

“What’s your game plan?”

Teaching Aspiring Saxophonists to Sound Great

Midwest Clinic ~ December 15, 2016

Joseph Lulloff - Professor of Saxophone - Michigan State University

Email: Lulloff@msu.edu

MSU Studio Website: saxophone.msu.edu

John Nichol - Professor of Saxophone - Central Michigan University

Email: nicho1ja@cmich.edu

Game Plans

Tonal Game Plan:

- Tonal Concept, Consistent and dedicated daily practice habits
- Well developed Embouchure, Breathing, Articulation, Tuning, Voicing, Technique, Articulation, and Vibrato
- Who are your Musical Heroes? Listening and studying other professional artists not only in your instrument but also the music profession.

Embouchure Game Plan:

- Corners of mouth drawn in
- Lower lip bunched over bottom teeth
- Conceptualize (even vocalize) the word “ooh” with this lip formation
- Top teeth placed on top mouthpiece
- The proper amount of mouthpiece taken in is important. The top teeth should rest on top center of the mouthpiece at the point where the reed and mouthpiece break away from each other.
- The entire embouchure should be firm, hugging the mouthpiece
- Blow a concise and focused airstream into the instrument, focusing the air on a point across the room at eye level.

With the proper embouchure outlined above, one should produce the following pitches on the mouthpiece alone:

- Soprano Saxophone: concert *C* (2 octaves above middle *C*)
- Alto Saxophone: concert *A* (1 octave and a M6 above middle *C*)
- Tenor Saxophone: concert *G* (1 octave and a P5 above middle *C*)
- Baritone Saxophone: concert *E* (1 octave and a M3 above middle *C*)

Breathing Game Plan: Great Air equals Great Sound

- Start with good posture.
- Visualize your breath and your sound.

- Strive to relax your body completely before taking a breath.
- Breathe in as deeply and quickly (with a relaxed midsection) as you can. Think of saying the word “how” as you inhale.
- As you fill your lungs with air, relax your shoulders and relax/expand your midsection.
- Practice patterned breathing exercises, both with and without the saxophone.
- Exhale as much as you can before taking another breath. Stale air is as bad as an insufficient quantity of air.
- Plan and mark your breaths in your music as you practice. Consider musical: phrasing, harmonic and melodic content. Any available recordings may also be helpful in your decision making of a breath game plan.
- Focus your air as you blow.

Proper Embouchure and Breathing are Essentials to Great Tone

Tuning Game Plan:

- Use a tuner daily, Drone exercises and the Tuning CD is a Must for all
- Most students play sharp! Daily practice voicing, overtone exercises and long tone tuning exercises are essential.
- Knowing specific fingerings for sharp and flat notes on the instrument

To play out of tune is like playing a wrong note

Technique Game Plan:

- Keep fingers slightly curved.
- Strive for fingertip contact to the middle of each pearl.
- Fingers should be a natural extension of the instrument.
- Hands should form around the instrument a relaxed fashion, as if holding a small grapefruit or foam Nerf ball. The fingers and thumb should form a shape of the letter C.
- Good technique involves as little finger movement as possible, especially in fast technical passages.
- As a rule, use a metronome for about 90 percent of your practice to attain not only good rhythm, but also concise and controlled finger motion.

Articulation Game Plan:

- Placing the tongue (upper part, just behind the tip) on the reed at a point or area just behind the tip. Close the reed by lightly pressing the tongue against the reed
- Creating a pressured air base by blowing into the mouthpiece with the tongue closing the reed
- Releasing the tongue from the reed, conceptualizing the syllable “Da” or La” in order to initiate the sound
- Stopping the sound with the tongue or air
- Using a metronome to practice articulation with carried rhythms

- Using verbal syllables to define certain articulation styles such as accents, *staccato* and *legato*, *marcato*, and similar markings is an excellent way to develop and perfect one's flexibility of articulation on the instrument.

Vibrato Game Plan:

- Listen to professional singers, string performers and wind players to develop your concept and style.
- Remain physically relaxed, and concentrate on the movement of the jaw at the hinge.
- Conceptualize the syllable "wa or va" to create your vibrato. If this is done, the other muscles will only show visible signs of movement at the point where the lower lip meets the mouthpiece.
- *Do not create the vibrato above the pitch.* A vibrato that undulates between slightly below the pitch to the center of the pitch, with a smooth curve (sine wave) at all times, will develop into a spinning vibrato over time.
- Begin slowly, using the metronome to guide the development of your vibrato speed. Use the following guide, only progressing until the vibrato wave becomes unsteady. Stop, and work at that tempo and below until you gain consistency, then move onward.
 - Start with: quarter note = 60, playing one cycle per beat, and increase the speed to 120. Then move to 2 cycles per beat, then 3 cycles per beat, then 4 cycles per beat. Repeat with increased metronome tempo.

In the end, spin the vibrato to achieve the most singing quality possible

Practice Game Plan:

- Long tones and slow intervallic warm-up exercises
- Overtone and voicing exercises
- Technical Study (scales and technical patterns that cover both the normal and the extended altissimo range, articulation exercises. etc.)
- Etude work for both musical, technical and stylistic study
- Repertoire works that cover at least 2 styles or periods of composition
- Playing through works that you studied in the past for both enjoyment and
- Long Tones for Warming down exercises

The End Game Plan

- Plan Structured and organized daily practice sessions. Slow practice and silent practice is key to a successful performance
- Recording practice sessions and accessing development is key
- Daily listening for development of solid conceptual skills and traits
- Attending Concerts of all styles of music to build one's listening experiences
- Become Well Read, Well Listened, Well Disciplined and Well in Health
- Embrace tomorrow's challenges by striving to achieve today's goals

Suggested Etude and Pedagogy Books: Junior High School

TECHNICAL EMPHASIS

Hegvik, Arthur Modern Course for the Saxophone, Books 1-2
Teal, Larry Studies and Time Division

MUSICAL EMPHASIS

Harle, John 100 Easy Classical Studies - Universal
Niehaus, Lennie Basic Jazz Conception
Teal, Larry Melodies for the Young Saxophonist
Voxman, Himie Rubank Beginning and/or Intermediate Method

Etude and Pedagogy Books: High School

TECHNICAL EMPHASIS

Ferling/Mule 48 Studies after Ferling
Gates, Everette Odd Meter Etudes
Hegvik, Arthur Modern Course for the Saxophone, Books 3-5
Klose, H. Daily Exercises for Saxophone
Londeix, J.M. Les Gammes
Kynaston, Trent Daily Studies for All Saxophones *and* Scales and Arpeggios
Teal, Larry 25 Daily Exercises
Teal, Larry Saxophonists Workbook

MUSICAL EMPHASIS

Berbiguier 18 Studies
Ferling/Mule 48 Studies after Ferling
Koechlin, Charles Etudes pour Saxophone and Piano
LaCour, Guy 50 Etudes, Faciles & Progressives
Small, J.L. 27 Melodious and Rhythmical Exercises
Voxman, H Advanced Method 1 and 2
Voxman, H Selected Studies

ALTISSIMO EMPHASIS

Lang, Rosemary Beginning Studies in the Altissimo Register
Rascher, Sigurd Top Tones for Saxophones
Rousseau, Eugene Saxophone High Tones
Sinta, Donald Voicing

www.meridianwinds.com

JAZZ EMPHASIS

Aebersold, Jamey Maiden Voyage, Volume 54
Niehaus, Lennie Intermediate and Advanced Jazz Conception

www.aebersold.com

For additional materials, visit the home page of the MSU Saxophone Studio Website (saxophone.msu.edu) and click on the Saxophone Resource Guide PDF that includes: suggested equipment, texts, literature lists, recordings, and other related information.