

Thurs 8:00 am Quick Take  
1/23/20

## Let's Talk Sax...

Skip Vandelight – Central Methodist University  
2020 MMEA In-Service Workshop/Conference

### *The First Four Inches*

- Mouthpieces/Ligatures
  - Hard plastic or Hard rubber mouthpieces
  - This is a good upgrade for students who might not be able to afford a new horn
  - Not all mouthpieces are the same, you may have to find a ligature that “fits” the mouthpiece
  - Check for “grooves” in the top of the mouthpiece, especially for students who are playing on an older horn and mouthpiece.
- Reeds
  - Inexpensive reeds work fine for beginners. I like 2.5 strength
  - For intermediate and advanced players – better quality reeds and stronger strength
  - What does a good reed look like?  
Heart, grain, color
  - Reed prep – filing or sandpaper (600 grit) helps take roughness off back of reed and get a better seal on the mouthpiece.
  - “Pop” test
  - Flattening the “waves”
  - Cane vs synthetic
- General Thoughts
  - Store reeds in a reed guard (great value for cost vs what it can do)
  - Mouthpiece and reed – pitch is concert A
  - NEVER let them leave the reed on the horn
  - Encourage students to have horns looked at EVERY year for leaks etc. Do the same with school saxes.

### *Embouchure*

- Basic set-up
  - Teeth on top of the mouthpiece
  - Bottom lip is a cushion
  - Flat and firm chin but not pointed (like clarinet)
  - Good check is to play low “f” at forte and have someone depress octave key. Should pop up and return back when you release it.
- Some things you can say to help them visualize or feel the correct embouchure
  - Drinking a thick milkshake through a straw without collapsing the straw. This will make them have equal pressure on all sides and not bite.
  - Think of trying to cool something hot you put into your mouth.
  - Muscles around the embouchure work like a rubber band or drawstring.
  - Think of whistling or saying “doo” or “ooo”

### *Tone Quality*

- Two accepted sounds.
  - French sound (Marcel Mule) violin-like. Brighter with faster vibrato
  - American sound (Larry Teal) clarinet-like. Darker with slower vibrato
  - For your band players, I like to tell them to sound like a French horn.
  - Vibrato is a MUST for soloists. Sax vibrato is jaw vibrato. Yaw, Yaw, Yaw (Actually Voo, Voo, Voo)
  - Have students listen to singers, string players, and professional sax players to hear how to use vibrato.
  - Can do it with a metronome in the beginning and do quarters, eighths, triplets, sixteenths.
  - Louder notes – wider vibrato, Softer notes – narrower. Lower notes – wider vibrato, higher notes – narrower.

### *Fingerings*

- Teach Bb with A and the bottom side key on the right. (Not 1<sup>st</sup> finger on each hand)
- Bis Bb. Very handy and will increase facility in certain keys
- Fork high F
- Fork high E
- Teach chromatic C and chromatic F#. Make them use them.
- Find studies, even for younger players, that will make them use the lowest and highest registers. Those tend to be the most troublesome for soloists.

Bis Bb

Fork E

Fork F



### *Harmonics*

- Build harmonics off of the overtone series
- "Top-Tones for the Saxophone" by Sigurd Rascher
- Find different fingerings by Googling altissimo sax fingerings
- There are different fingerings that work for alto, tenor, and bari sax