. In other words, if you were to compare the way various players in each idiom use vibrato (in terms of width, speed, and the onset of the vibrato), my guess is that there is greater variation found among jazz players than classical players. These are my subjective, experiential observations. You could get more objective data by analyzing recordings of great players in each idiom.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in jazz who are attempting to play convincingly in the classical idiom?***

First a disclaimer: in considering these questions, we have to recognize that every player is an individual with differing strengths and areas they are working to develop. Proficiency in either idiom is a relative thing which depends on many elements coming together. It is also important to recognize that proficiency in one idiom does not preclude proficiency in the other. Further, it is tempting to say that classical playing requires more control and finesse than jazz playing. However, this is not true in the sense that there is a great deal of control and finesse required in each style, but it is control of different stylistic nuances and different ways of applying basic techniques.

Beginning at the conceptual level, to perform convincingly in any style of music requires that the player have a reference point for that style of music. So, for a player with a jazz background who has little experience listening to or playing classical music the biggest challenge is having a concept of how music in the classical style should sound. They have to develop a sense of the specific stylistic differences and how to create them. In my own experience, when I was student I tried to keep the two styles separate in my mind by thinking of classical saxophone and jazz saxophone as two different instruments. One way I kept them separate was to practice only one style in a given practice session; so, I would practice my classical material in the morning and jazz material later in the day.

Another difficulty that arises sometimes is that students with little or no classical background have a hard time relating to classical music at all. It hasn't been part of their experience, so they don't understand it and they don't like it. The challenge here for the teacher is to help the student find some value in classical study and to help the student find a way to relate to the task of playing in the classical style.

As far as the stylistic challenges, all the above-mentioned differences in approaching the two styles are factors (concept, tone, embouchure/oral cavity, articulation, vibrato, etc.), as are some other concerns. When it comes to reading notated music, many young, jazz-oriented players are not accustomed to reading articulations exactly as they are notated. It is common for jazz players reading charts (big band, combo, etc.) to be expected to add idiomatic articulations to the music, which are often contrary to a literal reading of the score. Therefore, many jazz-oriented players are prone to ignoring the printed articulations.

Even if the articulations are played exactly as notated, there are questions of tempo and rhythm that may be an issue. Some jazz-oriented players are accustomed to being able to be somewhat flexible with notated rhythms. If this is the case, they would need to adjust their rhythmic concept to be more precise in terms of basic rhythmic accuracy. In terms of feeling the beat, some jazz players play behind the beat and would need to get used to playing more precisely on the beat. And, finally, the notion of rubato

is one that can be unfamiliar for jazz players, in the sense of when it is appropriate to pull back the tempo or push the tempo forward.

Likewise, the typical accent patterns of jazz and classical styles are different, so jazz players who are not as experienced in the classical idiom are prone to applying jazz accent patterns when playing classical music. For example, it is common in jazz to accent the highest note in a line. In performing something like the Ferling etudes or a piece from the standard classical repertoire, such as Paul Creston's *Sonata*, the aim is to create a smooth line where the highest notes don't stick out, but rather they fit into the line in a more uniform way. A jazz player accenting the highest notes in the line would sound unidiomatic.

In terms of creating accents, there are different means of creating accents in classical and jazz styles. In jazz, accents are often explosive, with an abrupt surge of air at the very beginning of the note; accents can be like stinging or punching a note. In classical repertoire (such as Ferling and Creston), accents are created by leaning into the note with the emphasis occurring more gradually, with less of a spike in volume. I like to use the analogy of a timpani played with a felt mallet. Rather than an abrupt explosion of air at the beginning of the note, there is a more gentle surge of air that spreads the emphasis over a greater duration of time followed by a sustained decay.

Considering the question of tone color, in the classical style a clear tone without edge, buzziness, or subtone is usually desired (there may be exceptions in contemporary and/or avant garde literature and crossover (jazz-classical) literature). In jazz, some distortion (edge, buzziness, subtone) is desirable. Therefore, a jazz-oriented player who has not developed the ability to play with a clear tone that is even in all registers, will likely play with too much distortion in the sound (either/or too much subtone or too much brightness and edge) in a classical setting. Many jazz players manipulate their tone expressively and create scoops and pitch bends by moving the lower jaw. In a classical situation, it is usually desirable to maintain a stable core to the tone and pitch without any scooping and generally without variation in the tone color. The jazz-oriented player may need to work on maintaining a more solid embouchure and jaw position so as not to inadvertently move the pitch or tone color. The problem of allowing the pitch to move sometimes occurs at the beginning of the note with an inadvertent scoop, or it can occur at the end of the note as a little fall-off.

Another factor in tone color is the oral cavity focus. Many jazz players play with a lower oral cavity focus than is typical for classical players. One way of illustrating this is by blowing on the mouthpiece alone. I think it is generally true that on average classical players play a higher pitch on the mouthpiece than jazz players. A jazz-oriented player approaching classical playing may produce a tone that is more spread (less focused) than a highly skilled classical player. This could be caused by the embouchure being too loose, the jaw being too low, the oral cavity focus being too low, the lower lip position, the amount of mouthpiece in the mouth, or a combination of these. The challenge here is for the player to develop an approach that is suitable to classical style while retaining a feel for how they want to play in a jazz setting. "Feel" is a key word here, since achieving the desired effects in each style requires something very different in terms of the physical feeling in the embouchure, jaw, and oral cavity. Developing a clear sense of how each style should feel requires great sensitivity and persistence. First, the player has to have an accurate mental model of how each should sound. Then, the player has to go through a

series of trial-and-error adjustments to find the physical approach that creates that sound. Finally, this successful approach must be memorized and reinforced so that it can be recreated at will.

When it comes to intonation, the finest classical players have a highly refined sense of pitch (tuning and intonation). While jazz players also strive to play in tune, not all develop their sensitivity to intonation to the most refined level. Some jazz-oriented players, then, would need to develop a more refined sense of intonation as part of developing their ability in the classical idiom.

Another area where the jazz player would likely need to develop more refinement is in the control of dynamics, particularly on the soft end of the dynamic spectrum. Jazz players are rarely asked to perform with the degree of control of very soft dynamics that is required in classical playing. Getting to a high level as a classical player requires the ability to control the airstream in very subtle ways. The ability to taper notes quickly and gracefully from the prevailing dynamic level down to *niente* is essential. Likewise, is the ability to play with a controlled *pianissimo* in any register.

Equipment can also be an issue for a jazz player developing their classical ability. A classical mouthpiece/reed combination tends to have greater resistance than a jazz set-up (at least in my experience). The difference in the feel of the classical set-up takes some getting used to. The player may need to develop greater embouchure stamina. Similarly, in classical playing it is more common that the player is required to play for long periods of time with little rest. To play a full recital of 50 minutes is quite demanding physically, on the embouchure and the entire body. Developing the embouchure strength for this kind of undertaking takes a period of months the first time a player performs such a program.

Finally, the kind of attention required for classical performance is different than the kind of attention required for jazz improvisation. Therefore, someone who is an adept improviser may not be accustomed to the extended concentration involved in performing a challenging written piece.

***What are some of the most prominent challenges for saxophonists proficient in classical saxophone who are attempting to play convincingly in the jazz idiom (not including improvisatory skills)?***

I will include the same disclaimer as above: in considering these questions, we have to recognize that every player is an individual with differing strengths and areas they are working to develop. Proficiency in either idiom is a relative thing which depends on many elements coming together. It is also important to recognize that proficiency in one idiom does not preclude proficiency in the other. Further, it is tempting to say that classical playing requires more control and finesse than jazz playing. However, this is not true in the sense that there is a great deal of control and finesse required in each style, but it is control of different stylistic nuances and different ways of applying basic techniques.

Beginning with the conceptual level, it will depend on the player's previous experience with jazz both in terms of his/her playing experience and his/her listening habits. For a player with a classical background who has little experience listening to or playing jazz the biggest challenge is having a concept of how music in the jazz style should sound.



In considering the question of stylistic differences between classical and jazz, we have to recognize that in jazz there is a wider range of expression that is considered acceptable than in classical playing. In terms of tone, some jazz players have dark, mellow sounds that are close to the classical ideal (such as Paul Desmond and Lee Konitz). Others have very bright, edgy sounds (such as Eric Dolphy and Kenny Garrett). Some play with near classical vibrato (Cannonball Adderley), while others use vibrato sparingly at the ends of notes (Lester Young). Some players are known for their extensive use of pitch bends (smears, scoops) (Johnny Hodges), while others manipulate the pitch very little. Some employ a heavy articulation (Sonny Rollins) while others use a light articulation (John Coltrane). Some players play their eighth notes more straight and on top of the beat (Sonny Stitt) and others play their eighth notes with a heavier swing feel (Cannonball Adderley) or behind the beat (Dexter Gordon). So, assumptions we make about what a skilled classical player must do to play convincingly in the jazz idiom have to be filtered through the lens of history, knowing that there isn't a set prescription for what makes someone sound like a jazz musician. It is a combination of factors, but the range of variability for each factor is fairly wide. In the end, saying whether or not a classical player has succeeded in playing convincingly in the jazz style is a matter of "you'll know it when you hear it."

It is likely that a skilled classical player is used to playing with a firm embouchure and a mouthpiece/reed set-up that has a fair amount of resistance compared to what most jazz players use. In jazz playing a certain amount of flexibility is desirable to be able to manipulate the pitch (bends, smears, scoops). This can be difficult for classically-oriented saxophonists. Switching to a jazz mouthpiece/reed combination (wider tip opening and a softer reed) will help, but may feel awkward. There may be a tendency to use a too-firm embouchure and loosening up can be very difficult for some. If the classically-oriented player is seeking a brighter tone, s/he may benefit from rolling the lower lip out further for jazz, which would also give a little more flexibility. In addition, a lower oral cavity focus for jazz (concert A on the mouthpiece for classical alto; concert G or F# on the mouthpiece for jazz alto) will help create the bigger, broader tone typically associated with jazz saxophone. These changes towards a more open sound can be very difficult for a player who has really solidified a refined classical approach. Embouchure/oral cavity confusion can result from any of these changes, and for this reason (among others), some classical teachers discourage their students from working on jazz, stating that it has an adverse effect on their classical playing. This can be true if the student isn't able to separate the two styles conceptually.

The classical player's use of vibrato can be a problem when playing in the jazz style. Jazz vibrato is usually slower than a classical vibrato, and it is typical to start the vibrato later in the note than in classical playing. Additionally, jazz players sometimes make the vibrato wider as the note continues. It is also typical for jazz players to back off of their airstream when they begin their vibrato, sometimes allowing the sound to become more of a subtone. All of these things are counter to the way classical players use vibrato. It is common for classical players to have difficulty mastering the nuances of jazz vibrato usage.

Just as jazz-oriented players can have difficulty adapting to the rhythmic style of classical music, classically-oriented players can have a difficult time creating an authentic swing feel. This is not simply a matter of playing uneven eighth notes, as it is often

explained. The articulation and accent patterns of jazz players have as much to do with the swing feel as how even or uneven the eighth notes are. Likewise, there are times in jazz style when it is appropriate to “lay back,” playing the rhythms a little behind the beat. This is not a feature of classical music and can be difficult for classically-oriented players, especially those with a tendency to rush.

As noted above, it is common in notated jazz music for the articulations not to be marked as they are meant to be played. Sometimes a quarter note with no articulation marking is meant to be played short; other times it should be played long. The only way to know what articulations are stylistically appropriate is to study the music by listening to master players and by playing with more experienced players.

One particular articulation technique is worth mentioning because it does not occur in classical playing and can be difficult for classically-oriented players to learn. It is creating so-called “ghost” notes using a technique referred to as half-tonguing or muffle-tonguing. Half-tonguing is to tonguing as humming is to singing. Humming is singing with your mouth closed; half-tonguing is allowing some sound while your tongue is on the reed. This is a technique that is difficult for many saxophonists to master, whether they are classically trained or not. However, this is an essential tool for creating the accent patterns that occur in jazz.

It is also worth mentioning that the way jazz players create accents is quite different than the way classical players create accents. Jazz accents tend to be punchy and explosive, completely the opposite of the more subtle, refined accents of the classical style. Classical players can have a lot of trouble creating the explosive attacks needed in a jazz context. On the other hand, it can also be difficult for classical players to create legato, bebop eighth-note articulation (offbeat articulation—“doo-ta-oo-ta-oo-ta-oo”). The habit of accenting on the beat in classical playing makes it very difficult for some classical players to accent the off-beats and keep the line legato. What sometimes results is a kind of “humpty-dumpty” swing.

In considering either question about players trained in one style developing skills in another style, it is important to remember that a great deal of practice and perseverance is required to master the nuances in either style (in addition to extensive exposure to master players and the cultural dimensions of the music). Once a player has reached a high level of ability in one style, it can be difficult to put in the hours necessary to master another style. It is possible that the depth of learning in the first style interferes with mastering the second style. Habits in the first style that run counter to what the player is attempting to do in the second style will continually surface. They need to develop a parallel set of habits that can be accessed with ease.

***What is the primary physical and/or conceptual challenge you have encountered as a player when switching between the two styles?***

This has been a learning process from the very beginning and I am still learning. Every time I practice or perform I learn and re-learn many things. My understanding of each style is continually developing and being refined. In my early undergraduate years the biggest challenge was developing a separate concept for each style, so I literally began thinking of jazz saxophone and classical saxophone as two different instruments. Part of this conceptual shift included solidifying a slightly different embouchure for jazz playing, namely playing with my lower lip out further than for my classical playing.

Looking back, I think this may have made it easier to differentiate the two styles, since I then had a clear cut physical difference in my approach to each.

One of the biggest challenges is being able to practice enough to stay in shape in both idioms. Like athletes we can be in-shape or out-of-shape both physically and mentally (conceptually). For me there are definitely ups and downs in maintaining and further developing my musical skills in each idiom. This is normal, of course, even if we were only talking about one idiom. Dealing with two styles, though, it's sometimes a case of being in-shape in one idiom and less so in the other. If I have a classical performance coming up, I may not have time to do any jazz practicing. If I don't have a classical performance on the horizon, I may take the opportunity to focus on my jazz playing.

***Which style presents more difficulties for you personally? Why?***

I feel that both styles present difficulties and I wouldn't say one style presents more difficulties than the other for me. The difficulties are just different. Practicing jazz improvisation is very different from practicing a set piece of music. I find it easier to practice a set piece than it is to practice improvisation. A set piece is concrete. If you have good practice habits, you can work in a very deliberate way and get clear results. Practicing improvisation is much less concrete. There is a seemingly endless array of potential materials that you could practice, much of it conceptual. Therefore, you have to make decisions about what to practice and how to practice it, choosing among many equally beneficial options.

On the other hand, classical practicing is very demanding in terms of trying to achieve the level of detail and finesse required for excellence. Aside from that, there are some pieces I cannot play because I have not mastered circular breathing and I am unable to slap-tongue (so far). Therefore, playing certain pieces is currently impossible.

***When you initially began playing the saxophone, did you have a teacher whose instruction methodology leaned more toward one style or the other, or was it a blend of the two?***

I started out playing in band at the age of 10 and I didn't have a private teacher until I was 12 or 13 (although I had taken classical piano lessons beginning at age 6). For the first year (5<sup>th</sup> grade) I only played band music and melodies from a book I had purchased. In my second year (6<sup>th</sup> grade) I had a band director who came to the elementary school to coach sectionals. In the saxophone sectionals, he would get out his trumpet and do call-and-response with us. He was a jazz guy and invited a couple of us to join the junior high (7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade) jazz band near the end of the year. That was my first exposure to jazz. At the same time, somewhere during this time I started learning television show theme songs by ear, by tape recording the song and playing it back over and over. In 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade a friend of mine had a teacher who showed him the blues scale, so we would "jam" together before school, plus I was given solos to play in jazz ensemble, so I was put in a position where I was expected to improvise, and I was trying to figure out how to do that.

My first saxophone lessons (7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade) were mostly from the Rubank book, working on solos for solo and ensemble contest, and occasionally working on jazz band music. I began studying with my first really solid teacher in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. He's the first person I can remember trying to work with me on embouchure, tone, vibrato, etc. He

played gigs as part of making his living in music and worked with me both on classical fundamentals and fundamentals of jazz. At that time I was still playing a student model horn with the mouthpiece that came with the horn and probably Rico reeds. We worked on long tones, vibrato, scales (from Joe Viola's book), and he wrote out arpeggio exercises with dominant seventh chords and other chord types. He gave me assignments in the Rubank Advanced Method as well as the Lennie Niehaus first Jazz Conception book. We worked on a solo for solo and ensemble contest, but we didn't do any improvising in the lessons. I don't recall working on getting a different sound from one style to the next.

In my sophomore year of high school, I started studying with a more jazz oriented teacher, though we continued to work on fundamentals and prepared some classical material. This is when I really started working hard on improvisation.

***When teaching young students, what methodology do you recommend?***

Whatever works! We need to recognize that the most important skill is the ability to listen and adjust—to hear what you are playing and make physical adjustments to match a desired result. Therefore, we need to help the student learn how to listen to themselves and know what they are listening for. When we teach physical skills, we need to give the student clear, simple objectives so they know what they are trying to accomplish and whether or not they have accomplished it. Then they need to know how to practice in order to make the desired result a habit. Anytime we talk about physical skills, we need to approach them as a combination of training the ear and training the physical technique.

With this in mind, I start from the premise that there are basic saxophone fundamentals that need to be developed and that it is the application of these fundamentals that varies from one style to the next. For example, with a beginner I teach what I referred to as a “normal” embouchure and don't suggest that a student try less lower lip for jazz until they have some years of experience and a really solid grasp on a good basic embouchure. A big issue for beginning students is the coordination of physical skills that take time to develop. The primary focus, then, has to be on developing good basic habits in terms of posture, breathing, blowing (use of air), amount of mouthpiece in the mouth, embouchure, oral cavity, articulation, hand position, finger movements, and later vibrato. There are many ways to work on these things, and we can do it in a way that helps the student develop their musicianship towards being able to play any style. Again, we have to help them train their ears to listen and to know what they are listening for (what is successful and what is not). Then we can work with the student on music from different styles and simply address the imperatives for each style. If the student has developed the basic skills sufficiently and if the teacher has the knowledge and skill to clearly explain and demonstrate what needs to happen in each style, then the student has a good chance of learning to play idiomatically in any style. I recommend using simple melodies from memory right from the beginning so the student is not simply playing exercises or lines out of a method book. Once the student has basic control of tone and articulation, these simple melodies can include some jazz riffs as well as children's songs, folk songs, etc. As far as style is concerned, the teacher must determine at what point the student is ready to learn different ways of ending notes (release with air vs. stopped with the tongue). If the student's basic articulation habits are established, this

can be done fairly early. The key is helping the student have a very clear idea of what they need to do and how they know when they are doing it successfully. Improvisation can also be introduced early using Jamey Aebersold's Volume 24 play-along (Major and Minor). The teacher can create call-and-response exercises and have the student explore creating his/her own melody from the notes in a major scale. Call-and-response can also be a good way to explore different stylistic elements (articulations, pitch bending, etc.). These types of exercises are as important as playing from a method book in developing the student's ear and creativity.

As the student develops, the student may express a preference or may demonstrate an affinity for one style over another. I think the teacher's role is to help the student develop his/her strengths while helping the student to be well-rounded. If the student wants to pursue a degree in music, then the teacher needs to help the student excel to a level that will gain admission to a college music program. For someone wishing to pursue a jazz major, s/he needs to put a significant amount of energy into developing improvisational ability. Classical study should not be ignored entirely and can be pursued to the level the student is able to do that. I have heard prospective freshmen audition who are pretty much equal in the classical and jazz ability. Some students do this by studying with a different teacher for each style. I have also heard prospective freshmen players who have basically studied only one style and are completely out of their element in the other style. If the student wants to pursue a classical saxophone major, then emphasis has to be put on learning repertoire and developing the skills needed to successfully audition into such a program. This may mean that jazz study takes a back seat or is set aside. Ultimately, each student is an individual and the teacher needs to be responsive to each student's interests even while trying to assert priorities that the teacher feels are important.

***What setup (mouthpiece, reed, ligature, instrument) do you use for each style? Why?***

Horn	Classical Mouthpiece/Ligature/Reeds	Jazz Mouthpiece/Ligature/Reeds
Soprano: Yamaha 62 (mid-1980s vintage)	Rousseau 4R, BG fabric ligature, 4 Vandoren Blue Box	Bari 64, Francois Louis ligature, 3 ½ Vandoren V16
Alto: Yamaha 62 (late 1970s vintage)	Vandoren AL3, BG metal gold-plated ligature, 3 ½ Vandoren Blue Box	Otto Link 6 (hard rubber from the mid-1980s), BG Revelation w/gold plated plate ligature, 2 ½ Vandoren V16, or 3 Vandoren Java, or Rico Jazz Select 2 Hard
Tenor: Yamaha Custom (mid- 1990s)	Rousseau NC5, BG fabric ligature, 3 ½ Vandoren Blue Box	Otto Link 8* (metal from the early 1990s), Francois Louis ligature, 2 ½ Vandoren V16, or 3 Vandoren Java, or Rico

		Jazz Select 2 Hard or 3 Alexander Superial
Don't own a bari	Rousseau 5R, BG fabric ligature, 4 Vandoren Blue Box	Rousseau JDX6, stock cloth ligature, 3 ½ Vandoren ZZ

The short answer to why is because I like the way I sound on these set-ups for what I want to accomplish in each style and they help me get that sound. I am not an equipment nut. I've played the same jazz alto mouthpiece since 1986. I don't spend a lot of time trying different mouthpieces, ligatures, or reeds, but when I come across something I like better than what I am currently using, I am willing to switch. I switched to the Vandoren AL3 classical alto mouthpiece two years ago for this reason. If I tried the similar tenor and bari mouthpieces and liked them that much more than my current mouthpieces, I would consider switching. The only reason I might not switch is that I don't play much classical tenor or baritone. My alto and tenor jazz reeds are somewhat in a state of flux. I have multiple brands in my reed cases right now, but I am on the verge of switching completely to 2 ½ V16 for both jazz tenor and alto.

***Is there a setup that works well for both styles? Why or why not?***

I don't think so. For me, what I am trying to accomplish in each style is different enough that using the same equipment would make it more difficult one way or the other. There are some situations that are more "crossover" in nature where there is a blending of classical and jazz in a way that I might use the opposite mouthpiece and reed set-up. For example, in performing the David Baker Concerto for alto saxophone and orchestra and with the Mike Mower Concerto for alto saxophone and wind ensemble I chose to use my jazz set-up. The Baker Concerto includes moments that are classical in nature and it includes jazz-oriented improvisation. The Mower Concerto, on the other hand, is entirely jazz in nature, although there is no improvisation. A couple of players I know who have performed the Mower Concerto chose to play it on their classical mouthpiece, but with a jazz style.

***Who are your primary influences for each style in terms of sound concept?***

In the classical realm I didn't copy directly from recordings the way I did for jazz. Eugene Rousseau was a huge influence, and I was certainly influenced by students of his that I heard during my studies, such as Kenneth Tse and Otis Murphy. Although they are several years younger than me, we played in a quartet together at one point. There were certainly others who influenced me that I heard while in school. I also think I was influenced by general listening to classical music and just trying to find a sound that fit into that concept.

Jazz: Charlie Parker, Cannonball Adderley, Sonny Stitt, John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, Dexter Gordon, Joe Henderson, Wayne Shorter, among others.

## CONCLUSION

The primary focus of any saxophonist attempting to approach a foreign idiom should be to attain a familiarity with all the subtleties of the style through an intensive listening regimen. There is truly no substitute for listening and, if done successfully, it will have a positive impact in all aspects (physical and conceptual) related to switching styles. Just like learning a new language, repetitively hearing someone speak it can bring a level of understanding far above simply reading it off a page. It is through listening that one can learn the intricacies of the language, and perhaps most importantly, develop an awareness of the authenticity of one's own attempts at it.

When switching from jazz playing to classical playing, saxophonists must be prepared to scale down the amount of motion in the oral cavity and embouchure that they may be used to, just as in Dr. Tse's aforementioned tennis/ping-pong analogy. This is essential to achieve the uniform timbre desired in classical playing, and can take a great deal of focused practice to eliminate any unnecessary motion. In general, the embouchure must remain fixed at all times in all registers. The saxophonist must also develop a feel for the proper oral cavity shape, which, for me, involves a higher tongue arch slightly further back in the mouth. Mouthpiece pitch can also be an indicator of the proper oral cavity setting, in which generally a slightly higher pitch (closer to A5 for alto) on the mouthpiece alone will yield a sound closer to the classical ideal.

Careful attention must also be paid to differences in articulation, with a much lighter, more delicate tongue stroke for attacks and open releases with no tongue stops in classical playing. The attack must be clean and without fuzz, air or distortion of any kind preceding, during or following the note. The written articulations in classical music must also be heeded with great discipline, unlike in jazz, when often a saxophonist is expected to add articulation styles that aren't explicitly written on the page.

Vibrato, while still a somewhat personal choice, should generally be more consistent, slightly faster and fairly narrow in classical playing compared to the wide range of expressive latitude found in jazz playing. Intonation awareness must also be heightened and developed to an extremely high degree, as the precision of classical playing demands absolute control of pitch in any register. There are a number of alternate fingerings that can aid both intonation and timbral uniformity for certain notes in certain contexts, and these should be explored and experimented with.

When it comes to having the proper equipment, one must take into account his musical goals, weighing the ability of each piece of equipment to work in tandem with his physical makeup to easily achieve them. The level of control and precision in classical playing demands equipment that will perform equally well in all ranges at all dynamic levels, which is often not the case with many jazz setups. So, it is imperative that jazz saxophonists who are serious about performing authentically in the classical idiom seek out equipment that will allow them to meet the demands of the music.

Finally, it is my firm belief that all saxophonists should take pride in the rich history and diversity of the instrument. Whether performers, educators or hobbyists, all have idioms that are more comfortable and perhaps more enjoyable to play in or listen to. However, there is tremendous value to be gained in studying the instrument in different contexts, and any who wish to be involved in a professional capacity on the instrument are only crippling themselves by choosing to ignore the presence of the saxophone in other idioms. That is not to say that all saxophonists must devote equal time to studying each style, but at the very least, a more thorough understanding of one's preferred idiom can be gained through simple comparative analysis. As the future of the instrument rolls on, I encourage all saxophonists to open their minds to learning a new musical language on their instrument. I did, and it has forever changed my life.



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