

58th Annual Conference
2004 Midwest Clinic

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*Golden Tone Defined: Obtaining Premium Sound
from Your Saxophonists*

Presented by Kenneth Tse

Sponsored by the University of Iowa, Yamaha Corporation of America, and
Vandoren (Dansr, Inc.) USA

I. There are basically two principal ideas when we approach the study of musical sounds:

- **Aesthetics**
- **Acoustics**

1) What is aesthetics in sound?

- Internal realization (psychoacoustics)
- Aesthetics (or esthetics) is a branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of beauty.
- Aesthetics in music—resonance and color (two of the many elements)

2) What is acoustics in sound?

- External manifestation
- Observation of how sound is produced
- Differences between various kinds of sound
- Differences between musical tone and noise
- **Studying the acoustics of the instrument enables one to appreciate more readily where the manufacturer's responsibility ends and where the player takes over.**

II. Unique qualities of the saxophone:

- It has a conical bore which is much larger than other woodwind instruments' (both even and odd number harmonics are amplified)
- It can create fundamentals more easily and the conical tip facilitates evenness of timbre and the extension to altissimo register
- Because of the larger bore, the player, assuming he/she has the proper equipment, needs to have the ability to control a great range of volume, flexibility of intonation, and have considerable influence on tone quality. (Great responsibility comes with great power) One must aim for the best tone possible, not settle for mere sound production.

III. The Aesthetics of Saxophone Tone Production

- 1) Do I have a **concept** of what a good saxophone sound/tone is?
Do I know what saxophonists should NOT sound like?

Listening Exercise:

Remember—listen for the best sound, not the sound you are accustomed to

Excerpt #1 _____

Excerpt #2 _____

Excerpt #3 _____

Excerpt #4 _____

2) Your saxophonists must be able to differentiate between good and bad sound.

3) **A good sound is not defined by any school of method or personal preference. Rather, it is what best represents the essence of the instrument.**

4) Suggestions:

- Play good recording examples so the students can learn aurally. Again, one must be able to define what a good sound is and most importantly, how to achieve it.
- Ask students to attend saxophone recitals in the area.

IV. The Acoustics (physical elements) of Saxophone Tone Production

Besides the concept of a good sound, there are crucial elements that affect tone quality and must be carefully dealt with:

1) Reed

- **The general quality of a reed has a direct correlation to its price.**
 - Personal recommendation: Vandoren, which is most consistent
- Choose the right strength: 2-2 1/2 for beginners and 3-3 1/2 for intermediate to advanced students.
- It needs to have a yellowish-brown or golden color with no green (too young) or brown discolorations (too old or moldy) in the vamp.
- Reeds need to be soaked thoroughly with water before playing and dried properly afterward. *Most of the time, prolonged soaking can help a warped reed (tip and body)
- Reeds need to be stored in reed guards or other commercial holders. I find that a wooden box (cigar boxes for example), with its relatively constant humidity, is one of the best containers for reeds in reed guards.
- Always use a mouthpiece cap when not playing.
- Rotate at least four reeds and discard old, chipped or moldy reeds.

- Make sure the reed is positioned securely and properly on the mouthpiece.
- For other details, please see attached article on reeds.

Problems and Remedies:

Reed too soft?

- Move it up slightly beyond the tip rail but not too much
- Clip the tip of the reed with a commercial reed trimmer (not guaranteed to work)
- Make sure the strength of the reed is correct for the level of the player

Reed too hard?

- Find a reed that plays easily on all registers with a good tone
- Collect all the hard reeds and ask a teacher to adjust
- Make sure the strength of the reed is correct for the level of the player
- If the color of the reed is dark, especially in the heart area, the cane is probably dead and will not vibrate correctly

Squeaky reed?

- Check if the reed seals with the mouthpiece; is it warped?
- Check if the tip is chipped or cracked
- Check if the tip rail of the mouthpiece is not damaged
- Check if the ligature is broken or too loose
- Does the player have correct embouchure, correct tongue position, or excessively puffed cheeks?

2) Air, Oral Cavity and Tongue Position

- Saxophone is the “tuba” of all woodwind instruments.
- Think of air as the fuel of the tone
- Use warm air (Misconception: “one needs to open the throat as in yawning”; one should not force the throat to open while playing)
- Besides achieving articulations, the second function of the tongue is to guide the air stream. Different notes on the saxophone have different tongue positions/oral cavity shapes.
- The larger the saxophone, the less air pressure but greater air quantity is required.
- **In order to play musically and expressively, the amount/speed of air MUST follow the inflection of the music.**
 - *Exercise*—Use correct embouchure and blow air through the mouthpiece (with reed) into the instrument but without sound (by relaxing the embouchure “grip” completely) and finger the notes as in

actual playing; listen carefully to the loudness AND pitches of the air stream. It should reflect the changes in dynamics and fluency of the music. What one hears in the air WILL reflect in the musical sound.

- *This exercise is also very beneficial for ensemble warm up*
- Test for embouchure and air balance using the mouthpiece alone. The student should be able to obtain the following notes on the respective instruments: soprano—concert C; alto—concert A; tenor—concert G; baritone—concert D
- Please see attached spectragrams for effects of different cavity shapes.

3) Embouchure

- It should be almost always formed in a forward “O” shape.
- It is much more flexible than that of the clarinet, which has a different shape—“MU”
- Make sure upper front teeth are placed evenly on top of the mouthpiece and lower lip rolled in comfortably, just enough to cover the lower front teeth.
- Corners of the mouth should wrap around the mouthpiece easily without too much tension.
- The chin should NOT be pointed.
- Embouchure in jazz playing is much more flexible but it does not mean without the proper form.
- Please see attached spectragrams for effects of different embouchure shapes.

4) Equipment

- Although it is not always possible to have the most expensive and best-made instrument for students, one should try to stay with time-and field-tested brands such as Selmer, Yanagisawa, Yamaha, etc.
- Make sure the pads are not leaking—have the instrument checked regularly
- The mouthpiece is another vital part of the saxophone. Make sure the tip opening is suitable for the level of the player—follow the manufacturer’s recommendations.
 - Recommended brands:
 - Classical—Eugene Rousseau (NC4), Selmer (C*), Vandoren (AL3)
 - Jazz—Meyer, Otto Link, Berg Larson

***Our job as music educators, especially instrumental music, is to reconcile the abstract (aesthetics) with the concrete (physical elements) and be able to communicate the result to the students.**

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me:

kenneth-tse@uiowa.edu

(319) 335-1660

<http://www.kenneth-tse.com>

<http://www.uiowa.edu/~musicsax>

Recommended Recordings:

An American Patchwork

Michael Hester, saxophones
(Smooth Stone Productions)

An American Exhibition

Kenneth Tse, saxophone
Mami Nagai, piano
(Crystal Records, CD657)

Extravaganza for Saxophone and Orchestra

Debra Richtmeyer, saxophone
(Albany Records, TROY 593)

“In Memory”

Kenneth Tse, Saxophone
With various artists
(Enharmonic Records, ENCD00-014)

Kenneth Tse, Saxophone

Kari Miller, piano
(Crystal Records, CD 656)

Mixed Company

Michael Jacobson, saxophone
With various artists
(Equilibrium Records)

Saxophone Masterpieces

Eugene Rousseau, saxophone
Jaromir Klepac, piano
(Riix Records, RICA 1001)

Saxophone Vocalise

Eugene Rousseau with the Winds of Indiana, Frederick Fennell, conducting
(Delos 3188)

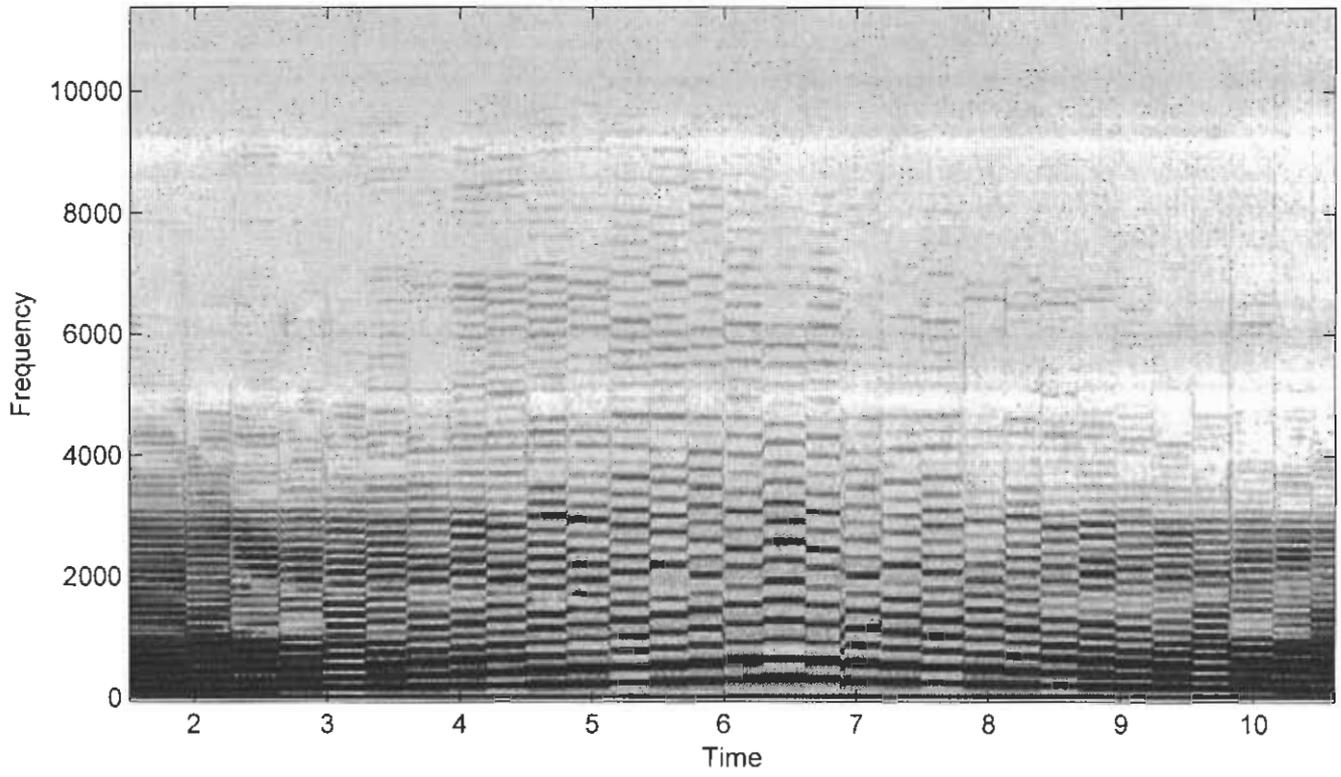
“Sonate”

Kenneth Tse, Saxophone
(Riix Records, RICA-2002)

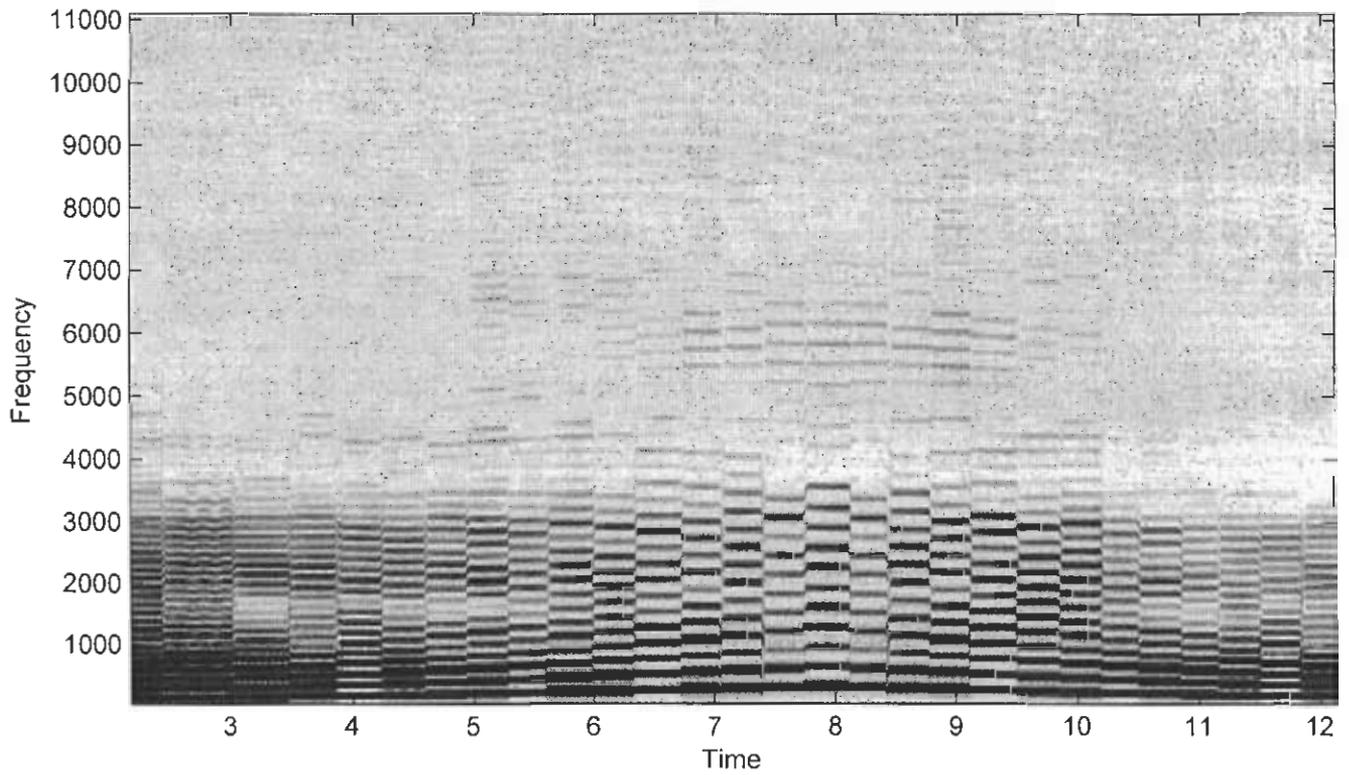
Winds of Change

Fred Hemke, saxophone
R. Finney’s *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Winds*
(New World Records)

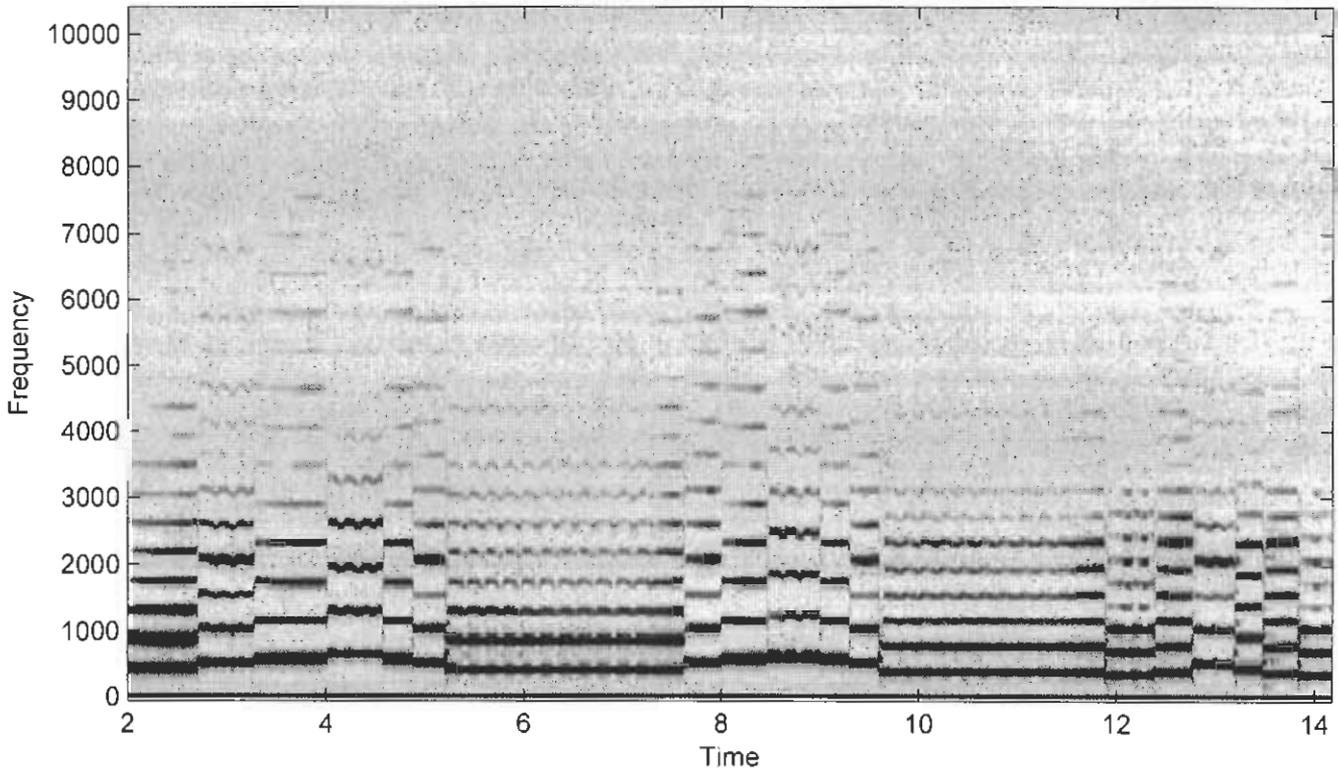
Mu shape



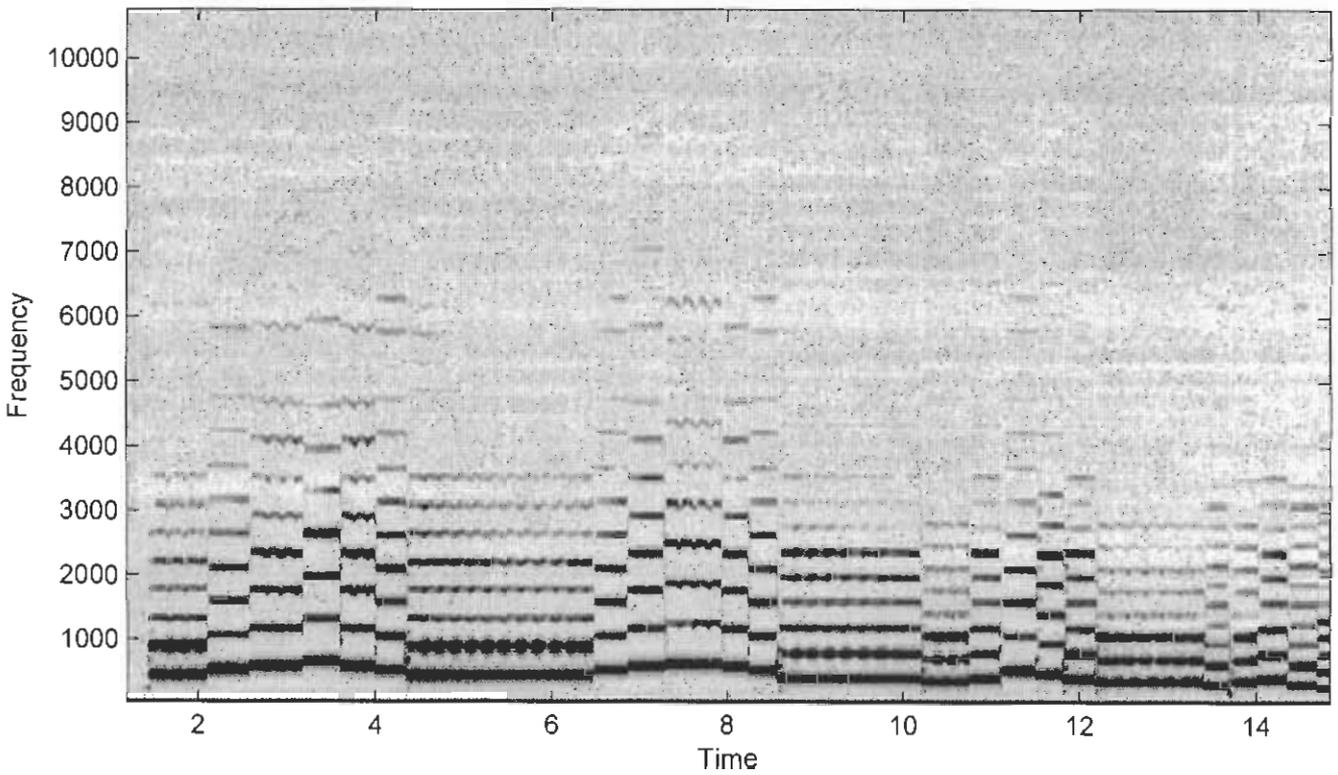
O shape



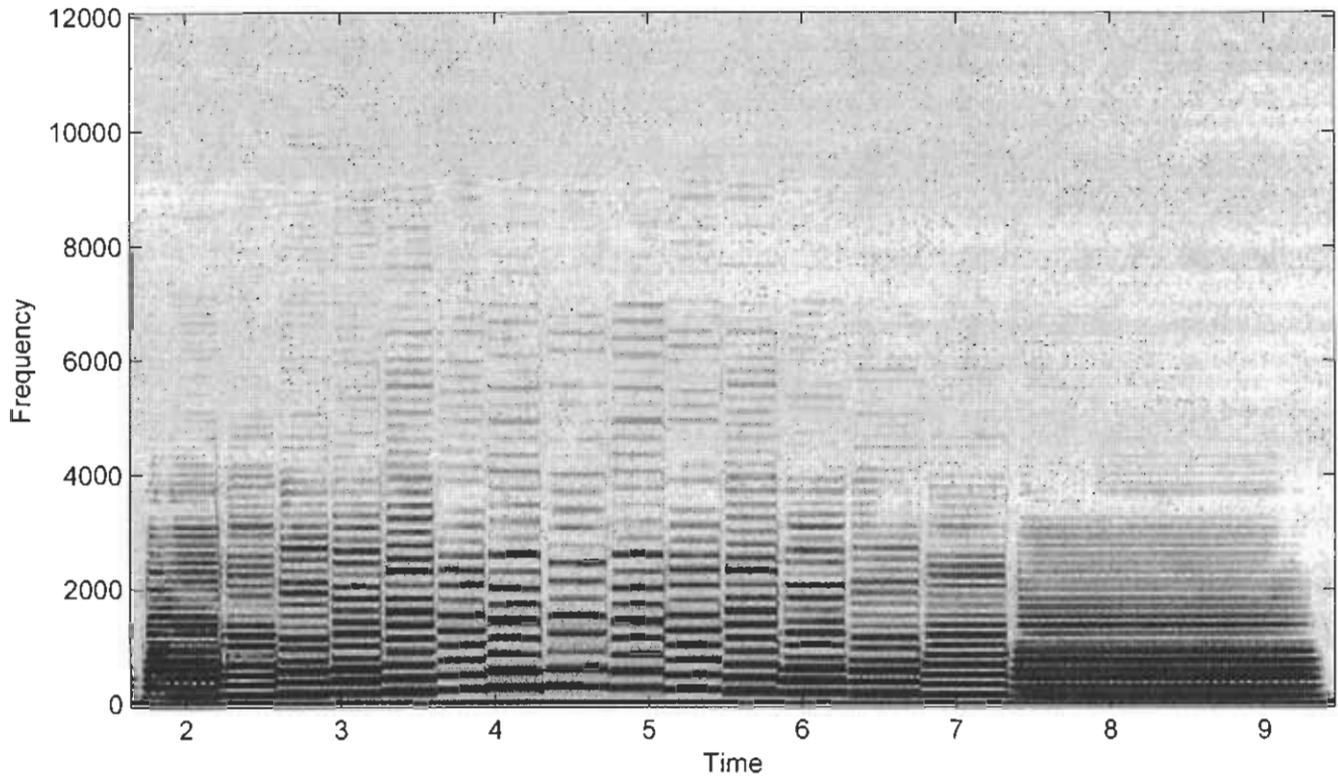
Narrow cavity, fast air



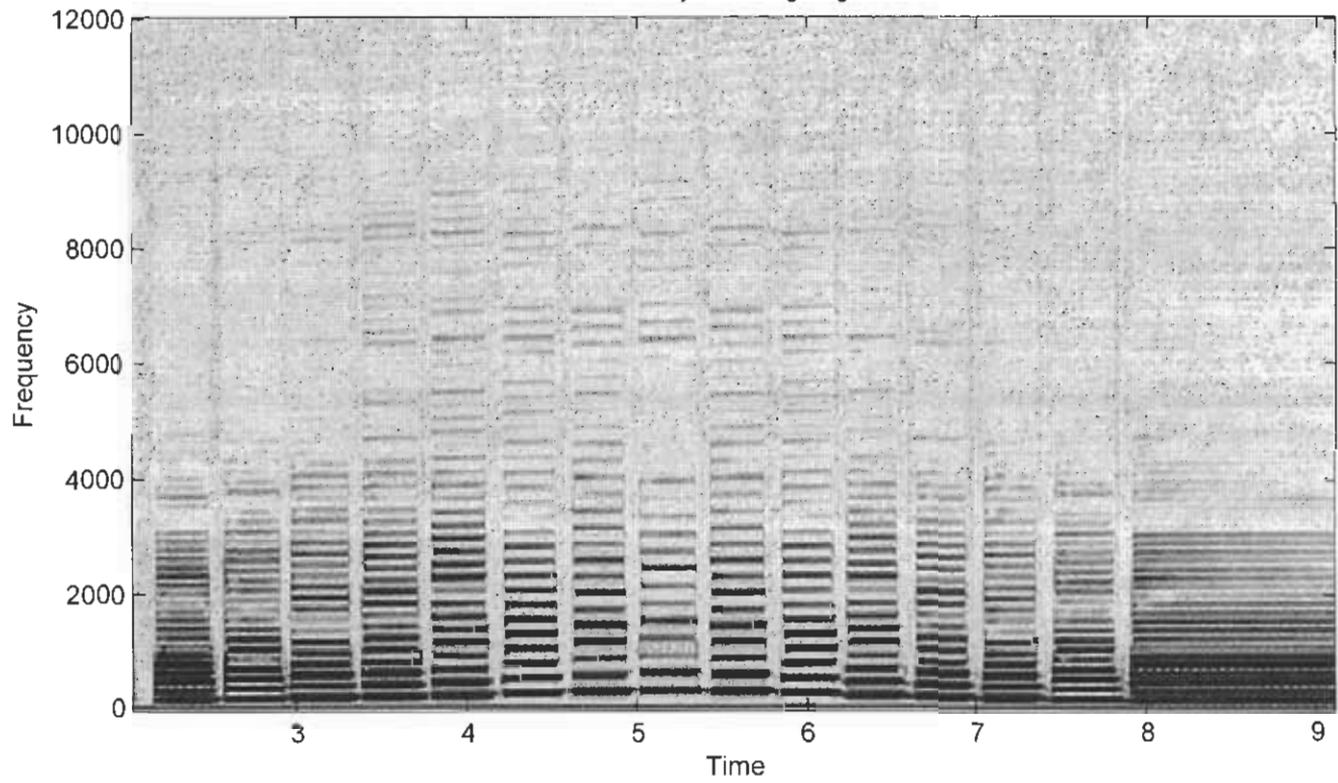
Open cavity, warm air



Light "tu" tonguing



Heavy "ta" tonguing



The University of Iowa Saxophone Studio

Kenneth Tse [cheh]

Selected Repertoire for Beginning through Pre-College Levels

Compiled by Jason Diefenbaugh

2004

Grade I

Solo Repertoire

Benson, Warren	<i>Cantilena</i>	Boosey and Hawkes
Burkhardt, Joel	<i>Chanson</i>	Southern
Hirche, Kathy (arr.)	<i>6 Favorite Classics for Alto Saxophone</i> (solo, duet, small ensemble in 2 parts; w/CD)	Amusica
Hirche, Kathy (arr.)	<i>First 5 for Alto Saxophone</i>	Amusica
Houlik, James	<i>Two Lyric Pieces</i>	Southern
Rousseau, Eugene	<i>Tenor Temperment**</i>	CPP-Belwin
Rousseau, Eugene	<i>Tenor Touchdown**</i>	CPP-Belwin
Rousseau, Eugene	<i>Tribute to the Tenor**</i>	CPP-Belwin

Methods/Etude Book

Harrison, Howard	<i>Amazing Studies for Saxophone</i>	Boosey & Hawkes
Herfurth, Paul C.	<i>A Tune a Day (Books 1 – 3)</i>	Southern
Hovey, Nilo	<i>Rubank Elementary Method</i>	Southern
Labanchi	<i>Concert Etudes (vols. I, II)</i>	***
Perenyi, Peter	<i>222 Studies for Saxophone (Grades I-IV)</i>	Musica Budapest
Rousseau, Eugene	<i>Saxophone Methods (vol. I)</i>	Kjos
Teal, Larry	<i>Saxophonists Manual</i>	Encore

Grade II

Solo Repertoire

Giovannini, Caesar	<i>Romance</i>	Southern
Hirche, Kathy (arr.)	<i>Three Australian Folk Songs</i>	Amusica
Hoffman, Earl	<i>In Modo Trentotto</i>	Southern
Karel, Leon	<i>Hexaphon**</i>	Southern
Karel, Leon	<i>Quintra**</i>	Southern
Lully (arr. Rousseau)	<i>Sombre Woods**</i>	CPP-Belwin
Rose, William James	<i>Aria and Dance**</i>	Southern
Rousseau, Eugene	<i>Londonarry Air</i>	CPP-Belwin

Methods/Etude Book

Hovey, Nilo	<i>First Book of Practical Study</i> <i>for Saxophone</i>	Belwin
Lacour, Guy	<i>50 Etudes Faciles (Book 1)</i>	Billaudot
Mauk, Steve	<i>A Practical Approach to Playing the</i> <i>Saxophone, for Class or Individual Instruction</i>	Lycenm Press
Rousseau, Eugene	<i>Saxophone Methods (vol. II)</i>	Kjos
Teal, Larry	<i>Saxophonists Manual</i>	Encore

Grade III

Solo Repertoire

Barat, J. E.	<i>Berceuse**</i>	Rubank
Borodin, Alexander	<i>Polovetsian Dance**</i>	Rubank
Calliet, Lucien	<i>Theme and Variations</i>	Southern
Dougherty, William	<i>Seven Bagatelles*</i>	Heilman Music
Leeson, Cecil	<i>Concertino</i>	Southern
Leeson, Cecil	<i>Sonata No. 1</i>	Southern

Reed, Alfred	<i>Ballade</i>	Southern
Ribas, Maria Rosa	<i>Sonata</i>	Dorn
Skolnik, Walter	<i>Meditation</i>	Presser
Skolnik, Walter	<i>Sonatina</i>	Tenuto

Methods/Etude Book

Hovey, Nilo	<i>Second Book of Practical Study for Saxophone</i>	Belwin
Pares, Gabriel	<i>Daily Exercises and Scales for Saxophone</i>	Carl Fischer
Teal, Larry	<i>Saxophonists Workbook</i>	Encore
Teal, Larry	<i>Melodies for the Young Saxophonist</i>	***

Grade IV

Solo Repertoire

Bozza, Eugene	<i>Aria</i>	Leduc
Delden, Lex Van	<i>Sonatina</i>	Donemus
Hartley, Walter	<i>Poem**</i>	Presser
Lantier, Pierre	<i>Sicilienne</i>	Leduc
Milhaud, Darius	<i>Dance</i>	International
Purcell, Henry	<i>Two Burres</i>	***
Rueff, Jeanine	<i>Chanson et Passepied</i>	Leduc
Simpson, Roger	<i>Canzona</i>	Waterloo
Williams, Ralph Vaughan	<i>6 Studies in English Folk Song</i>	Galaxy Music
Wirth, Carl Anton	<i>Dark Flows the River</i>	Wirth
Wyman, Lawrence	<i>Rainfall**</i>	Wyman

Methods/Etude Book

Bois, Christopher	<i>25 Airs</i>	Henry Lemoine
Bois, Christopher	<i>28 Etudes and Transpositions</i>	Staff Music
Caravan, Ronald	<i>Preliminary Exercises and Etudes In Contemporary Technique</i>	Dorn
Teal, Larry	<i>Daily Etudes for Saxophone Technique for Saxophone</i>	MMB

Grade V

Solo Repertoire

Benson, Warren	<i>Aeolian Song</i>	MCA
Couf, Herbert	<i>Introduction, Dance, and Furioso*</i>	Bourne
Duckworth, William	<i>A Ballad in Time and Space**</i>	Seesaw
Heiden, Bernhard	<i>Diversion</i>	BMI
Heiden, Bernhard	<i>Solo</i>	AMP/Bote & Bock
Hindemith, Paul	<i>Sonata</i>	Schott
Ibert, Jacques	<i>Histoires</i>	Leduc
Kaufmann, Walter	<i>Meditation</i>	MMB
Moritz, Edvard	<i>Sonata No. 2, Op. 103</i>	Southern
Singelee, Jean-Baptiste	<i>Adagio et Rondo, Op. 63**</i>	Roncorp
Still, William Grant	<i>Romance</i>	Bourne
Tull, Fisher	<i>Sarabande and Gigue</i>	Dorn

Methods/Etude Book

Kynaston, Trent	<i>Daily Studies for All Saxophones</i>	Belwin
Lacour, Guy	<i>50 Etudes Faciles (Book 2)</i>	Billaudot
Rascher, Sigurd	<i>158 Saxophone Exercises</i>	Hal Leonard
Schmidt, William	<i>10 Contemporary Etudes</i>	W.I.M.
Sellner, Joseph	<i>Method (2nd Part)</i>	Billaudot

Grade VI

Solo Repertoire

Creston, Paul	<i>Suite, Op. 6</i>	Shawnee Press
Creston, Paul	<i>Sonata Op. 19</i>	Shawnee Press
Debussy, Claude (arr. Rousseau)	<i>Rhapsody</i>	BMI
Eccles, Henri	<i>Sonata</i>	Elkan-Vogel Co.
Francaix, Jean	<i>Cinque Dances Exotiques</i>	Leduc
Glazunov, Alexander	<i>Concerto, Op. 109</i>	Leduc
Hartley, Walter	<i>Petite Suite*</i>	Fema
Jacobi, Wolfgang	<i>Sonata</i>	Bourne
Lunde, Lawson	<i>Sonata No. 1, Op. 12</i>	Northstar/Southern
Milhaud, Darius	<i>Scaramouche</i>	Southern
Tcherpnine, Alexander	<i>Sonata Sportive</i>	Leduc
Wilder, Alec	<i>Sonata</i>	MMI/B & B
Whitney, Maurice (ed. Rascher)	<i>Introduction and Samba</i>	Bourne
Whitney, Maurice	<i>Rumba</i>	Bourne

Methods/Etude Book

Allard, Joe	<i>Three Octave Scales and Chords</i>	Chas. Colin
Berbiguier (arr. Mule)	<i>18 Exercises</i>	Leduc
Ferling (arr. Mule)	<i>48 Famous Studies</i>	Leduc
Lacour, Guy	<i>12 Studies</i>	Billaudot
Lacour, Guy	<i>24 Easy Atonal Studies</i>	Billaudot
Piazzolla, Astor	<i>Tango-Etudes</i>	Henry Lemoine
Voxman, Himie	<i>Selected Studies</i>	Rubank

*-- *Solo Alto Saxophone*

** -- *Tenor Saxophone and Piano*

Other Solo Collections:

Rascher, Sigurd	<i>Rascher Collection</i>	Woodwind Services
Teal, Larry	<i>Solos for the Alto Saxophone</i>	Schirmer
Teal, Larry	<i>Program Solos for the Alto Saxophone</i>	Presser
Teal, Larry	<i>Solos for the Tenor Saxophone</i>	Schirmer
Voxman, Himie	<i>Concert and Collection</i>	Rubank

Suggested methods for rhythm:

Haines/McEntyre	<i>Division of Beat (Books 1A, 1B, 2)</i>	Southern
Whaley, Garwood	<i>Basics in Rhythm (2 vols.)</i>	***
Teal, Larry	<i>Studies in Time Division</i>	Encore

Suggested methods for jazz, and jazz improvisation:

Aebersold, Jamey	<i>Volumes 24, 2, 3, 16</i>	Jamey Aebersold
Niehaus, Lenny	<i>Basic Jazz Conception for Saxophone</i>	Try Publishing Co.
Niehaus, Lenny	<i>Intermediate Jazz Conception</i>	Try Publishing Co.
Niehaus, Lenny	<i>Advanced Jazz Conception for Saxophone</i>	Try Publishing Co.
Snidero, Jim	<i>Jazz Conception, 21 Solo Etudes for Jazz Phrasing, Interpretation and Improvisation (w/CD)</i>	Advance Music
Ricker, Ramon	<i>Advanced Chord Studies for Saxophone</i>	Leduc
Ricker, Ramon	<i>Etudes on the Diminished Scale for Saxophone</i>	Leduc
Ricker, Ramon	<i>Jazz Etudes on the Pentatonic Scale for Saxophone</i>	Leduc



YAMAHA

Educator Series

WIND INSTRUMENTS



Kenneth Tse

For information on the author, please visit:
www.kenneth-tse.com

Who Wants to Talk About Reeds?

By *Kenneth Tse*

Introduction

Although literature on single reeds or reeds in general is not extensive, there have been quite a few scholastic books and articles published in the last century. However, some of them are either out of print or in journals – such as the Journal of the Acoustical Society of America – that are difficult to obtain or to understand for most young musicians.

Despite many guides on reeds, whether it is K. S. Jaffrey's scholarly-written treatise *Reed Mastery* in 1956 or commercially-conceived handbook "The Reed Guide" by George Kirch in 1983, single reed musicians continue to struggle and lament over their piles of cane.

"...there is nothing new under the sun," the Bible says. Indeed, many methods have been tried and re-tried. Sophisticated equipment has been developed to aid the musicians to find or create the "perfect" reed. Nonetheless, struggles remain and the subject of reeds has increasingly become, at least in the writer's experience, a taboo topic of our time.

Brief Anatomy of Reeds

The basic material from which reeds are made is called the *Arundo donax* (or "The Great Reed"). All double reeds, single reeds, and even bagpipe reeds are made from this unique perennial grass. Mature canes have a yellowish-brown hue and are suitable for reed making. It is an extremely slow-growing grass that takes at least three to five years to become a usable cane. Perhaps because of the high demand and production schedule, some companies use immature canes for their reed products, which requires a longer storage period.

Arundo donax's unique textural structure consists of hard and soft fibers. The hard outer shells are composed mostly of silica, mica, manganese, magnesium and other hard elements. Secretion of wax and silica compound gives the cane its hardness and shine. Interspersed between the hard fibers are the soft spongy cells that are composed mostly of carbohydrates.

The Function of the Reed and Its Effect in Acoustics

Being a tone generator, the reed is a very important part of the instrument – even more so than the resonator, which is the bore of the mouthpiece and the instrument. Whether the reed is balanced or not affects the vibration of the air column and hence affects the fundamental tone. Although the effects on a cylindrical bore (clarinet) might be less than a conical one (saxophone) given their acoustical differences, a poorly made or adjusted reed amplifies those effects.

Most reed instruments have the same physical phenomenon in producing sound: as air is forced through the reed, the increased airflow pulls and closes the gap between the mouthpiece and the reed and releases a burst of air into the bore of the instrument. The strength of the natural arch of the reed plus the return of the air wave reflected from the body of the instrument forces the reed to open and allows it to release another burst of air into the instrument, resulting in a valve-like function. Therefore, the quality of the reed and balance of its side rails are of utmost importance.



Kenneth Tse

Selecting and Working with Reeds

In selecting a reed:

- It needs to have a yellowish-brown or golden color with no green (too young) or brown discolorations (too old or moldy) in the vamp.
- Straight, evenly spaced hard fibers across the tip with no blank spaces. (The function of the soft spongy soft fiber cells is to control the reed so that it will not vibrate too freely. If there is an excessive amount of hard fiber, the reed will sound harsh. On the other hand, however, if there are too many soft fiber cells [blank spaces] waterlogging can be a problem and the reed will sound dull.)
- The surface of the vamp should be smooth.
- It does not matter whether the reed has a U-shape vamp shoulder (American cut) or a horizontal vamp shoulder (French cut). But do make sure the vamp is uniformly cut; some reeds are thicker on one side.
- The butt end/heel of the reed needs to have a relatively high arch. Low arch means the reed is made from a cane that has large diameter, which will not make a good reed.
- The heart of the reed needs to show an inverted U-shape under the light. A large area of dark shadow means the reed is possibly too thick in the middle. A reed with an oddly shaped heart does not vibrate well.
- Choose the right strength: 2-2.5 for beginners and 3-3.5 for intermediate to advanced students.

In working with reeds:

- To test if a reed fits the mouthpiece properly-put the bottom hole of mouthpiece in the center of your palm and seal it properly. Suction out the air from the mouthpiece. Then quickly take the mouthpiece out of the mouth without removing it from the palm. A popping sound should occur after a few seconds; that indicates the reed is fitting properly.
- To test the balance and strength of a reed:
 - To check the balance of the sides and back of the reed, blow through each tip corner and play the middle to low register (clarinet: throat and chalumeau registers; saxophone: Bb to low Bb).
 - Check the balance of (1) and (3) [see "Parts of the reed"] using a lamp: soak a reed with water, point the reed toward the light and, watching from the butt end of the reed, push up the end tips of the reed, one side at a time, gently with the index finger. If the balance is right, the reflected light on the reed should show that both sides should bend up about the same amount. Adjust the side where it seems too hard to bend.

– If the reed is too hard-Using a reed knife or a Dutch/reed rush, scrape cane from the area (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6) that is too thick (mostly 1 and 3); if both sides are balanced but lower register is hard to blow, scrape area 4, 5, or 6. Please note that adjustments in areas 2 and 5 should be minimum. Any adjustment to the tip is neither recommended nor necessary in most cases.

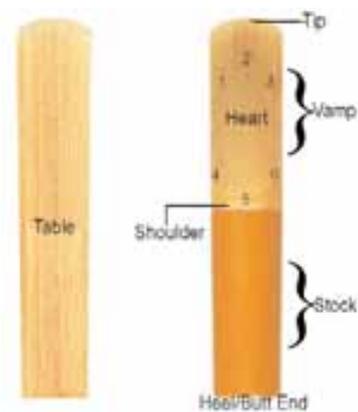
– If the reed is too soft-

Move it slightly beyond the tip of the mouthpiece and/or

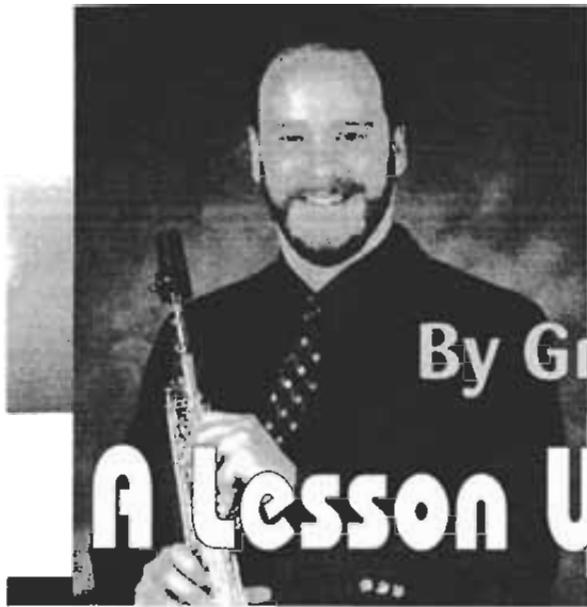
Clip a small amount off the tip using a reed trimmer.

Final notes to Band Directors

- Reeds need to be soaked thoroughly with water before playing and dried properly afterward.
- PLEASE NOTE: a warped reed does not mean it is a bad reed. It only means that the reed was dried unevenly or there are too many soft cells in the cane. Teach students to dry reeds with the table facing upward. If warped, soak the reed for a longer time until normal; there is no need to press the tip against the mouthpiece table.
- Reeds need to be stored in reed guards or other commercial holders. The author finds that a wooden box (cigar boxes for example), with its relatively constant humidity, is one of the best containers for reed guards.
- Always use a mouthpiece cap when not playing.
- Rotate at least four reeds and discard old, chipped or moldy reeds.
- The general quality of a reed has direct correlation to its price.



Parts of the reed



By Greg Banaszak

A Lesson With Kenneth Tse

After his 1996 Carnegie Hall debut *The New York Times* heralded Tse as "a young virtuoso" and the *Herald Times* described his playing as "virtuosic brilliance" with a "beau-teous, ever-so-smooth voice." Primarily self-taught as a youth, and a former student of distinguished saxophonist Eugene Rousseau at Indiana University, Tse performed throughout Asia with the Asian Youth Orchestra under the direction of, among others, Sir Yehudi Menuhin, Samuel Wong, and Alexander Schneider. He has appeared as a soloist with the Hong Kong Sinfonietta, Hong Kong Wind Philharmonia, Indiana University Wind Ensemble, Baylor University Wind Ensemble, Lamar University Wind Ensemble, Emory University Wind Ensemble, Atlanta Youth Wind Symphony, and Des Moines Symphony, among others. His Japanese debut in 1997 included recitals at the Tokyo College of Music, Ginza Yamaha Hall, Kunitachi School of Music, and Showa College of Music, where he gave the Japanese premiere of David Maslanka's *Sonata*. As the classical saxophone capital of Asia, Japan welcomed Tse as a young musician with the maturity of a seasoned virtuoso. Tse has recorded on Crystal Records, RIAX Records, and Enharmonic Records. Several important American composers have written pieces for him; they include saxophone sonatas, concerti, chamber music, and solo works by David DeBoor Canfield, John Cheetham, and Leonard Mark Lewis.

Kenneth Tse is a graduate of Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and Indiana University (BM, MM and AD). He was the first saxophonist to receive the prestigious Artist Diploma from the Indiana University School of Music. Tse also received an honorary life membership from



the Contemporary Record Society. Formerly Professor of Saxophone at the University of Missouri before joining the faculty at the University of Iowa, he also serves as the membership director for the North American Saxophone Alliance. As a Yamaha Performing Artist and Vandoren endorsed artist, Tse is an active international performer, adjudicator, and clinician.

HOW TO PRACTICE

Whether it is with my own students or when I give master classes in different settings, very often the question of how to practice comes up. My answer is always as such: it is not how to practice, but rather, how to practice efficiently. I like to use the illustration of a typical Chinese dinner to describe one's practice routine. For those of you who are not familiar with a traditional Chinese dinner, you are presented with not one but several courses:

fish, pork, chicken, soup, etc. Yes, it is a lot of work on the part of the mother and whether you like them or not, you must eat them all. It is rude and also unhealthy not to eat the balanced meal that one's mother has prepared so lovingly.

What does practicing have to do with a Chinese meal? One could basically divide the routine into technical and musical areas. Technical development includes long tones, vibrato exercises, scales, and articulation exercises. It is beneficial to practice long tone without vibrato, from *ppp* to *fff* and *fff* to *ppp*, while focusing on air support and tone quality. When working on vibrato exercises, use the whole range of the instrument and various dynamic levels. Alternate straight tone and tone with vibrato MM 76-82. (4 undulations per beat). Practice scales employing various patterns, articulations, dynamic levels, as well as incorpo-

rating altissimo. Articulation exercises are most productive when applied throughout the full range of the instrument, at a variety of tempi. Learning and reviewing etudes is important to musical development, as well as expanding literature. Repertoire should span different eras and categories, to include solo, with piano, with orchestra and band, orchestral excerpts, and chamber music with saxophones and other instruments.

PRIORITIZING IN YOUR PRACTICE ROUTINE

How should one prioritize the above areas and create an efficient and yet balanced diet (similar to the food nutritional pyramid) for a practice routine? I ask students which area should be on the bottom of the pyramid (namely the rice and pasta group or fruit and vegetables group) and which area belongs to the meat and dessert food group. They often answer that solo repertoire is more important (therefore should be in the pasta and vegetable groups), and scales along with other technical exercises are just warm up exercises (placing them near the top of the pyramid). The immediate response to this answer is that it sounds quite true. However, after careful consideration I believe that the answer should be the opposite with technical development on the bottom of the pyramid and literature as dessert.

I am not at all implying, by any means, that one should spend four hours every day practicing scales and one hour on literature: if so, my students would be the first to complain. But concentration, perfection, and creativity are the key words. Warm-up exercises are not something you just do, they require as much attention, if not more, as playing repertoire and etudes. To put it differently, warm-up exercises go beyond preparing one's body and mind. When a player is secure technically, literature studying becomes a sweet dessert otherwise it can be a struggle.

One's practice warm-up session should also be a time of creativity. Mindless repetition, including strict and unchanging routines, only create boredom leading to. In other words, one should find and experiment with different recipes and ultimately create your own practice warm-up structure that is beneficial and suited to your needs.

RESTING AS MUCH AS PRACTICING

I recommend students to rest as much as they practice. Let us assume that a student has four hours in a particular day to practice. The first hour should consist of ten minutes for long tones, five to ten minutes with vibrato exercise, ten to fifteen minutes doing articulation exercises, and thirty to forty minutes practicing scales. The second hour should be spent reviewing old, and starting new, etudes. I suggest spending the last two hours practic-

ing literature, including lyrical and technical issues, contemporary techniques, etc.

For many the motivation to begin practicing is very important but often lacking. It is vital, therefore, to start with a warm-up exercise that motivates you and is relevant to your total daily goal. Quite often after the first six minutes of practicing one's readiness and mood will set in for the rest of the day. That is why it is especially imperative to treat the start of the day carefully.

THREE SUGGESTED EXERCISES

Before I leave the topic of practicing I would like to suggest three exercises that I often ask my students to incorporate into their routine. The first is to practice with fingers only. Besides saving some chops, listening to the key clicks is also very important especially when one is practicing difficult passages or fast moving patterns. If the student can hear an even key-clicking sound chances are they will be played evenly. There are rhythms to the clicks. Frequently that is how the student and I realize exactly which note or notes are causing the problem.

The second technique involves practicing with only the air. We all know that we are playing a wind instrument. However, rarely do I hear people talking about practicing with air only and listening carefully to how one is manipulating and using the air stream. Whenever I hear a student playing a musical phrase without any expression, I ask them to finger the notes and blow air into the horn (while loosening the embouchure so no sound is produced). I can often barely hear any wind sound from the horn. To put it simply, if you cannot hear the inflections in your use of the air stream (the different dynamics or air speed), chances are you cannot hear the inflections or expressions in the music.

Last but not least, think. Fortunately and unfortunately, I was mostly self-taught for the first eight or nine years of my saxophone study. It was unfortunate because I lost some valuable time and guidance, but fortunate because I was forced to do much research myself and had time to think. May I suggest that when you are not playing the saxophone, while you are eating, resting, or commuting, that you analyze, meditate, and dwell on your technical or musical problems. Very often solutions emerge from vigilant thinking. Be creative in your approach. I found that the time I spent in searching for my own answers have carried me a long way through the different roles as a student, performer, and teacher. Remember, your teacher is only yours once a week. For the remaining time you are your own teacher.

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SAXOPHONE REPERTOIRE EXCEEDS THE CELLO

In a recent conversation with Monsieur Jean-Marie Londeix, who was preparing a new edition of his book *150 Years of Music for Saxophone*, he revealed that there are currently over twenty thousand solo and chamber works written for the saxophone, and still counting. This number excludes orchestral pieces that call for the saxophones. Moreover, Monsieur Londeix explained that according to figures from publishers, we are experiencing the first time in history where the demand for printing and sale of saxophone music exceeds that of the cello. As a friend of mine rightly put it, "there is too much music and too little time."

With this vast number of repertoire available to us how does one know which are good pieces to study and perform? There are many approaches to finding good compositions. First of all the most common way would be through the suggestions and often the requirement of one's teacher. Thanks to internet technology, and the innovative spirit of many teachers, there are currently quite a few saxophone studios from different universities that have their studio websites available online. One would certainly find very valuable information regarding the study of the saxophone and also the syllabus repertoire list of that particular school. Of course there are pieces that we all agree to be the standard repertoire such as the Creston *Sonata*, Ibert *Concertino da Camera*, Glazounov *Concerto* and Desenclos *Prelude, Cadence, et Finale*. And then there are some that are required, in some schools, as standard repertoire but not in others. Whatever the case maybe, they are at least much shorter lists to be investigated and most of these compositions have been performed and accepted by many.

One could also follow the trace of various well known composers for our instrument. A few that came to mind are Jindrich Feld, Bernhard Heiden, Walter Hartley, Christian Luba, Libby Larsen, Pierre-Max Duhois, Robert Muczynski, Ida Gotkovsky, etc. Obviously, they all present very different styles and challenges but certainly we could all learn from their music and the result is sure to be rewarding.

I ask my students periodically to give a new music presentation. We are blessed to have the well respected Eble Music Company in down town Iowa City and I like to ask the students to go treasure hunting. Once in a frequent while, one would bump into Dr. Himie Voxman or Mr. Charles Eble lurking at a corner of the store researching as well. The students would then choose music that are rarely played or are virtually unknown. Each student then studies and performs the piece and also gives historical, analytical, and technical information on that particular piece. This is one of the great ways for everyone to learn and discover compositions that have often been missed in the pile.

BUILDING A LEGITIMATE CAREER IN MUSIC

It is very ironic to me that when I was a beginning student the legitimacy of building a career in music was always present. Whether it was from my parents, relatives, friends, or myself, this question always emerged in thoughts and conversations. No one seemed to know how

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to answer it. Now that I am on the other side of the table as a teacher I find myself having the untold obligation of answering others the same question.

Let us assume that the readers here are determined to make a living in music. Regrettably, many institutions today do not offer courses or seminars on career building. That leaves us no choice but to learn on our own. Often after the students receive their degrees, whether they are undergraduates or graduates, few have any clue on where to start. I would like to offer some suggestions.

Begin by building your resume while you are in school. If you are a performer, perform as much as possible, whenever and wherever. You must take the initiative yourself instead of waiting to be invited. Perform also for venues such as nursing homes, convalescent centers, and community events; they will give you an idea of what music is all about. If you are in music education, learn how to practice so you can teach. Build a good sound concept; start to memorize great sound around you so you can recreate it. Prepare yourself to succeed, not just to get by.

Start early in collaborating with your friends in different schools, and by attending national and international conferences to stimulate your vision. Participate in various competitions. Competitions are good as long as one does not take the result, winning or losing, too seriously.

Have you thought about making a recording? When you are ready send demo tapes to record companies, you never know what might happen. I also suggest acquiring various skills. Acquire a different skill. Saxophone is only one of the tools with which to express yourself. Learn conducting, singing, or a different instrument, for example. Be marketable. Besides your ability as a musician, try learning other skills such as computing, accounting, cooking, marketing, or whatever suits your personality.

When a job situation in music does not work out, one can always use another skill to survive and carry on until other opportunities present themselves. Most of all, build confidence and decisiveness in whatever you do. §

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