



Getting the Most From Your Jazz Sax Section



Butch Eversole, Palmer Ridge HS
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Slide Show Link

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1cludMxkpsFp_Q43c4I5v4bjKyL1D00PWGs7c0s9VXjg/edit?usp=sharing

First...the Disclaimer

The information provided here is based on my experience as a saxophonist and teacher. It is largely my OPINION. There are other ideas and solutions that work as well, or maybe better.

I hope that you can take away a few things that will help your students, your bands, and your teaching. If you find just one idea that works for you, then I will consider this presentation a success!

Overview

Saxophonists must become musically bilingual to perform in both 'classical/traditional' styles and jazz styles.

What is appropriate and works in concert band may often be offensive in jazz band--and vice versa!

Overview

We'll take a look at the following areas to discover the best ways students can make the necessary adaptations to perform the jazz style and language:

Equipment

Vibrato

Technique

Jazz Sax Section Specifics

Tone

Jazz Stylistic Considerations

Articulation

(This presentation won't address improvisation).

Equipment

The best and easiest way to switch between jazz and classical playing is through the use of genre-specific mouthpieces and reeds.

Equipment

Mouthpieces

Use a jazz-specific mouthpiece for jazz band ONLY. Jazz mouthpieces will generally have a larger tip opening.

The shape of the inside of the mouthpiece is different with some aspects exaggerated. The resulting sound is louder and brighter (or at least with some edge from upper overtones).

A larger tip opening allows for more nuance and variability, but also comes with pitch control issues.

Equipment- mouthpieces

Alto- Meyer 5, medium Chamber; Vandoren (V16, Java, Jumbo Java); D'Addario Select Jazz 5M, Yanagisawa 5- stick with hard rubber

Tenor- Vandoren; D'Addario Select Jazz 6M; Otto Link; hard rubber is the easiest transition; advanced players can try metal.

Bari- Yanagisawa, Vandoren; D'Addario; Meyer

Soprano- start with a more 'classical mouthpiece' (Selmer C*, stock Yamaha) for control. Then consider those on the alto list.

Equipment- Reeds

Use a Jazz cut reed, and for jazz band ONLY. These are cut with less wood in the heart of the reed and will be brighter.

Suggestions: Vandoren Java (Green box or Red box); D'Addario Jazz Select, Rigotti Gold; Generally $\frac{1}{2}$ strength less than classical setup due to the larger tip opening of a jazz mouthpiece. Softer reeds allow for more nuance and shaping, but come with pitch control issues.

Note: If a student keeps struggling/changing reeds during a several consecutive rehearsals, the problem may likely be the horn needs repair.

Equipment- Horn Model Suggestions

Yamaha 475 or 480 (intermediate), 62, 82, 875

Selmer Series II or III, Reference 36 or 54 (don't know much about Selmer intermediate horns)

Yanagisawa

P. Muriat

Eastman

Cannonball?

Technique

Classical/traditional/concert band teaching will develop necessary technique, intonation, core sound production, etc. needed for jazz saxophone playing.

Technique

Horn positioning

Alto- middle or side is fine. Side is better for some students based on torso length (height...younger and/or shorter students)

Tenor- side

Bari- side

Soprano- middle, but head up!

Technique

Instrument Assembly

- The Horn comes to the Player!!
- Bring neckstrap up!! Head should not be reaching down; mouthpiece comes to mouth, not vice versa.
- Adjust the neck and mouthpiece—the horn shouldn't be assembled symmetrically. Make the horn fit the player. No head turned sideways.

Tone

- Tone is THE most important aspect of all playing
- The core and principles to a good sound is still the same for both classical and jazz. AIR.
- Classical (also called “traditional”)- ‘darker’, ‘rounder’; ‘pure’.
- Jazz- ‘brighter’; lots of latitude; Reed/Mouthpiece will help provide a difference.
- Students need a tonal concept/ model. They have to listen to jazz players to develop the proper concept!

Articulation

Jazz articulation will likely make the most difference in your section's playing.

The mechanics/technique for jazz articulation is the same as traditional styles.

Articulation

“Classical” Articulation

The ‘rule’ is NEVER tongue-stop. (Though every rule is broken at some point).

Articulate exactly as marked- don’t add slurs or tonguing for ‘convenience.’

Exception: hiding tonguing under a slur to help with a skip, or other edits for musical reasons.

Articulation

Jazz Articulation

The 'rule' is ALWAYS tongue-stop (though every rule is broken).

Long 'slurs' mean phrase should be connected, but generally 'back-accented'

Suggested resources: Niehaus Jazz Conception; Snidero Jazz Conception

Articulation

Practice articulation with scales.

(Be sure students don't clip ends of slurs and/or 'swing' rhythm too much).



Articulation

Lennie Niehaus “Jazz Conception” is a great resource for learning the articulation of the jazz language:

[Niehaus Demo](#)

Articulation

Jazz Articulation

Ghost notes – If a descending skip is hard to play—ghost it.

Demo: [“Autumn” from Snidero’s Jazz Conception](#)

Articulation

Jazz Articulation

EXAGGERATE JAZZ ARTICULATIONS

Stronger accents

Accent = Air + Tongue (more tongue for jazz style)

Too legato, no accents = “Easy Listening”

Vibrato

- a. Jaw vibrato
- b. Frequency- Rate, or speed of vibrato
- c. Amplitude- Depth or width of vibrato
- d. Classical- usually faster and even
- e. Jazz- slower, varied rate for expressive effect, width can be more personalized

Jazz Sax Section

Understanding the role of each part

Chord voicings- usually in score order

LEAD ALTO, not another stronger player

Loudest in section, but other parts need to be full

1st tenor is the Solo chair (and not the section lead)

Many MS and easy HS tunes put the solo in lead alto; MOVE solos to other players!

Jazz Sax Section

Understanding the role of each part

Bari- Sometimes with sax section, sometimes with bass instruments

Bari volume should ideally be close to lead alto

2nd tenor is the hardest part to play, with all the leftover notes of the chord.

Section UNISON- balance to TENORS, not lead alto!

Jazz Sax Section

Section Articulation

Lead alto should set the style and articulation (with director or student input as needed).

When section matches the articulation, it will sound much cleaner

Consider Accents, Back-accenting, and ghosting

If the lead player articulates well, it helps the section sound OK.

Jazz Sax Section

Stylistic considerations

Vibrato

None when unison

Lots from lead alto

Entire section on occasion

Jazz Sax Section

Stylistic Considerations

“Scoops” and “Bends”

When over-used or poorly performed, conveys an an immature style

Don't allow over-scooping (like a pop singer singing classical)

Jazz Sax Section

Stylistic Considerations- Scoops and Bends

****Use 1/2-step grace note slur instead of a lip scoop****

Advanced players can combine with lip, then only lip

Demo: ["Autumn" from Snidero's Jazz Conception](#) (m. 33)

Bends require more air

Use chromatic/scalar glisses (minor 3rd?) for wider bends

Jazz Sax Section

Stylistic Considerations

Subtone- light, airy, fuzzy, tone.

Use only when specified; don't over use.

Jazz Sax Section

Building a Sax Section

ANY decent woodwind player can learn to double on sax quickly and easily.

Opens the possibility to use woodwind doubles on more advance HS lit.

More than 5 players? Double 2nd tenor first, don't double lead alto.

Less than 5 players? Drop 2nd tenor first

Ideally 3 players- Alto, tenor, bari.

Resources

Jim Snidero "Jazz Conception" series, published by Advance Music

Easy Jazz Conception for the Saxophone Section

Easy Jazz Conception, Intermediate Jazz Conception, and Jazz Conception.

Etudes with recordings, available for ALL jazz instruments.

Resources

Lennie Niehaus “*Jazz Conception*” books

Basic Volume I and II, [Intermediate](#), Advanced, Duets

Jazz Conception for Sax Section (2 volumes?), with Rhythm section.

[Colorado All State Jazz Audition music](#)

QUESTIONS??

Reach out to me at any time!!

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About Raleigh E. Eversole, IV

Raleigh E. Eversole, IV, is in his 27th year of public school teaching in Colorado. “Butch” is the Academic Chair for the Performing Arts and Director of Bands at Palmer Ridge High School. He is a member of the inaugural faculty and served on the Core Planning Team for Palmer Ridge. Prior to his position at Palmer Ridge High School, Butch taught at Lewis-Palmer High School, Manitou Springs High School and Manitou Springs Middle School. He has taught saxophone at Colorado College and conducted at the LeBam International Summer Band Camp in Beirut, Lebanon. His groups have performed seven times at the CMEA Conference and five times at the Music for All National Festival. Butch holds a Bachelor of Arts in music education from Shepherd University in West Virginia and a Master of Music in saxophone performance from the University of Northern Colorado.

Butch remains active as a saxophonist, performing regularly with the Springs Contemporary Jazz Big Band, the Academy Jazz Ensemble, and the pop-rock horn combo Pourly Edukated. Other free-lance opportunities have included appearances with such diverse artists as the Colorado Springs Philharmonic, the Chamber Orchestra of the Springs, the Temptations, Dan Akroyd, and Trisha Yearwood.

Butch is a Past-President of the Colorado Music Educators Association (CMEA). He has also served as Chair of the CMEA Instrumental Council and as the Southern Region Representative to the Colorado Bandmasters Association. Other professional memberships include Phi Beta Mu and Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia. Mr. Eversole was the 2010 Colorado designee in *School Band and Orchestra* magazine’s “50 Directors Who Make a Difference,” was named the 2012 “Distinguished Arts Teacher” by the Pikes Peak Arts Council, and was the 2020 recipient of the Phi Beta Mu, Kappa Chapter “Outstanding Bandmaster” award. He resides in Monument with his wife, Cynthia (also an LPSD music educator), and their 15-year old twins. In his spare time, he enjoys ice-fishing at his estate in Hawaii.