Susquehanna University • Department of Music • Selinsgrove, PA 17870

MIDWEST BAND & ORCHESTRA
December 18-22, 2007
Chicago, Illinois

NERF BALLS NOT REQUIRED!

Teaching Resources and Helpful Suggestions in Training Your Saxophone Section to Sound Really Good.

Dr. Gail B. Levinsky

Associate Professor of Music
Susquehanna University

Windsor Room - Congress Hotel
Thursday, December 20, 2007, 4:30 – 5:30 PM

Nerf Balls Not Required!

Teaching Resources and Helpful Suggestions in Training

Your Saxophone Section to Sound Really Good

The educational and musical popularity of the saxophone is in part due to the notion that it is one of easiest instruments to play. Unfortunately, it is also one of the most difficult to play properly and therefore, presents numerous challenges to both student and teacher alike. The use of nerf balls, handkerchiefs, carpet padding and other materials is NOT required. The focus of this presentation is to offer simple and fundamental pedagogical reminders when teaching young saxophonists. –Dr. Gail B. Levinsky

POSTURE

Instrument & Neck Strap positions:

While playing the saxophone the neck strap must be positioned in such a way that the back of the neck is straight and the performer brings the instrument to the mouth without any manipulation of the head to the instrument. The aligning of the spine from head to tailbone is vital for maximum breathing capacity and airflow. The **alto saxophone** may be held either to the side or in front of the body. The **soprano saxophone** is positioned in front of the body while the **tenor and baritone saxophones** are always positioned to the side while the student is sitting.

Hand and finger position:

Left thumb contacts the octave key plateau at all times. When required, the thumb will gently rock toward the octave key. This is an important point, as many young players will often lift the thumb away from the rest.

Right thumb is placed behind the thumb hook. Do not tense the thumb into the instrument, but rather use the thumb as a guide. Remember, the neck strap supports the weight of the saxophone. Hands and fingers are rounded and curved. The fleshy part of the fingertips makes contact with the keys keeping a gentle downward direction towards the floor.

STANDING POSTION **SITTING POSITION**

(The first and third picture is what we are looking for students to do!)

AIR and EMBOUCHURE

ORAL CAVITY:

- The saxophone is performed with an open throat.

TONGUE POSITION:

- The back of the tongue should be in a low and natural position. Students can easily achieve this by thinking "ah or oh."

- The tongue should be relaxed allowing the tip or forward part of the tongue to touch the tip of the reed.

AIR STREAM:

- Fast and focused air stream. However, one must also think about warm air.

Have your students try this-: EXERCISE 1

Place your hand approximately 6 inches in front of your mouth. Blow a fast focused air stream toward your hand. The air should be cold. Now cup your hands as if it was winter and you were outside without gloves. The air should be warm. This concept is extremely important. The air stream in producing sound must be fast and focused, while also keeping the tongue low.

EMBOUCHURE:

- **Upper teeth** are placed **<u>on</u>** the mouthpiece. *(The lower lip curls slightly over the bottom teeth remembering not to use any more lip than necessary.)* The saxophone embouchure is rounded and should be thought of as equal pressure at all four corners of the mouth. Thinking **"O"** (whistle or puckering of lips) will help greatly in achieving this position. Chin should be flat. *(REMINDER: This is a significant difference between the traditional clarinet embouchure and saxophone.)* The embouchure should remain constant throughout the entire range of the saxophone.

PLACEMENT:

- Determining the amount of mouthpiece position in ones mouth is somewhat unique to each player. However, identifying the fulcrum where the reed and mouthpiece touch is an excellent place to start.

EXERCISE 2 - Holding the mouthpiece and neck only. Have your students observe the reed/mouthpiece from a side view. Determine where the reed and mouthpiece touch. Position the embouchure and blow fast focused air.

- Pitches produced if embouchure, tongue, position and air are correct:

--Alto Saxophone-A^{b}
--Tenor Saxophone-E
--Baritone Saxophone-E^{b}

EXERCISE 3 – The above works quite well. A more accurate indicator for determining if the student is in good position and utilizing all factors identified above is sounding the following pitches on the mouthpiece only. *(REMINDER: If your student is getting a higher pitch, mostly they are biting; too low probably too relaxed or reed strength too soft)*

--Alto Saxophone-A
--Tenor Saxophone-G
--Baritone Saxophone-D

ARTICULATION & TONGUING

Tonguing:

- Good tonguing is essential to understandable musical communication. The movement of touching the reed to the tongue is called TONGUING. *REMINDER:* Observe unnecessary movement in the throat or an "in and out" movement in the jaw.

- The process of tonguing is supported by uninterrupted air.

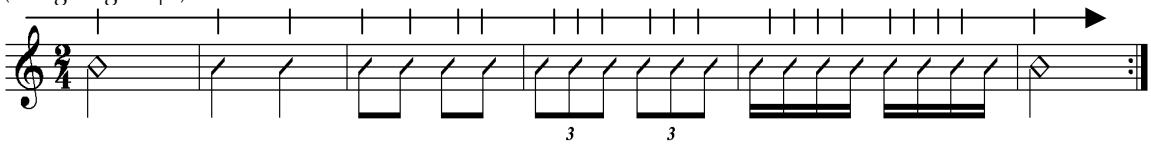
- The embouchure should be constant and not effect tone quality.

- Motion of the tongue is away from the reed and not toward it. The goal is to fundamentally interrupt the vibration of the reed with the tongue not close it against the mouthpiece.

REMINDER: Is your student getting a **Slap Tongue** effect? This is typically achieved by closing the reed against the mouthpiece (often with the tongue in a rather flat position.) When the tongue is released from the reed a suction effect is created. REMINDER: Reinforce all of the above.

EXERCISE 4
Begin slowly and repeat as necessary.

(Air stream = ⟶)
(Tonguing = |)



SAXOPHONE EQUIPMENT

The decision to select an instrument, mouthpiece, ligature or reed is a very personal one. However, the bottom line is whatever equipment one selects the following qualities must exist:

The ability to play freely with a characteristic tone quality and in tune!

Saxophones:

Student models:

Selmer AS300
Selmer AS500
Yamaha 23

Intermediate models:

La Vie 250 series
La Vie 240 series
Yamaha 475

Professional

Selmer Super Action 80 Series II or III
Selmer Reference 54
Yamaha-62II
Yamaha-82Z

Mouthpieces:

Classical — **Selmer S80 C***
- Highly recommended. In fact, I will go out on an edge here. Start your beginners on this mouthpiece…you will never be sorry.

Selmer S80**	A bit more open than the C*
Selmer S90	Different bore size, more open
Vandoren	Optimum

Jazz
Meyer 6M or 5M
Otto Link 6-8 tip opening / hard rubber or metal
Beechler 5-7 tip opening / hard rubber or metal
Claude Lackey 4*3 tip opening / hard rubber
Berg Larson hard rubber or metal
Selmer D or E hard rubber or metal
Vandoren A Series hard rubber

Reeds:
Medium strength
Vandoren-3 or 3 1/2
Hemke-3 or 3 1/2
-It should be noted that as a student progresses it is not unusual for the performer to use a slightly harder reed on the soprano, tenor, and baritone.

Ligatures

Selmer, a great starting point, functional.
Bonade, adequate and inexpensive.
Vandoren Optimum, excellent and expensive.
Winslow, excellent and expensive.
BG (France)

TEACHING VIBRATO

Incorporating the use of vibrato into one's sound is the student's sound!
Vibrato is not just a concept of adding tonal color

.

- Vibrato is produced by slightly moving the lower jaw up and down.
  NOT in and out, throat, or diaphragmatic.

- Embouchure position should not change

- Listening for two qualities: speed and symmetry of undulation.

uuuuuuu not, vvvvvvvvv

- Once the general concept has been achieved, proceed working somewhat rhythmically if you will in eighths notes, then increasing to triplets and sixteenths.

- After student feels comfortable with maintaining 4 pulses per beat, work with metronome for stability and accuracy.

- Add vibrato to long tone warm up, as well as one, two octave, and full range scales.

- Tempo should be increased. Desired results: ♩ = 68-80

REMEMBER:

- Vibrato is the sound, not something that is added.

- Vibrato isn't meant to be metered, but rather a fluid motion.

There are many who say…
if you notice the vibrato it is probably wrong!

OTHER TECHNICAL ISSUES

CHROMATIC FINGERINGS

Bb: Which one do I use?

- Side Key Bb - may use in almost every situation.

- *Bis* Bb - use in flat keys. The only rule is when using in a classical situation avoid sliding form Bb – B Natural. Utilize the similar rules as with they apply to Bb Thumb key on flute.

- LH 1 & RH 1 – In my opinion-ALMOST NEVER!

Chromatic F#

- Chromatic F# should be use in any situation where the player is going from F (or E#) to F# (or Gb). The exception to the rule is when the performer is going to or from E, Eb, or D below the F#.

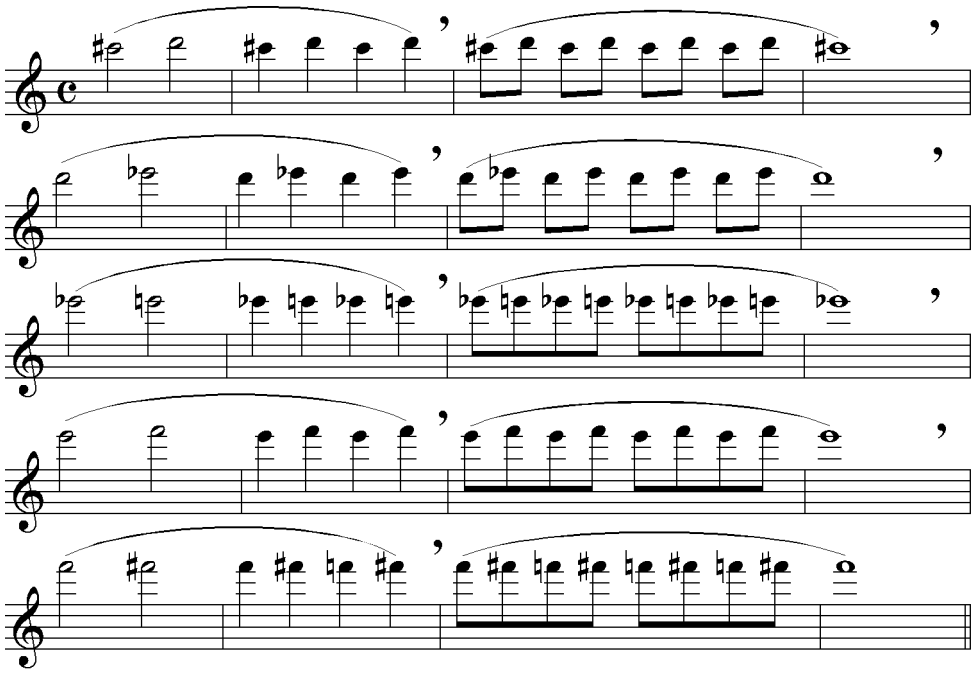
Palm Keys

- Probably the most neglected part of saxophone technique with young students.

- Key to success: Let the air do the work, not the embouchure. In other words, there is no need to overbite!

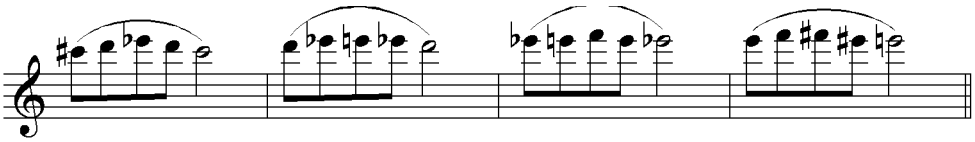
EXERCISE #5

Focus on hand position, embouchure, and direction air. Work towards evenness of sound and finger technique.



EXERCISE #5

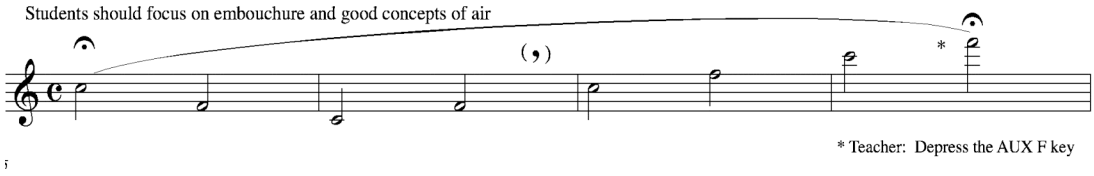
Focus on same issues as above. Begin slowly.



Continue pattern to high F

Auxiliary or Front F

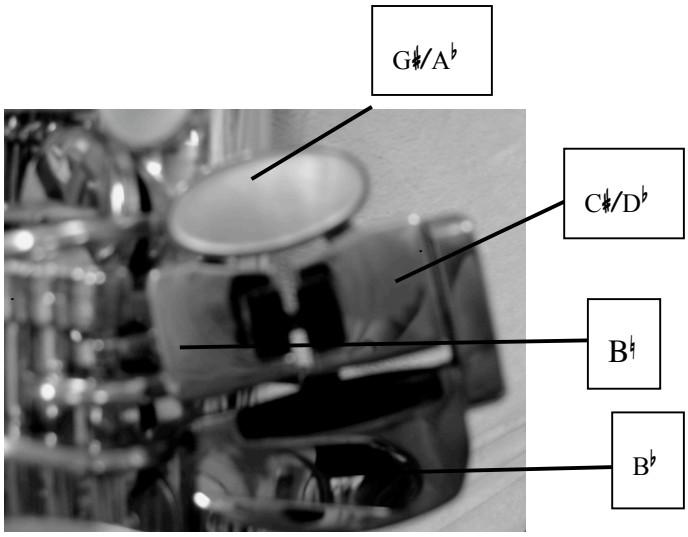
A very convenient fingering to utilize going to and coming from C or C# above the staff. A must in the development of a student's use of the altissimo range.



The above exercise is also an excellent way to first introduce the high register

Table Key Cluster

- Use the rollers!
- Use the fleshy part of the LH pinky
- Know the fingerings!



One very important point mechanical benefit—most all saxophones are built with an articulated G# mechanism. Meaning if your students need to go from G# to C#, play the G# on the low C# key. No need to rock back and forth.

INTONATION & THE SAXOPHONE

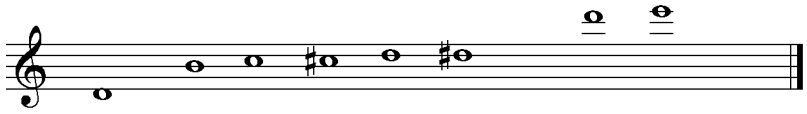
Every instrument has its issues. Okay, maybe the saxophone has a few more. However, making sure that students are playing on a good reed/mouthpiece combination, have a characteristic embouchure, their instrument is in good working order, knowing the natural intonation tendencies of their instrument will all help in having them play in better tone.

Alternate Fingerings for Improved Intonation

General mechanics: –

- Open a key the pitch is raised.
- Close a key the pitch is lowered.

The notes below seem to be the most problematic. NOTE: Pitches are transposed.



Pitch	Action	Result
[D^1]	•Add Table Key C#	Raises pitch
[B^2]	•Add SK Bb	Raises pitch
[C^2]	•Add SK Bb	Raises pitch
[$C\#^2$]	•Add Chromatic C	Raises pitch
	•Add Octave + 3rd Finger (LH)	Raises pitch
	• Add Octave + 3rd Finger (LH) plus any(RH) keys	Lowers pitch
[D^2]	•Add low B key (table keys)	Lowers pitch
[$D\#^2$]	•Add low B key (table keys)	Lowers pitch
[D^3]	•Add RH keys	Lowers pitch
[E^3]	•Add RH keys or take off Palm Key 2	Lowers pitch

Recommended Repertoire

HIGH SCHOOL/ALTO SAXOPHONE-
COMPOSITIONS ARE LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER.

HIGH SCHOOL/ALTO SAXOPHONE

Suite No.1	J.S Bach/Londeix	Leduc
Aria	Bozza	Leduc
Suite	Bonneau	Leduc
Concerto	Glazounov	Leduc
Sonata	Creston	Shawnee
Sonata	Eccles/Rasher	Carl Fischer
Sonata	Heiden	Schott
Aria	Ibert	Leduc
Fantasie et Impromtu	Jolivet	Leduc
Sicileinne	Lantier	Leduc
Sonata	Lunde	Southern
Tableaux de Provence	Maurice	Lemoine
Sonata Sportive	Tcherepnine	Leduc
Piece en Forme de Habanera	Ravel	Leduc
Chanson et Passepied	Rueff	Leduc
Abstract	Ward	Southern

HIGH SCHOOL/TENOR SAXOPHONE

Suite No.1	J.S Bach/Londeix	Leduc
Sonata	Di Pasquale	Southern
Sonata IV	Galliard	McGinnis & Marx
Poem	Hartley	Tritone
Sonata	Platti/Rousseau	Étoile
Solo de Concert	Singelee	Southern
Solos for the Ten. Saxophone	Teal	Schimer
Chant Corse	Tomasi	Leduc
Sonata	Tuthill	Southern
Fantasia	Villa-Lobos	Southern

HIGH SCHOOL/BARITONE SAXOPHONE

Premier Solo,	Demersseman	Roncorp
Little Suite	Hartley	Dorn
Sonata	Hartley	Dorn
Allegro Spiritoso	Senaillé	Southern
Solo de Concert, Op. 77	Singelée	Roncorp

~~ Chamber music is vital in developing young players and their musicianship skills. ~~

HIGH SCHOOL QUARTETS

Trois Pieces	Albeniz/Mule	Leduc
Andante et Scherzo	Bozza	Leduc
Quatour	Dubois	Leduc
Petit Quatour	Françaix	Schott
Fantasia	Gibbons/Hemke	Southern
Quartet (#1,2,3,4)	Howland	Yabarra
Quatour	Jeanjean	Salebert
Allegro do Concert	Singelee	Carl Fisher
Sonata	Scarlatti/Hemke	Southern

Classical Saxophone Discography (Compact Disc recordings)

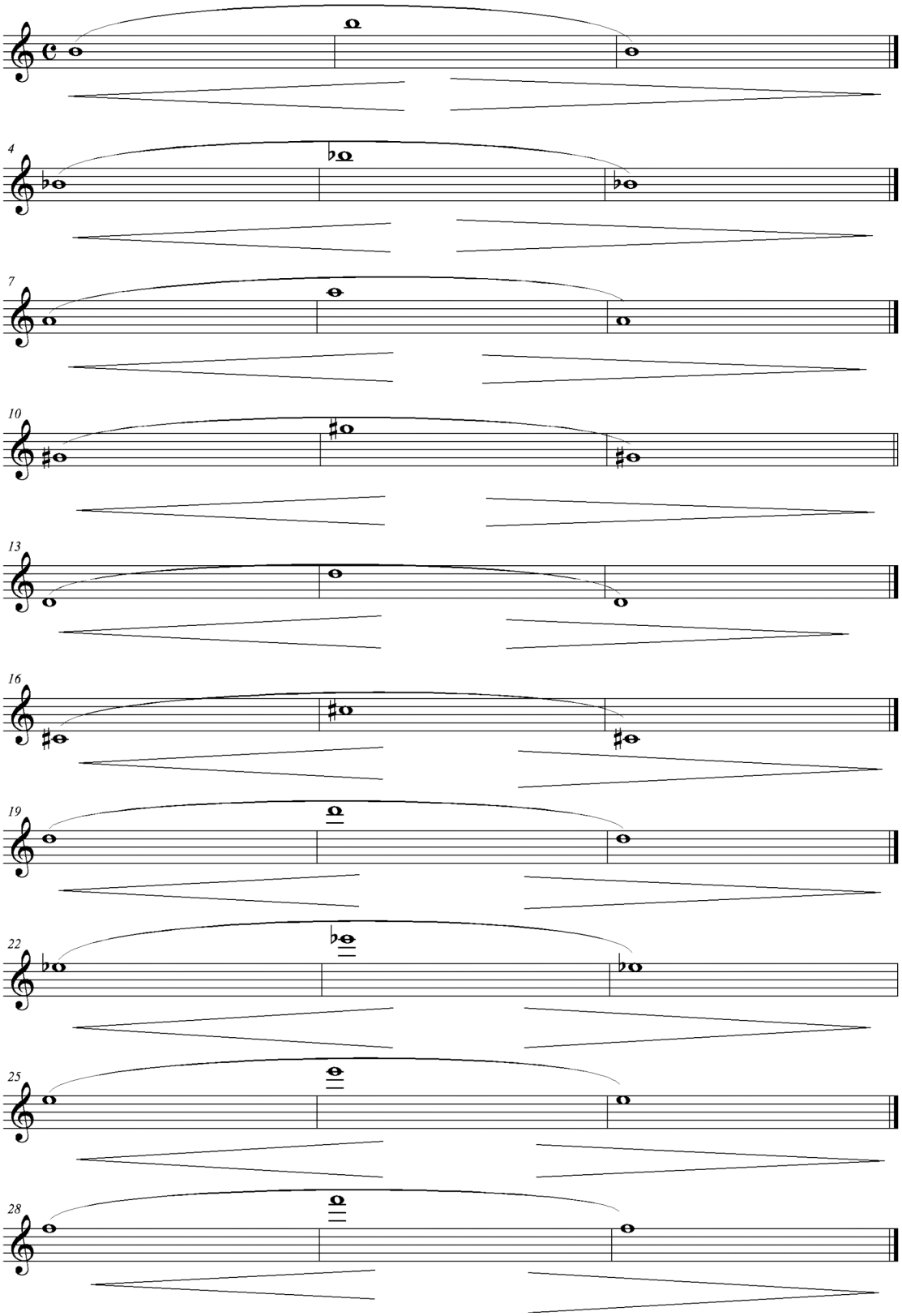
Solo Saxophone

Arno Bornkamp	*Arno Bornkamp*	Globe
Frank Borngiorno	*Classical Saxophone*	Lisio
Paul Bro	NOSTALGIE*: Music from Northwestern: Music of Bill Karlins*	NU Press
Griffin Campbell	*Tableaux*	Worldwinds
Claude Delange	*The Historic Saxophone*	Bis
	A La Francaise	Bis
Susan Fancher	*Pondering Nothing*	Innova
Fourmeau, Jean-Yve	"Tableaux de Provence" Saxophone Recital	Philips
John Harle	*Saxophone Concertos*	EMI
Frederick Hemke	*The American Saxophonist*	Saxo Records
	Simple Gifts	Saxo Records
Lynn Klock	*Vintage Flora*	Open Loop
Gail B. Levinsky	*Saxophone & Other Voices*	GBL
Joseph Lulloff	*Joseph Lulloff plays the saxophone music of Colgrass, Dahl, Ruggiero*	Arizona University Recordings
Steve Mauk	*Distances Within Me*	Open Loop
Timothy McAllister	*Visions*	Centaur
Otis Murphy	*Memoires of Dinant*	RIAX
Eugene Rousseau	*Saxophone Colors*	Delos
John Sampen	*The Contemporary Saxophone*	Neuman
William Street	*Héliosaxo*	Arktos
James Umble	*Chamber Music-Dejeuner Sure L'Herbe*	Dana
Various Artists	*America's Millennium Tribute to Adolphe Sax*	Arizona University Records

Saxophone Quartet

Adelphi Saxophone Quartet	*"Simply Four Saxophones"*	EMI
Amherst Saxophone Quartet	*Lament on the Death of Music*	Innova
Apollo Saxophone Quartet	*First & Foremost*	Argo
Aurelia Saxophone Quartet	*Music from America*	Challenge Classics
Chicago Saxophone Quartet	*Chicago Saxophone Quartet*	Centaur
Chicago Saxophone Quartet	*July*	Elf
New Century Saxophone Quartet	*Standards, Vol. 1*	Channel Classics
The Rasher Saxophone Quartet Kroumata Percussion Ensemble	*Music for Saxophone & Percussion*	Caprice
Stockholm Saxophone Quartet	*Stockholm Saxophone Quartet*	Caprice
Transcontinental Saxophone Quartet	*Mountain Roads*	Albany Records

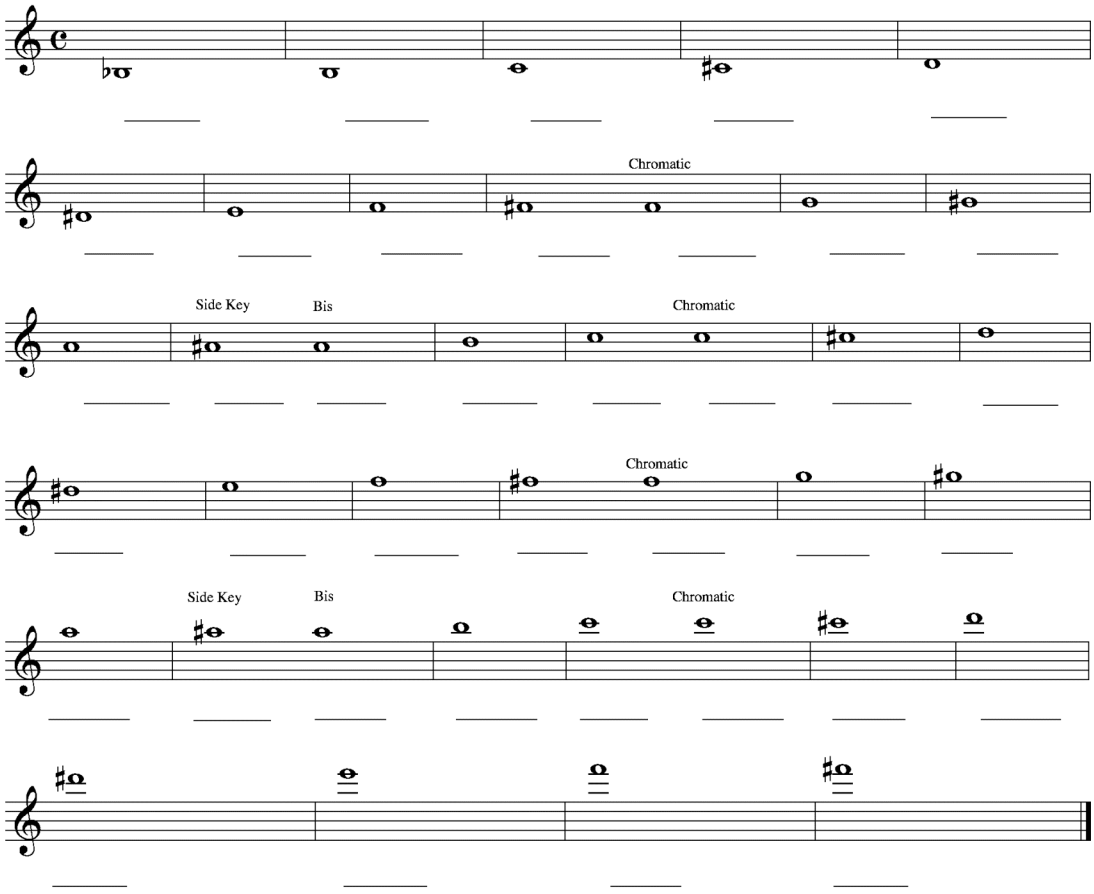
Warm Up - Exercise #1
Long Tones



Student: _____ Date: _____

Saxophone Tuning Exercise

Using a tuner, indicate the sharpness or flatness of the pitches below.

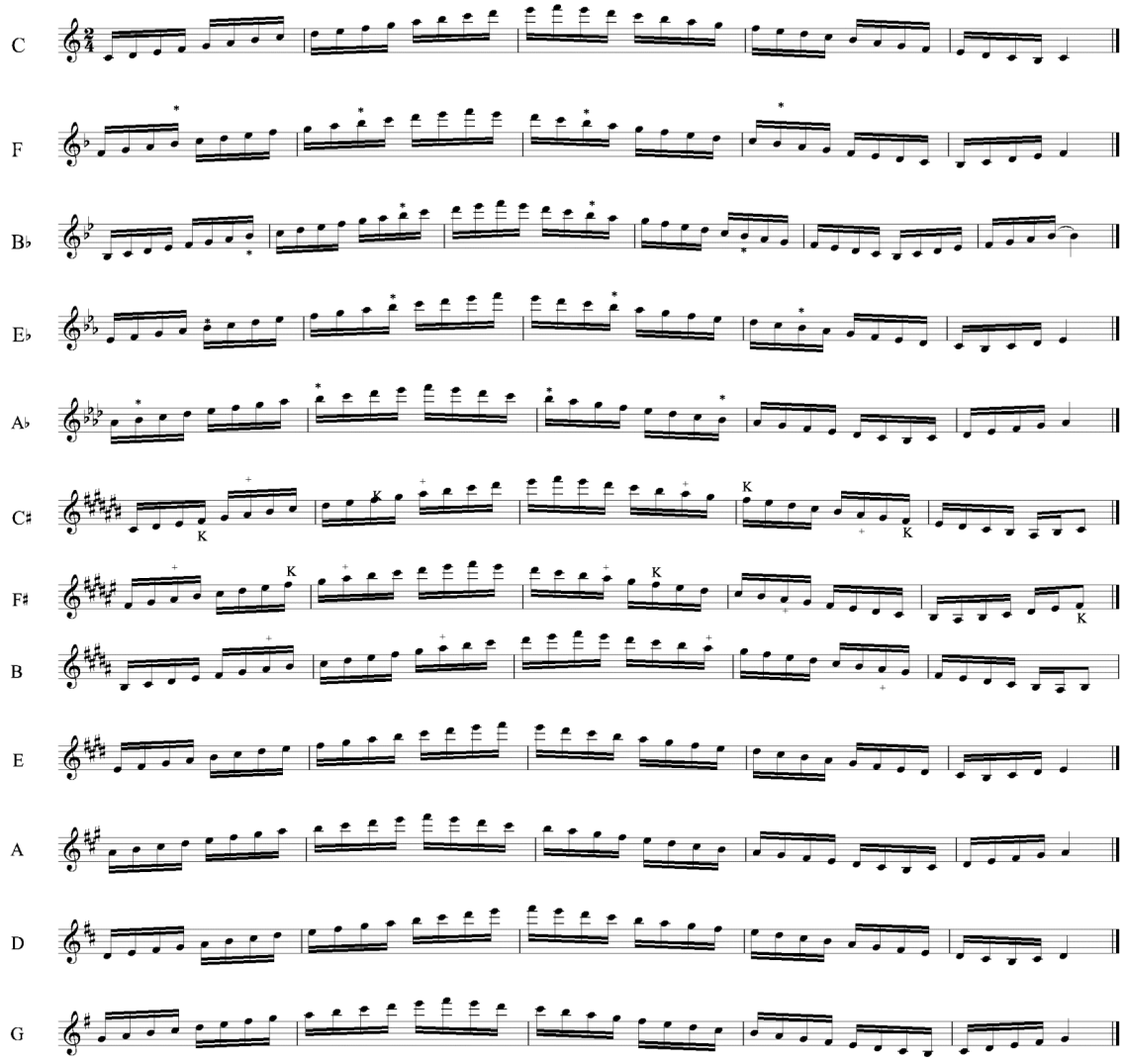


General comments:

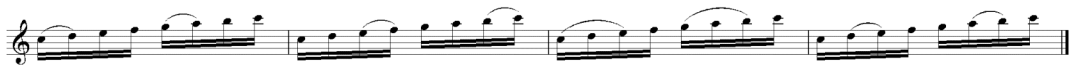
This chart was first published in "The Art of the Saxophone" by Larry Teal (© 1961), and is highly recommended for students to begin understanding where the problematic notes lie on their instrument.

FULL RANGE SCALES

Studying and practicing full range scales are key to developing tonal and technical mastery. Begin slowly always remembering to practice with a metronome everyday! The importance of scale study is to develop a sense of evenness of tone, as well as finger dexterity throughout the entire range of the instrument.



Articulations



* = Bis Bb
\+ = Side Key Bb
K = Chromatic F#

Students should begin with one and two octave scales. For the purpose of developing evenness of sound and fingers students should begin the study of full range scales. It's imperative that students utilize chromatic and alternate fingerings at this stage.

Gail B. Levinsky is an associate professor of music at Susquehanna University (Selinsgrove, PA) where she serves as saxophone professor and member of the music education faculty. An active recitalist, collaborative musician, clinician, and music educator, she has performed in the United States, Canada, and Europe. Levinsky has commissioned and premiered a number of new works for saxophone, including most *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* by Jason Bahr; *Sun Dance for Two Saxophones & Piano* by Mathew Quayle; *Bacarolle for Saxophone and Live Electronics* by Patrick Long; *Langston's Lot for Alto Saxophone, Tenor Voice, and Piano* by Douglas McConnell; and *Nebulae for Alto Saxophone and Organ* by Frank Ferko. With a keen interest in the area of instrumental pedagogy, Dr. Levinsky has significant experience teaching applied studies at the elementary and secondary grade levels, as well as the collegiate setting. She has presented master classes for high school and college programs and at state and regional music education conferences, including the MENC-Eastern Regional.

Levinsky received her Bachelor of Music Education from Butler University, and Levinsky's degrees include the Bachelor of Music from Butler University, and the Master of Music, Graduate Certificate of Performance, Doctorate in Music from Northwestern University. Her dissertation entitled *An Analysis and Comparison of Early Saxophone Methods Published Between 1846-1946,* explores the first hundred years of published methods for teaching the saxophone. She is a member of Pi Kappa Lambda, Kappa Delta Pi honor fraternities, and held elected offices with the North American Saxophone Alliance where she presently serves as its Region VIII director. Dr. Levinsky is a clinician artist for The Conn-Selmer Company, and during the summer months serves on the faculty at New England Music Camp in Sidney, Maine.

gblevinsky@susqu.edu

570-372-4266