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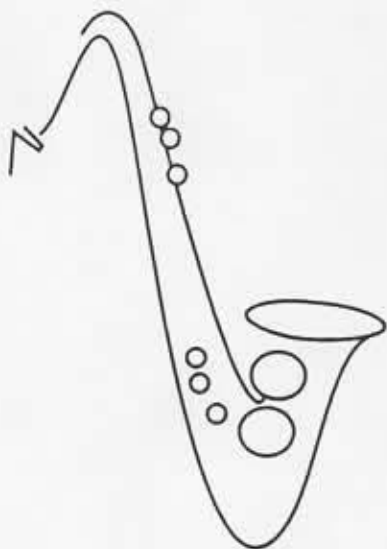
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15th Anniversary Of The

Vintage Saxophones Revisited

An Historical Celebration Of The Bass Saxophone



Paul Cohen

Almost all of us know that there are bass saxophones, and most of us, whether we realize it or not, have actually heard the instrument played in some context or another. But the experience of seeing one for the first time leaves an impression that is not soon forgotten. That experience will vary considerably from person to person, and especially from generation to generation. The luckier ones, people who remember the 1920s, would have seen a proud, gleaming instrument resplendent in its deep tonal glory playing up a storm. Featured in both big and small groups of the day, it was virtually indispensable as a powerful and yet flexible bass voice, and frequently was the instrument of choice to anchor the bass register in small group recordings.

Recollecting the bass saxophone in the 1930s was not so easy. It could be seen in certain large ensembles and big bands, played from time to time as an occasional instrument. A few soloists still took advantage of its unique tonal capabilities, but these artists were becoming less popular as a newer music demanded different solo expressions. In the 1940s and early 1950s, one might have seen an erstwhile but weathered bass in a Mummer's parade, or perhaps witnessed its use in the local high school band on a piece or two.

From the 1960s until recently, one's first acquaintance with the bass saxophone might have been disconcerting as well as revealing. For many of us, it came through irrepressible curiosity while we were innocently exploring the band room of our high school or college or the basement of the local music shop. Remember the first impression of that big, unseen form appearing out of darkness? It looms large and unexpected in the deep forgotten recesses of a dimly lit room. When we opened its creaky, cavernous case a dank stuffy aroma ever-mindful of its age and history was cast about the room. For some it was the smell of discovery and adventure, reminiscent of past revelations and tales of faded



Buescher bass saxophone c. 1923

glories. For others, a disagreeable reminder of the use and ill-winded practicality of this yawning behemoth. Its ancient and often battered body, stiff and unappreciated, peers out tiredly from its tomb as though it had been played a thousand years ago. If it is without a case, as so many of them are, it lies on some unnoticed shelf blanketed with years of dust and memories of notes it never knew, evincing wounds of bent keys, cut and missing pads, shriveled felts and corks, and dents - oh so many dents. And what's that? A lyre and lyre post? Somebody picked it up and marched with it? Only dinosaurs were that big (and that dim) to undertake such a chore. That confirms its age - millions of years old. It is amazing that it's still here, clinging tenaciously to a precarious existence. But then, why is it here at all? What is it doing in this room? Who played it and why? What possible relation could this ungainly relic have to the suave



Adolphe Sax bass saxophone c. 1868

sopranos, altos, and tenors that are so facile and responsive and popular today?

Early History of the Bass

The importance of the bass to the entire saxophone family is substantial. The very first saxophone built was the bass! The initial conception of the saxophone was predicated on the search for a new bass orchestral voice by Adolphe Sax. His research and activities gave way to inspiration and industry of a musical, tonal, and acoustic nature. His first instrument that reflected the successful union of all of these qualities, a prototype made in the early 1840s, was a bass saxophone in C.

The bass, through Sax's determined efforts, received an enthusiastic welcome from many of the established composers in Paris. Berlioz wrote in 1842:

"Its sound is of such rare quality that, to my knowledge, there is not a bass instrument in use nowadays that

*could be compared to the saxophone. It is full, soft vibrating, extremely powerful and easy to lower in intensity."*¹¹

Again, in describing the bass saxophone, Escudier wrote in 1844:

*"The timbre of the saxophone has something of a sadness in its high register which excites you like an electric shock. The low register, to the contrary, is of a grandiose, pontifical nature. For pieces of a mysterious and solemn character, it is the most beautiful low voice presently known."*¹²

The first work written that used a saxophone, *Chant Sacre* by Berlioz, called for the bass saxophone. performed on October 3, 1844, *Chant Sacre* was an arrangement of a vocal work adapted for the new instruments of Adolphe Sax. Later that year, Dec. 1, 1844, the bass was included in *Le Dernier Roi de Juda*, an opera by Georges Kastner. Kastner was a real friend to the saxophone, for he wrote a method book for the entire family of saxophones as well as a beautiful saxophone sextet in 1844, several years before all the sizes of the saxophone family were built! The sextet is now published by Ethos Publications for SSATBBs.

The early 1850s saw the bass saxophone in a number of orchestral and operatic works. It formed part of a quartet in the 1852 opera *Le Juif Errant* by Halevy. An American composer, William Henry Fry, included the bass in two of his works: *Santa Claus Symphony* (1853) and *Hagar in the Wilderness* (1854).

The occasional use of the bass saxophone in the latter part of the 19th century in orchestral repertoire was more than overshadowed by its consistent use in the French military bands. Greater recognition for the bass saxophone in the United States occurred in 1872, as the French Garde Republicaine Band appeared as part of Patrick Gilmore's International Peace Jubilee in Boston. With an instrumentation including six saxophones, the Garde Republicaine was considered the finest group participating in the Jubilee.

By 1878 Gilmore had added the bass saxophone to his band instrumentation, and by the 1890s it was established as an important instrument of the band, although its employment was dictated by financial and instrumentation constraints. Well known band leaders, such as Innes, Gilmore and Sousa included the bass saxophone whenever their tours called for an expanded group.

The awareness of the bass saxophone continued to grow in Europe and America through the turn of the century. Strauss included a bass saxophone part in his *Sinfonia Domestica* (along with parts for soprano, alto, and baritone), while the English composer Joseph Holbrooke included a bass part in his *Hommages, Symphony #1* in 1908. Gustav Bumcke, the German pedagogue and composer, was a life-long champion of the saxophone beginning at the turn of the century. Of note is his 1907 composition *Zwei Quartette fur vier Saxophone Op. 23* written for alto, tenor, baritone, and bass saxophones. (Example 1) Holbrooke of England wrote an unusual chamber work in 1908 for twelve instruments, including a quintet of saxophones from soprano to bass.

POPULARITY OF THE BASS IN THE UNITED STATES

It is with popular music in America that the bass saxophone developed its strongest following. As the saxophone was becoming accepted as a superb solo, chamber and ensemble instrument in the latter part of the 19th century, it became first a featured instrument, then a preferred one, in much of the music-making of the time. Amateurs crooned popular solos with piano, small groups formed and played in civic and municipal functions and the saxophone became an ideal complement for chorus and church activities. As the versatility of the instrument continued, so did the use of the additional members of the saxophone family, extending from the alto, tenor and baritone to the soprano and bass, with variants in between.

Zwei Quartette für vier Saxophone.

I.

Abendgang.

(Marche au Soir.)

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Gustav Bumcke, Op. 23 No 1.

Ruhig, doch mit Ausdruck.
(Tranquille, mais avec expression.)

Alt in Es. Tenor in B. Baryton in Es. Bass in B.

Example 1 Title page of the quartet for alto, tenor, baritone and bass saxophones by the German composer, Gustav Bumcke. Written c. 1907, it is one of the first small chamber works to use the bass saxophone.



Example 2 The Six Brown Brothers, c. 1920. One of the more famous entertainment groups of its time, this ensemble was one of a handful of groups that launched the saxophone craze in the United States. Their popularity helped establish the bass saxophone as a viable and desired ensemble instrument through the 1920s.

By 1915 the country was inundated by saxophone ensembles: quartets, sextets, trios and even 50 piece saxophone orchestras! By the 1920s it appeared that America was over-run by saxophones everywhere. The bass figured prominently as the anchor for many of these groups. The Six Brown Brothers is the ensemble generally considered the catalyst for this propulsive popularity (see **Example 2**). They were a vaudevillian novelty saxophone sextet that took this country by storm c. 1916. Dressed in clown suits and often in dark-face makeup, this group made dozens of records and toured the United States numerous times during their 15 year career.

The versatility of the bass saxophone was now understood and employed in musical situations outside of saxophone ensembles. It became an important member of many dixieland and jazz groups, often exchanging roles with the tuba. In acoustic recordings of the time (recordings made before the development of electric microphones) it was the bass instrument of choice, in that its clear tone and percussive attack, along with its more powerful nature, recorded better than the string bass or tuba.

Early jazz bands began to use and often feature the bass saxophone. The great Fletcher Henderson band of c. 1923 used a bass saxophone not only in the traditional role of time-keeper, but as a hot solo instrument, often played by Coleman Hawkins. From the mid-to-late 1920s, Paul Whiteman's band utilized a bass in its more symphonic instrumentation.

Bass saxophone soloists developed a following during the 1920s, with Adrian Rollini and Spencer Clark the best known. Rollini was universally acclaimed in this country and Europe as a musical and technical master of his instrument (**Example 3**). His influence in jazz extended beyond saxophonists to jazz performers on all instruments. He soloed with many groups and some of the best performers of the day, and he wrote columns on playing the bass saxophone that were



Example 3 Adrian Rollini, the great bass saxophone soloist and sideman. He played a Buescher bass that eventually was acquired by the famous English bass saxophonist, Harry Gold.

published in the English music magazine, *Melody Maker*. Here is an excerpt from May 1929 on tone production:

The most important point when playing any musical instrument is -Tone. In this respect the bass saxophone is no different from any other instrument. The first essential is to produce a tone which is not merely of sufficient volume for the performance of bass parts when playing with a band of anything up to ten or twelve strong - itself a matter requiring careful handling because it is not easy to obtain a large tone and yet retain sweetness - but which is at the same time wholesome, sweet and pure when playing solos.

It matters not how good a hot stylist one may be, how good a finger technique he may have, how good a reader he may be, nor in fact how good he may be at any of the other factors which are necessary for performance upon a musical instrument, unless he has tone of a sufficient quality and quantity everything else is negated, negated.

Certain subjects with which we have dealt in previous articles - the points which constitute a good instrument, the construction of the mouthpiece, the selection of reed - all play their part in tone production, but there is one thing which is of super importance and it is the ability of the man behind the instrument.

I have found many who otherwise might have turned into good exponents become nothing but mediocre players because having rushed in too quickly they found in the end that the fine

super-structure of stylish ideas in hot playing fell to the ground because it had no foundation of tone production nor control to support it.

With the ending of the saxophone craze in the late 1920s, combined with the onset of the Depression and a change in musical attitudes and tastes, the bass slid into a precipitous decline in popularity and use. The instrumentation for the popular big bands became standardized with four or five reeds, the lowest being the baritone. The "Hot Jazz" of the twenties in which the bass sax played such an important role now sounded "dated" and out of style. In its place: the onset of swing with its smooth, homogenized sound, urbane sophisticated arrangements and powerful sound of massed reeds, brassy and rhythm. The business nature of music changed as well. Vaudeville was dying, movie theaters no longer needed live ensembles (talkies were introduced in the late 1920s), radio brought music to the living rooms of millions of Americans. Musicians needed to consolidate their talents for contemporary musical requirements. For saxophonists, it meant gaining proficiency on doubling other woodwinds. Extraneous horns, such as the soprano or bass saxes gave way to the more practical need for clarinet and flutes. Even the famed Adrian Rollini eventually gave up his bass in favor of a vibraphone night club act!

There were exceptions, though. Duke Ellington used a bass saxophone (played by Otto Hardwicke) on occasion in the middle 1930s (Example 4). High school and college bands used the bass, as it had become for a brief time, part of the standard band instrumentation. This meant that many transcribed and original works for band through 1950 either in transcription or original came supplied with bass saxophone parts!

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s the bass continued to be little used and little known. Some big bands known for their depth of sound and experiments with orchestration, most notably Stan Kenton in the

United States and Boyd Raeburn occasionally used the bass. In the 1960s Bud Shank made a remarkable record *Bud Shank and the Sax Section* which featured a saxophone ensemble (with rhythm section) playing imaginative arrangements of jazz standards. The ensemble included one or two bass saxophones and one contrabass. Broadway has from time to time called upon the special qualities of the bass saxophone. Meredith

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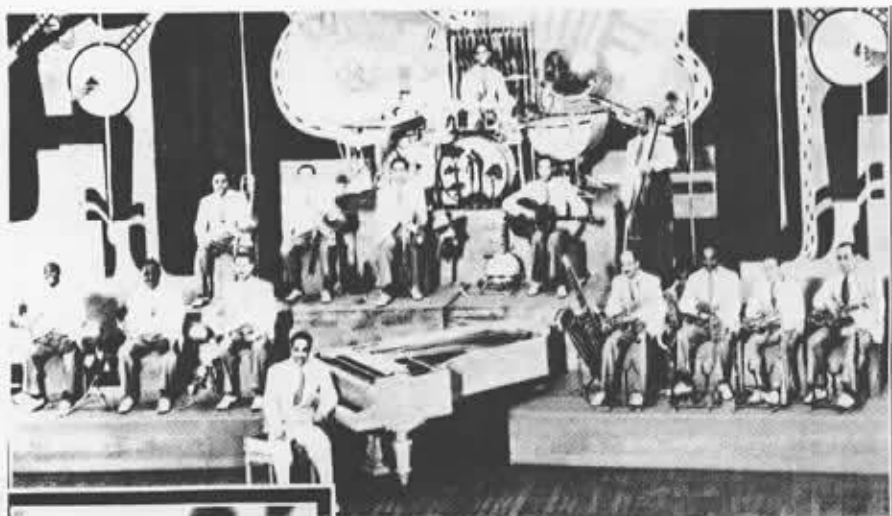


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Example 4 The Duke Ellington Orchestra c. 1934. Note the visual prominence of the bass saxophone in the reed section. When Ellington required the services of the bass (which was not very often in the 1930s), he called upon Otto Hardwicke for the honors.

Willson's *The Music Man* from the late 1950s, Bernstein's *West Side Story* from the early 1960s, and today, the hit show *Jerome Robbins* all use a bass saxophone.

THE REVITALIZED BASS SAXOPHONE

The rise in popularity of the saxophone from the mid 1970s through the present time has touched on all members of the saxophone family in all genres of music. The bass is enjoying a long overdue revival that is transforming this long-forgotten battered contraption of the band room into an exciting, contemporary instrument. It is the foundation of the saxophone ensemble, a group that is now flourishing at many Universities and communities in the United States, Canada, and Europe. Professional groups, such as the Saxophone Sinfonia, Rascher Saxophone Ensemble and the New York Chamber Saxophones offer an astonishing variety of original music featured in tours, recordings and music festivals. David MacIntyre, a marvelous multi-media composer from Canada, has written several works using a saxophone ensemble that call for two bass saxophones! And the bass is returning to an ensemble in never should have left the concert band. Newer works, such as pieces by Karel Husa, as well as revivals of the original instrumentation of lost treasures (in-

cluding Graingers' *Over the Hills and Far Away* with parts for STABBs saxes and contrabass sarrusophone!) are now being performed with the bass saxophone as an active participant.

The revitalized solo frontier for the bass saxophone has already arrived, in that it is again being featured as a solo instrument. In Jazz, Vince Giordano is a hot bass player with his revival group, the Nighthawks, while Scott Robinson (a frighteningly versatile jazz player) often solos with his bass. There is a growing body of literature for the bass saxophone in the concert field as well. I was helpful in bringing attention to two overlooked pieces for the instrument: the *Melody Variante* by Carl Frangkiser, (c. 1930s) and *Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep* by T.H. Rollinson (c. 1900s). Walter Hartley has written a *Sonata Giocosa* for bass saxophone and piano, and has adapted his *Aria for Tuba* for the same instruments. Sigurd Rascher writes of his performances of the *Theme and Variations on an American Hymn Tune* (1954) by Stuart Sankey for Bass Saxophone and Orchestra. The late Brian Israel wrote a delightful double concerto for sopranino and bass saxophones and concert band! Players such as Joseph Powel, Dan Gordon, Jeff Haus, Tom Gorin and myself have performed solo recitals and solo concertos on the bass. Just

this past summer both Joseph Powel and Tom Gorin performed *Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep* with bands from Connecticut and Vermont. In France, contemporary saxophonist Daniel Kentzy has recorded a work for bass saxophone and electronic tape. And this is only the beginning!

The renaissance of the bass saxophone is a triumph of merit and dedication overcoming long odds of faded memories and lost experiences. As the instrument (through the tireless efforts of those committed to its revival) becomes better appreciated for its glowing deep tonal splendor, powerful dynamics and surprising agility, it will attract the interests of composers, players and listeners. It is an awareness long overdue and every occasion of its playing becomes a celebration of remarkable dimension. If you have not heard a bass saxophone recently, rest assured that you will be hearing one very soon, and the pleasure will be for all to enjoy. ■

Paul Cohen, currently on the faculty of the Manhattan School of Music, has performed with his two bass saxophones in concerts throughout the country. In addition to solo recitals featuring the bass at Princeton University and Lebanon Valley, he has performed the *Sinfonia Domestica*, (Strauss) and the operas *Herodiade* (Massenet) and *Von Haute auf Morgan* (Schoenberg). Most recently he played one of the two bass sax parts in the multi-media work, *Piazzi* by David MacIntyre. On other size instruments, Dr. Cohen has played in the Cleveland Orchestra, Sante Fe Opera, and Group for Contemporary Music. His solos appearances with the San Francisco Symphony, Richmond Sinfonia and the New Jersey Symphony, among others, include saxophone works by Ibert, Debussy, Husa, Martin, Dahl, Tomasi, Caltabiano, and Villa-Lobos. His work, as a solo performer and commentator has been heard on radio in New York, Boston, Cleveland, and San Francisco. □

Questions For Paul Cohen

Questions for *Saxophone Journal* about old, unusual, or rare saxophones and related products should be sent to Paul Cohen, 43 Van Buskirk Rd. - Teaneck, New Jersey 07666. Please include any related documents and/or photos that can assist with presenting your questions in *Saxophone Journal*. If requested, materials will be returned after publication. □

Spencer Clark

Robert Williams



Though the bass saxophone was a common instrument in bands of the 1920s and 1930s, it is considered more of a novelty today. Upon first hearing the beautiful, melodic playing of Spencer Clark, I realized what we have all been missing.

Born in Baltimore, Maryland on March 15, 1908, Spencer's family moved to New York in 1909. He began performing professionally in 1923 and dropped out of school in 1926 to join the vaudeville act of Joe Penner. From 1924-1939 he played with well-known bands such as the California Ramblers, the Ozzie Nelson Band, the Fred Waring Band, and the Dick Stabile Band. For two years he played with

the Lud Gluskin Band, an extremely popular group in Europe.

John Chilton features him in his book, *Who's Who In Jazz*, and writes of Clark, "As a colleague said, he was the best all-around musician on the New York Jazz Scene." Over one-hundred records feature his playing, many of them recorded with the Lud Gluskin Band. In this group, as in some others, Clark improvised all of his parts, not just featured solos.

Whether using his bass saxophone as the foundation for a band (functioning as a string bass player would), or improvising mellow, melodic solos or counter-melodies, his recordings and his live playing today show him to be a musician of great virtuosity, possessed of a truly remarkable ear. He has been a well kept secret to most of us, in part because of his self-deprecating modesty and the relative obscurity of his instrument.

While playing with the Lud Gluskin band in Europe, (1928-1931), Spencer developed the use of the bass saxophone as a free-moving instrument, separate from the reeds, brass, and rhythm, playing counter-melodies. In this contrapuntal role, the bass saxophone moved a step beyond

Adrian Rollini's concept of rhythm-or-solo playing.¹

An article by Art Napoleon in *Storyville*, "The Bass Sax In Jazz," contains a couple of interesting statements about Spencer Clark. "He, (Clark) is heard behind Tommy Dorsey on the Ramblers' *I Ain't Got Nobody* and *Third Rail* (Edison 52206) displaying admirable command of rhythmic shading, dynamics, and ensemble blend. His solo efforts, however brief, reveal him as an interesting and capable performer. To this day, Clark has his coterie of followers... who insist, almost with piety, that Clark was 'Twice as good as Rollini.' It is not possible to ascertain whether it be true or not; the recorded evidence simply does not exist.

What records there are demonstrate Clark's ability to hold his own in any musical surrounding. He could play the bass sax... and well."²

In his notes on the Lud Gluskin LP, *Wolverine #1* Warren Plath tells us that on *March of the Hoodlums*, "Clark demonstrates complete utilization of the bass sax." According to Paul Purcell, "This is also true of *So I Picks Up My Ukelele*, where his horn drives the whole band along with the ease of a string bass - no easy task on the big horn. Spencer is heard playing a sub-tone clarinet solo on *Let's Be Domestic* and xylophone on *Sweepin' The Clouds Away*. There are also recorded examples of his playing string bass, guitar, cornet, and tenor sax... to say nothing of his skill at arranging."³

In 1939, Spencer retired from full-time playing and worked at a variety of other jobs until 1971. In 1971, he retired to Webster, North Carolina, a small town in the mountains. Many enthusiastic saxophonists from this country, Europe, and even from Australia, visit him to talk shop and get helpful insights. They are all welcomed by this friendly man. Living only eight miles away, I took advantage of the opportunity to get to know Spencer, and found him both a gracious and fascinating host. I was at first surprised by see-

ing, in addition to the expected saxophones, a vibraphone, a bass viol, and a guitar in the living room. It was only later that I learned he once played professionally on all of them, as well as banjo, mandolin, clarinet, and cornet (with Ozzie Nelson in 1932-33).

After retiring Spencer began playing and recording more actively again, and continues to perform even now. He has played on approximately twenty recordings since his retirement. A reviewer in the March, 1982 edition of *Cadence Magazine* said of a recording, *The Song of Bix, 1981 Princeton Bix Festival, More Informal Sessions*, "The two strong impressions this record hits me with, and which remain with me over various listenings are: the overall ambience of improvised music fluently and lovingly played - almost a second language; the lovely mellow playing of Spencer Clark." *

Recently, the BBC did a video documentary on the bass saxophone titled "The Lowest Of The Low," which was reviewed in the Summer 1986 issue of *Saxophone Journal* by British writer Clive Downs, and Spencer appeared on the video.

I hope my interview with the most recorded bass saxophonist in the history of the instrument will give you some insights into the career and life of my good friend, Spencer. His words will tell you more. □

You have spent a lot of time in recent years talking with young saxophonists and sharing your knowledge with us. I appreciate you taking time today to spread some insights to a lot of players at once. When did you first start playing an instrument, how did you first get started in music?

Oh, I was about eight or nine. I was living in Bridgeport, Connecticut. There was a vaudeville act at that time featuring xylophone, it was the George Hamilton Green Trio. Green was a very well known xylophonist at that time, and a very good one. I was absolutely fascinated with the xylophone, it

seemed like a simple thing to do and there were such good sounds coming from it. So, I started experimenting by filling different glasses (every glass I could find in the house), with different amounts of water so I could get a scale when I tapped them with a pencil. We had a piano in the house and although I didn't know much about it, I knew the right relationship of the black and white keys so I laid it out that way. I started picking out little tunes on the thing (the glasses) and got pretty good. Finally my Dad bought me a little ten-dollar xylophone that had two octaves with no tubes underneath. It was just a plain thing, a plain Jane toy. I went down to the church and played a Sunday program one day about two months after I started, and that was my first interest in an instrument.

Then a neighbor of ours living in Bridgeport, gave me a zither, which seemed kind of interesting, but I didn't like all the strings on it. All the open strings and the four tuneable strings were kind of hard to play and you couldn't finger them like a guitar. So, then he took it a back and gave me a mandolin which he also had, and I could do a little bit with that. I kind of like the mandolin. I found out what the scales were, and the relationship of the strings one to another, the distance apart and so forth. I found I could do some picking with that thing. That was interesting. I think I got into all these things from curiosity, more than anything else. I wanted to find out why the instruments worked, why they were laid out as they were, what was the reason for them, you know, that kind of thing. My interest in instruments has carried me all the way through into everything, brass, woodwinds, strings; you name it. I've always been wanting to find out how they work.

How did you end up choosing the bass saxophone out of all of these instruments?

I got into saxophone a little later. Somebody gave me a clarinet, a lit-

tle broken down clarinet, which I could barely get a scale out of. Then I heard a saxophone being played, and thought, 'Gee, that's much nicer than a clarinet.' So I traded the clarinet for a good pitcher's glove, and then traded that for a C-Melody saxophone which a kid in the neighborhood had. I got to the point where I could play the thing and I was playing in a trio, with a drummer and a piano player. I knew that you should have a vibrato in the tone, but I didn't know how to get a vibrato. So I'd hold the C-Melody on my knee and jiggle my knee up and down, until I found out that was not the right way to do it. It worked, though. It was a wild vibrato but it worked. It tired my leg out too. I was about fourteen or fifteen at the time.

Then I heard about the California Ramblers Band. They had a bass saxophone player, and he was also a xylophone player. That caught me on two fronts. So I went to hear the guy, and it was Adrian Rollini, a famous guy, and he was wonderful. Now I had to have a bass saxophone. I worked on Dad and he finally broke down and gave me enough money to buy a bass saxophone, a used one. And I started playing. That was about 1922.

What were some of the major bands you played with over the years?

I went with the California Ramblers after high school. I got proficient enough and got friendly enough with the boys to be a substitute for Adrian Rollini when he would be off on some other assignment or some other job. I started doing substitute work for him in 1925, and that went on for a couple or three years.

I went to Europe in 1928 with the Lud Gluskin band, which was well-known in Europe; lesser-known in the United States. I stayed with him for a little over two and a half years. I came back and went with Bert Lown's Hotel Biltmore Band. When I got home I found out that Adrian Rollini had just quit the band and they had an opening for

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The Arcadians at Loew's Theater in New Rochelle, New York December 1924. Spencer Clark's first real band gig, is seated with his bass saxophone the fourth from the left.



Lud Gluskin Orchestra at the Haus Germania Roof Garden, October 1929. left to right (front row) - Spencer Clark, Serge Glykson, Gene Prendergast, Emile Charron; (second row) - Faustin Jean-Jean, Eddie Ritten, Emile Christian, Howard E. Kennedy, Raphael Broggiotti; (third row) - Artur Pavone, J. Russell Kelly, Pauly Freed; (standing) - Lud Gluskin



Lud Gluskin Orchestra in France, with Spencer Clark on extreme right, 1930

me. The arrangements were set for bass saxophone so they took me in. I stayed with Bert Lowns' Band for most of 1931. That petered out. I think the job closed, as a matter-of-fact. Then I went with Will Osborne's Band. He was a well-known singer. He was competitive with Russ Colombo and Bing Crosby in those early crooner days. Osborne was a pretty good name at that time. He had a full band, working theatres and so forth. I went with him only for a couple weeks, then I got a bid to go over with Fred Waring who was at the Roxy Theatre. So I stayed with Fred Waring's group the rest of 1932. In 1933 I went back to Bert Lowns, who in the meantime had gone over to the Park Central Hotel, and had a nice job over there. In the summer of 1933, I quit there and went with Ozzie Nelson playing third trumpet, because Ozzie had made me a nice offer to play at a place in Long Island in the summer. I came back to the Park Central in the latter part of 1933. In 1935 and '36, I was up at a place called Arrowhead Inn which was at the north end of New York City, up toward Yonkers. It was a quiet, pleasant spot to be in, so I stayed there for a couple of years.

In the fall of 1936, I went with Dick Stabile, who had been a star saxophone player with Ben Vernie's band; featured enough to gain a name for himself and form his own band, which he did in 1936. I joined him because he had a saxophone band, five saxes including himself, and I made the sixth saxophone. He featured a thing called the saxophone sextette, which was a cute little phrase to play with. I stayed with Stabile from 1936 up until early 1938, and then I quit the music business at that point.

I went to work for the New York Post with a connection, my then father-in-law had dangled in front of me for a long time, and I thought it would be a nice sort of thing to do. I went there and worked for a year. That didn't turn out to be a good way of working at all, so I quit entirely and went back to

the music business. However, I didn't get anywhere because they didn't want bass saxophones at that particular point. Although I played a little bit of bass fiddle, there wasn't really enough demand to earn a living. My Dad and Mother had moved to Chicago at this point, and I decided to go out and see what that was like. I went out and found that a lot of musicians had gone into the aviation business. It was something that I had in the back of my mind for years, that sooner or later I would have to get out of music and do something sensible. So I got into aviation in the fall of 1939, and remained in aviation all the way up to 1955, playing only jam sessions and occasional jobs in that particular period.

What was the New York scene like when you were there in the 1930s?

I had gone away in '28 and got back in '31 and the Depression had hit. The Depression did not affect us in Europe. It didn't affect the band business at all in Europe. We

were riding high over there, making good money, working all we could, and spending it freely of course, having a big time. We got back to New York in '31, and I found things had very much quieted down. Although music was still going pretty well. There were bands playing. People still needed to be entertained and amused, and so there was still activity in the band business.

Who were some of the well-known players you played with in some of these groups?

With the Ramblers, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey were in and out of the band a lot. A trombonist from the West Coast, Abe Lincoln, a star out there, he was with us. Eddie Condon, and all the group that came in with him, Jack Teagarden and Charlie Teagarden, Bud Freeman, Davy Tough, we all worked together a lot in the '30s.

Tell me a little bit about Bud Freeman.

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Chicago. He has a very unique way of playing. His whole feeling is just the essence of rhythm. Everything he does is basically rhythmic. He has a very disjointed way of playing that's difficult to listen to at first, but when you finally listen to him and get to know him a little bit, it's absolutely fascinating. We've often said, many of our friends, that we'd like to take him to have his brain dissected after he dies and see how many parts it had to it. How many different parts, you know, unrelated parts, and how they were connected together, because nobody has been able to imitate him or even sound like him, which is most unique. There are very few musicians, through the jazz period that I know at least, who have not been duplicated and copied. Freeman is one, Jack Teagarden is another, and Bobby Hackett on cornet is a third, and nobody seems to be able to duplicate what they have done. Well, Bix Beiderbeck, to go back to him, because he was another unique player. He had a unique style; unique mental processes all the way through. In fact all these men had very unique approaches to music, and to jazz.

I guess you knew Adrian Rollini pretty well, then.

Yeh, I lived right near him, in Larchmont, and we got to be pretty friendly. He was a very nice guy, really a great help to me, giving me little tips and shortcuts.

I was only trying to emulate Rollini, at first. That was my goal. I never got to that point of course, because he was a far more competent musician than I. He was a concert pianist for one thing; he could read anything you put in front of

him. I was never a good reader. He had that wonderful drive which fascinated me. He also had an aggressiveness to his playing that I couldn't approach. Finally it sunk in that I couldn't do that, and it was just not in me to be an aggressive player. While I was working with the Gluskin Band in Europe, I learned a great deal because the arrangers over there didn't have any parts for me, so I was free to find my own parts (improvise them all) in an eleven or twelve piece band. It made it very nice. They had a player, I didn't have to play bass (lines), I was just a free-lance operator down in the lower tones. Then I developed what I hope is my style, more of a melodic style, like counter melodies, as cellos would play, that kind of thing. This is what I like to do most. That really developed at that particular period. In later years, when I was with Dick Stabile, we had a wonderful arranger in the band named Bill Staffon. Bill would listen to different things I would do, and he would say he liked something or he didn't like something else and we would talk about it. He started writing parts for me and it was wonderful. Boy, I had a buddy then. We thought alike and everything worked out well.

Who are some saxophone players that you enjoy listening to?

Bud Freeman, then, and now, and probably always, I will enjoy him. Oh yes, Jimmy Dorsey and Pete Camiglio. Pete was very much like Jimmy Dorsey in his sound, approach, technique, and everything else. Both were good technicians and good players to listen to. I don't like them as much now as I

did then. I tend more towards more melodic players. Now Scott Hamilton is a good melodic player when he chooses to be, and I admire him greatly. The fellow in New York, Phil Bodner. Phil Bodner, I love because things just flow out of him. He's got a good tone, wonderful control and just beautiful thinking. I don't think I would have liked him back in my earlier experience, because I don't think I would have fully appreciated him.

How is improvisation different now than it was then?

I don't know that it really is, that's a tough one to answer. The rhythm sections that supported any soloist were not as exciting back then as they are now. Now they are just downright exciting. Frankly, I think it's the introduction of the Afro-Cuban music that's brought most of this about because things just fly now. They didn't used to do that. They used to thump along and that's about all you could say for them. Fellows who could improvise then were really working, although they weren't aware of it, under a handicap compared to today's backgrounds. What they would do today, Lord only knows.

How is the lifestyle of the jazz musician different in the 20s and 30s than it is today?

As to the lifestyles of the musicians, I think it was a crazy but wonderful period back then for musicians because we were all young, footloose, and carefree. We didn't give a damn about what we did, the main thing was to be happy. If it took drink to be happy, so you drank. Hopefully not to excess, but nonetheless you'd be staying happy with drink, and doing silly things, but having a good time out of it. I don't see that as much today, in today's musicians. Of course, I'm not as conversant with the mainstream of today's players as I was then. I've been in and out of it more or less the last several years, but I do see a lot more serious approach in the performance and in lifestyles. Most of those I

know are settled down. They have home bases somewhere with families, and go back there as quickly as they can.

You are mainly an ear player, aren't you?

I feel best playing by ear. When you go from band to band you have to read new charts all the time, and I became a modestly good reader. I enjoy and feel more comfortable playing by ear. My ear is good and my study of chords has been good so I hear pretty much what is going to happen, and that makes me feel comfortable.

When did you retire here in Webster, North Carolina?

We came here in 1971. I had been a purchasing agent for the city of Highland Park, Illinois. I took retirement in April of 1971, we moved down here and built our house the following fall and settled in. I had made up my mind to look for musical activity as soon as I got down here. I had three basic careers. A career as a fulltime musician which lasted fifteen years, from which I got no pension and very little savings. Then I had a career in commercial aviation, in several different jobs for fifteen years, again I got no pensions or savings worked up. My third career was as a purchasing agent, and I did that for fifteen years, and retired; still with no pension to speak of, with the idea of picking up some musical work and using that as a back-up. And that's what I've been doing.

You recorded a feature album, with just bass saxophone and rhythm section shortly after you retired here in the mountains.

Yes, in 1978. In fact, it is the only album of its kind ever made with solo bass sax and rhythm section. I had been on a lot of albums through the Manassas Jazz Festival

JUMBO—Oversized bass saxophone owned by Spencer W. Clark, center, is inspected by Sydney Cohen, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra personnel manager, left, and Conductor William Steinberg, right. Clark, who formerly played with top dance bands, will appear with Symphony in final concert tonight and Sunday afternoon. Instrument is rare, they say. There is only one professional bass saxophone player in the United States today.

that were released every year after each festival. In all, with various other things I had been on, I had done around twenty-five albums as a sideman. I had an experience one time at a concert up in Illinois, where the musicians weren't ready to play, and there were people sitting in the audience. The guy says, 'why don't you go out and do something on the bass, and I'll give you a good rhythm section.' He did and it was a helluva good rhythm section. So I went out there and played with the rhythm section as a solo instrument and we had a wonderful time and the people liked it. I kept that in the back of my mind, that was back in 1952 or 1953. I later talked with Paul Burgess, who has the Shellac Stack. Paul liked the idea, so we set a date, went to a studio and made the tapes. In the meantime, I'd been working on this multiple saxophone stuff here at home. Some of these cuts I wanted to put in there to show off a little bit and play five saxophone parts with rhythm. So, I had the boys make me some rhythm tracks up there that I could use when I got back home. I took the masters of the rhythm tracks and



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added my saxophone parts on top of everything. We incorporated that into the master tape that we ultimately sold to George Buck, who released it on the Audiophile label. It's available from George Buck and Audiophile Records. I think it's Audiophile AP131. It's called, *Spencer Clark and His Bass Saxophone Play Sweet and Hot*.

Can you tell me about some of your other playing activities since you've retired.

We had a nice thing going with some of my old time buddies from Chicago. We've gotten together and played all through the years, starting in the war years. We are all about the same age now. In 1975, there was a reunion at Princeton that covered some of their fiftieth anniversaries. We put a band together with a typical Dixieland lineup, with one of everything in front; about seven pieces. It went very well so we were up there from '75-'81. We released an album each year.

Have you played at any jazz festivals since you retired?

Yes, in 1973 Fatcat McCree (Johnson McCree), who puts on the Manassas Festival, called me and asked if I would come up and play for them. I did. I went back again in '74, '75, and '78. Then again in '80, but I haven't been back since because he's now moved it to the Thanksgiving weekend, and I can't get away then. We have some other plans on Thanksgiving. I went down to the Wilmington Jazz Festival in '83. The International Association of Jazz Record Collectors have meetings and I've played two of those, one in Alexandria, Virginia and one in Chicago in '78 and '79.

I believe you told me about playing in the Netherlands fairly recently.

Yes, we took another trip to Europe in 1983 and I met a very wonderful bass saxophone player who lives in the Netherlands. He's a hell'uva good player. His name is Ronald Jansen-Heijtmajer, and I

think that he is the logical successor to Adrian Rollini. He has the technical skills and the power and everything else to fill Rollini's shoes. The bass saxophone is a very popular instrument in Holland. In fact, I think there are twenty-two bass players in Holland. He wanted to know if I would come over there and play with them. He has a group called the *Jazzomatic Four*, so he renamed it the *Jazzomatic Four Plus One*. I worked some jobs with them, and did some concerts with them over there. One was the Breda Festival, which is a well-known jazz festival in Holland. We gigged around the Netherlands for about nine straight days.

You have been known for having an open house for any young saxophone players who want to come talk with you and exchange ideas about the saxophone and music. Could you tell me about a couple of the interesting people you have met in this way?

You always hear about people through friends. That seems to be the way it starts. A friend in the New York area, Russ Whitman, knew a fellow named Bill Peatman who was a professor of chemistry at Vanderbilt University. He wanted to be a bass saxophone player, so he called me up and we chatted for a while, then he wanted to know if he could come over. I said sure, so he came over and we became very good friends. Then he moved to Berlin to take a job with some chemical company there. Now, when I make a trip to Europe, Bill will provide a horn for me. He has two bass saxophones. He in turn introduced me to the group in Hamburg that I met. About every two years he comes back for a vacation and comes to see me. He was here just a couple of months ago, a very nice guy, and these connections are so pleasing to me.

Do you have any other thoughts on your playing?

I don't play well if I'm nervous or uptight. I get that way if I feel

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people are looking right at me. I like to play best with a group where I can fill in, do my solos, and be a part of the whole thing. I was recording in New York in 1974 with Zoot Sims and some others, and the leader Joe Venuti, just froze me for some reason, and I didn't do as well as I might have. Zoot played the ugliest horn I've ever seen, but it didn't matter, he was great!

Back in the 1920s Joe Venuti had done a group thing called the *Blue Four*, which was very popular. He had Adrian Rollini, Frank Signorelli, and Eddie Lang. That is a bass sax, piano, guitar, and violin. This time (1974), he was trying to recreate those things, so he had Bucky Pizzarelli on guitar. He tried to get Frank Signorelli, but Frank had amputated a leg or something and couldn't play any more. Anyway, he wasn't there. Adrian Rollini had already died, so they called me in and asked if I'd play. Dill Jones played piano. So we made a record called *The Blue Four*. Hank O'Neill put that out. That was my last visit to New York. Oh, I hated it. It didn't look like the New York I remembered, bilingual signs all over the subways, in the streets and everywhere else. Dirt and filth everywhere. Oh boy, I didn't remember anything like that!



left to right (seated) - Spencer Clark & Ronald Jensen-Hentmayer; (standing) Hans De Bruljn, Peter Den Boer & Hein Denekamp

So New York was a lot different than in the 1930s?

New Yorkers, too. New York was a great place to live in the 30s. In the late 20s, we would be playing out in the country, out near California Ramblers Inn, or someplace out there you know until about two or three o'clock, you know. Everybody said, "let's drive down to Harlem and hear some music," so we'd jump in an open car, no windows on it, no glass, and drive down there. We'd leave the instruments in the car and park around the street, go on in the place and stay till five or six o'clock in the morning and listen to music. Then come out and

find that everything was fine. Nobody touched anything. All the stealing started in later years.

One thing that I forgot to ask you about earlier that just came up. You mentioned that Jimmy Dorsey played with the Ramblers. What was your impression of his playing? I've never had an opportunity to hear a recording of him. Excellent. He's a very good technician. He had a funny tone on clarinet. It was sort of a "nanny goat" type of tone, which I didn't like, but he played wonderful clarinet. He played damn good cornet or trumpet. The guy could do anything, literally. He started out on a brass instrument and went over to saxophone. For fun he used to take the neck of his stand (the little pipe coming up had sort of a crook neck on the top of the thing) and he'd stick a trumpet mouthpiece on the end of that crook, and pretend he was playing an instrument. He'd stand up and play a hell of a lot of notes on it, you know. People would look at him and wonder what is that guy doing. He had a very good sound on saxophone. He made a couple of saxophone solos. One was called *Oodles of Noodles*, which he later incorporated into his theme song. It was a very beautiful thing. It was his own composition. And if you ever get a copy of the thing, you'll see he played it beautifully. A good technician. Of course, remember that the technicians of that day don't compare with the technicians of today. They didn't have the altissimo range or didn't use it. So they went up to high F and that's where they stopped. That's all she wrote up there and they didn't know about anything else.

Thank you for talking with me this afternoon, Spencer. I've enjoyed it, as always. ■

1. From "Spencer Clark: A Bidodiscography." by Paul Burgess. *Shellac Stack*. Fall 1977 (745):5.
2. Ibid. page 6.
3. Ibid.
4. From "Spencer Clark: Noted Musician of the 20s, 30s, and Today." by Sara Carden (1982). In *The Sylva Herald*. Sylva, N.C.

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Exploring The Concert Saxophone Repertoire

Walter Hartley's Sonatina Gloriosa For Bass Saxophone

Laura Hunter



THE COMPOSER

Walter Hartley is no stranger to saxophonists. Born in Washington, D.C. in 1927, he started composing at age five and was a serious student of composition at sixteen. He received his Ph.D in Composition from the Eastman School of Music where he studied with Burrell Phillips, Thomas Canning, Herbert Elwell, Bernard Rogers, Howard Hanson, and Dante Fiorillo. He is presently Professor of Music (history, theory, and composition) at the State University of New York College at Fredonia. He also served on the faculty of the National Music Camp at Interlochen, Michigan from 1956-1964. His association there with saxophonist Donald Sinta led to his well-known composition, *Duo* for saxophone and piano. Hartley's music has been performed by ensembles such as the National Symphony Orchestra,

COMPOSITION SUMMARY

- ☐ Composer: Walter Hartley
- ☐ Title: *Sonatina Gloriosa*
- ☐ Instrumentation: Bass Saxophone and Piano (alternate parts included for the string bass & tuba)
- ☐ Degree of Difficulty: Easy, providing you have a bass saxophone
- ☐ Publisher: © 1988 by Tenuto Publications, Theodore Presser Co., Bryn Mawr, PA 19010
- ☐ Year Composed: 1987
- ☐ Length: 5 minutes

SONATINA GIOCOSA (1987) Walter S. Hartley
FOR BASS SAXOPHONE AND PIANO

Allegro molto (♩ = 152)

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Allegretto grazioso (♩ = 56)

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bass sax 2

Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra, Oklahoma Symphony, and the Eastman Wind Ensemble. In 1954 he was the recipient of the coveted Koussevitzky Foundation commission which resulted in his *Chamber Symphony*. Hartley has long been a fan and supporter of the saxophone. He was a guest composer at the World Saxophone Congress and was elected by the North American Saxophone Alliance to an honorary life membership. He has written upwards of forty works for the saxophone in a variety of settings. The work at hand is the first for bass saxophone that he has written.

THE BASS SAXOPHONE

The bass saxophone is generally employed as a novelty instrument and is heard most often in saxophone 'bands' and in transcription. Other than *Sonatina Giocosa*,

the only original concert work for the bass is *Melody Variante* by Carl Frangkiser.

Joseph Powel, a modern champion of the bass saxophone and the dedicatee of *Sonatina Giocosa*, has known Hartley and his work for a long time. When Powel suggested a piece for the bass Hartley took the challenge. The premiere was in June, 1987 at Syracuse University with Hartley at the piano and Joseph Powel on the bass saxophone. Playing Frangkiser's work and the premiere of the Hartley *Sonatina Giocosa* in one evening, they performed the entire known original repertoire for the bass saxophone on one program.

There are a few special considerations when playing this work on the bass. Balance of course is always an issue. While the bass has a low tessitura it has a high "presence" factor and will be heard whenever it

is being played. There are many high piano passages which will be lost if the bass saxophone and the left hand of the piano do not balance their volume appropriately. The bass also tends to play flat in the higher ranges. This work does not go above high F but the saxophone tends to sag in pitch starting around G2. Clarity of sound and pitch definition are also a challenge when performing on the bass and must be sought after tirelessly.

THE MUSIC

I have always assumed that charm and the bass saxophone were mutually exclusive, but Walter Hartley has proven me wrong. This is an absolutely charming piece and it is perfectly suited to the bass saxophone. It is a pleasure to hear and entirely idiomatic. Taking the nature of the bass saxophone into consideration Hartley wrote in a

Pho. L.H.

31 *p*

36 *cresc.*

41 *f*

46 *p*

50 *Poco rit. a tempo*

56 *cresc.*

64 *f dim.*

70 *p*

75 *pp*

Quodlibet: Poco vivace, scherzando (1-118)

6 *p*

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11 *p*

16 *p*

22 *p*

30 *mp*

35 *He Re poco cresc. mf*

40

46 *f*

54 *f*

60

65 *f*

71 *f*

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comfortable range for the instrument (nothing above F3 and little above C3) and in tempi easily executed by the large mechanism of the instrument.

Allegro molto is in condensed sonata form using two ideas that contrast to each other (A mm.1, Bass part/B mm.14 piano part). The piano music is the beautiful and crystalline writing that is characteristic of the music of Hartley. The music moves with extreme grace and the contrapuntal flavor is delicious.

Allegretto grazioso is a waltz with a trio section at mm. 33. This waltz is in simple ABA form. For my taste, the A sections should be played more slowly than the $\text{♩} = 56$ with the B section picking up tempo to $\text{♩} = 56$. Each section has its own

character and the A section is much more languorous. Don't rush through this music, let your audience enjoy it.

Quodlibet: poco vivace, scherzando is the entertaining third movement. A quodlibet is a type of music which comes to us from the 13th century and continually quotes preexisting music. Well-known melodies, in this case all in 6/8, are pieced together in a somewhat surprising manner. This movement typifies a polyphonic quodlibet by presenting the melodies simultaneously in different voices of the composition. As a rule quodlibets are humorous and this one is no exception. I can't imagine a more appropriate combination of musical form and instrumentation than this one for a composer to use

to exercise his musical wit. It works extremely well! Below is a list of some of the quotations in this movement. Measure numbers indicate beginning of quotation.

- *Funeral March* of the marionettes (Also known as Alfred Hitchcock's theme music) (m.5)
- French folksongs *Aupres de ma Blonde* (m.14, 58, 26) and *Cadet Rouselle* (m.54)
- Victor Herbert's *March of the Toys* (m.18)
- Two Sousa Marches - *Liberty Bell March* (m.11, 23, 61) and *Sempre Fidelis* (m.35)
- Trio of march *Our Director* by F.E. Bigelow (m.38)
- Valentine's aria from Gounod's *Faust* (m.23)
- Coronation March from Meyerbeer's Opera *The Profit* (m.38)
- Triumphal March from Verdi's *Aida* (m.50)
- von Suppe's *Light Calvary Overture* (m.45)

Even in this rapid-fire of quotations they are easy to discern. The movement is very well put together and a real treat to hear. I am surprised that this musical form is not heard more often.

Since bass saxophone recitals have yet to attain wide popularity, Hartley wrote this piece so it could be played by other instruments and the edition includes solo parts for tuba and string bass. The piano part is the same for all versions. While this work is possible on instruments in the same tessitura as the bass, it is not well-suited for transfer to tenor or baritone saxophone. ■

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Repairing Your Saxophone

Emilio Lyons



Making A Bass Saxophone Pad

The bass saxophone is only different in one aspect from the other saxophones and that is simply its size. It is extremely akin to the baritone in terms of basic operational problems. As an instrument repair technician, I like to work with a given horn in my lap, however, this is obviously not possible with the bass saxophone. The amount of space needed to work on a bass saxophone can, in and of itself, be a challenging problem for any instrument repair technician. The biggest problem for the bass saxophone is pure "damage control." It is extremely susceptible to dents and dings from basic transportation and handling. Unfortunately, if a rod is damaged, a repair technician will most likely have to make a new one from scratch.

Unlike the other members of the saxophone family, pads on a bass saxophone can last an extremely long time because they seldom come in contact with saliva. Because of this the pads generally do not need to be treated or waterproofed. The large physical area of seal needed to seat a bass saxophone pad properly is of special concern due to the large size of the pads themselves, and the necessity for the pad to fit flush to the tone hole. A minor leak on a bass saxophone is a major problem! The most interesting aspect of pads for the bass saxophone is their availability. When the size you need is no longer stocked the solution is to make your own pads. Materials needed are a firm high quality crushed felt, cardboard backing, thin leather, and a nylon resonator (preferably the screw type). Also, a resonator from the Bb key of a baritone saxophone can be quite effective.

MAKING A BASS SAX PAD

After you've removed the pad from the key cup, the first step is to remove the leather from the old pad. Then cut a circular piece of leather large enough to cover the felt backing. If the felt backing is no longer usable, it will be necessary to cut a new circular piece of crushed felt, making it slightly smaller than the inside of the key cup diameter. It will be necessary to punch a small hole in the middle of the newly created leather pad before placing the leather piece against the felt backing. Place the nylon resonator, making sure it is centered, against the round leather pad and attach it with the small screw. Coat the round cardboard backing (thin but stiff cardboard to fit snugly inside the key cup), and the edges of the leather, with simple contact cement, after which you must carefully tuck the edges of the leather under the round cardboard backing in the same way you'd tuck a drumhead. Let the contact cement bond before coating the cardboard backing with a shellac to seal it. You now have a new bass saxophone pad ready to be placed into the key cup.

Using a common leak light to spot leaks is essential even for a bass saxophone, but it takes much longer due to the sheer size of the pads involved. Just like the baritone saxophone, a leak light is inserted into the side 'high' D key hole, which means this key has to be removed from the horn.

Spring adjustments for a bass saxophone are again similar to those done on a baritone. Making your own springs from a heavier gauge piano wire is highly recommended. Talk to any piano repair shop for

specifics on how to obtain the piano wire. Adjusting the action on a bass saxophone is the same as with all the other saxophones, and even the key heights need not be a major concern. The basic key height on a bass saxophone should be a little higher than the baritone, more out of respect for the increased bore size of the instrument.

Interestingly, some parts for a bass saxophone are still being manufactured, however, it is time consuming to find out who is producing what, and to what extent a given part will work on your instrument. That means you'll have to rely more on your ingenuity, rather than supply houses, for most of the repair work on your's, or any bass saxophone. ■

Questions for Emilio Lyons

Questions from *Saxophone Journal* readers about saxophone repairs and/or maintenance should be sent to: Emilio Lyons "The Sax Doctor" Attn: Paul Wagner - *Saxophone Journal*, P.O. Box 206, Medfield, MA 02052.

Emilio's column was prepared by Paul Wagner, Professor of Saxophone and Woodwinds at Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. □

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Beauty And The Bass

Scott Robinson

It was in a dusty corner of my high school band room in Herndon, Virginia, that I first discovered the bass saxophone. Neglected and in need of repair, it was all but ignored by the other saxophone players in the school. I was astonished to find that there was actually an instrument larger than the ungainly baritone I was playing at the time, and I took to it quickly, lugging it home after school and performing whatever small repairs I could to make it play. Shortly thereafter I played the instrument here and there in jam sessions, pit bands, my brother's group, and in my own quartet, even going so far as to take it out on a neck strap with the high school marching band. While I'm not sure my back ever completely recovered from that experience, I did discover that the bass saxophone possessed a beautiful, deep sonority like no other instrument and I soon fell in love with it. It would be many years before I was fortunate to have one of my own, and so it is only in the last three years that I have been able to begin exploring its possibilities.

It seems to me that the usage of the bass saxophone in the context of jazz or improvisational music has largely been confined to two major areas of playing.

1. Traditional jazz in its various forms as practiced by players such as the famous Adrian Rollini, Min Liebrook, Joe Rushton, and more recently Vince Giordano. In this setting the bass saxophone provides an improvised two-beat bass part in the ensemble, and contributes occasional solos.

2. What is generally termed the avant-garde, as exemplified by Anthony Braxton, Roscoe Mitchell, Vinny Golia and others, is a style of bass saxophone playing in which the great sonic resources of the instrument are mined up in a more or less "free" improvisational context.

Certainly the bass saxophone's flexibility and powerful sound makes it ideal for both of these styles of playing. But, in-between these two relative extremes there are many other areas of jazz in which I feel the instrument has been surprisingly under-utilized. For example, Charlie Ventura was one of the very few players who used the bass saxophone in a bebop situation and only infrequently. Perhaps saxophonists are fearful that the horn is too cumbersome for this kind of playing, but I find that with time and practice, a degree of technical facility comparable to what one would expect on a tenor, can be had on the bass saxophone. In fact, when I play the bass sax with my own group, I think of the horn more as a large tenor than as a bass saxophone. It is interesting to play it in a quartet situation because the solo line is often below the walking string bass, rather than above, giving an unusual twist to the "usual relationship" of the solo horn to the rhythm section.

Another area in which the bass sax has seen relatively little activity is ballad playing. I find the bass perfectly suited to this, with its deep, affecting tone, and the wide range of expression and nuance which is characteristic of saxophones in general.

Example 1

Adrian Rollini Bass Line

Example 2

Adrian Rollini Solo Chorus

Example 3

Bix and Rollini 'Out Chorus'

Example 4

Rapture Of The Deep

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The music **Examples 1-3**, taken from cornetist Bix Beiderbecke's 1927 recording of *Royal Garden Blues* (from *The Bix Beiderbecke Story, Vol. 1, "Bix And His Gang,"* Columbia LP CL844), gives us a sample of the man who is generally regarded as the greatest of the early bass saxophonists and who still serves as a model of the genre today - Adrian Rollini. Adrian Rollini, the brother of Arthur Rollini, possessed a marvelous tone and good command of the horn and not only was he a consistently inspired soloist, his bass lines were inventive and daring. **Example 1** is the bass line he plays in the first blues chorus just before the clarinet solo. Adrian's rhythmic approach is clearly more complex than the simple two-beat roots and fifths tuba style of many of his contemporaries. One can hear a special empathy between Bix and Rollini in these recordings. In bar 11, Bix answers Rollini's triplet figure on the first beat with a flurry of triplets on two and three. **Example 2** is Rollini's solo chorus. His articulation and dynamics are very expressive, ranging from a plaintive moan in the first measure, to something approaching a slap tongue in bars 5 and 9. He fashions a particularly beautiful turn of

phrase in bars 7 through 8. **Example 3** is the out chorus. Notice the absence of a downbeat in bar 4, and the use of the ninth instead of the tonic on beat one of the following measure. Bix and Rollini land on the same note in the first beat of bar 8, slightly out of tune with each other, for an effect that is surprisingly plaintive and beautiful.

Example 4 is my improvised solo on *Rapture Of The Deep*, from my latest recording titled *Winds Of Change* on the MultiJazz Records label. This slow and ethereal piece, which I actually wrote about a year before I finally got a bass saxophone to play it on, is in 7/4 time with a 4/4 bridge. The solo occurs on the last bridge section, following a bass flute solo. In this modern setting, I try to think "tenoristically," rather than let myself be intimidated by the instrument's bass nature.

The Eb in the second bar is the highest natural note on most bass saxophones, although I find that Es and Fs are readily obtainable using the lower fingering with a little extra upward pressure on the reed. Two bars later I land on a big low Bb. Bar 6 makes use of the Db major seventh sound, which is contained in the Gb lydian, and bars 9-12 are based on a whole tone scale. It might also be worth pointing out that bars 3, 10, and 16 have something in common - these rapidly descending figures point out the lowest register of the instrument, which is after all its greatest strength.

The bass saxophone is a great and noble instrument whose tremendous potential has been nowhere near realized. I am sure that in addition to those dedicated practitioners who are keeping the past and present traditions of the instrument alive, more and more creative musicians will write new music for it, bringing forth new sounds and finding new ways to make use of its powerful tone and full expressive range. This is why I often refer fondly to the bass saxophone as "the instrument of the future!" ■

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The Changing Role Of The Bass Saxophone

It is huge and clumsy. It won't fit in many cars. It has to be played in a customized cradle. It is very scarce and very expensive, and reeds are a problem. Yet with all this going against it, the bass saxophone's revival is in full swing. New generations of performers are finding in the bass sax an instrument capable of great power and beauty. To date, well over 200 performers have recorded with this brass behemoth, in settings ranging from jazz to classical to punk rock.

The first saxophone out of Adolphe Sax's shop was, in fact, the bass. It was demonstrated at the Industrial Exposition of 1844, and became in that year the first orchestral saxophone, appearing in Georges Kastner's opera *The Last King Of Juda*. The instrument (and its brothers) soon found its way into French military bands as well.

David Robinson, Jr.

But it took a vaudeville act to make the saxophone catch on here in the States. Dressed in clown suits, the Six Brown Brothers (sporting saxophones from soprano to bass) became enormously popular in the 1910s playing light fare of the day, with Harry Finkelstein's bass sax pumping out two bass notes per bar. Their 1914 Victor recording of *La Paloma* is almost certainly the first recorded use of the bass sax. Other sax groups, complete with bass, soon popped up to record for competing labels.

The recorded evidence tells us that the bass sax remained relegated to these saxophone novelty groups for several years. In 1918 Harry Yerkes, a popular dance band leader of the day, became the first to record the bass sax in this "oompah" role with a dance band. By 1921 (perhaps earlier), clarinetist/violinist Joseph Samuels was doubling on bass sax for occasional solos with his Synco Jazz Band. These first recorded bass sax

solos efforts are quite clumsy, and were done strictly for novel effect.

It was around this time that the bass sax's "oompah" role came into wide favor. Ray Mille, Earl Gresh, Mike Markel, Ben Selvin, Paul Specht, Les Stevens, Henry Santrey, Herb Wiedoeft, Ted Lewis, Benny Krueger, and Ted Weems were among the first bandleaders to regularly employ the bass sax in place of (or alternating with) tuba. Soon bandleaders everywhere were jumping on the bass sax bandwagon, capitalizing on its greater carrying power than the string bass and its sharper, more defined attack than the tuba - considerable advantages in the days of acoustic recording equipment.

The sudden popularity of the instrument was due in large part to the tremendous success of the California Ramblers. This quintessential "hot dance" band built its sound around the booting bass sax of Adrian Rollini, the instrument's first and perhaps unsurpassed master. Rollini's influence can hardly be overestimated. He transcended the "oompah" role with his bluesy, fluid bass line, and he firmly established the instrument's hot and sweet solo

California Ramblers

Pictured in the center of this 1927 photo of the California Ramblers, standing next to his future wife to be - Dixie - is the great bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini. Also pictured is Adrian Rollini's bass saxophone. During the 1920s the California Ramblers was a very popular music group of between nine and fourteen musicians from the studios of Hollywood, led by singer Ed (Wallace T.) Kirkeby who assembled the musicians to record under his name from 1921 to 1937. Violinist Arthur Hand was the music director from 1922 to 1925. Adrian Rollini was a regular member of the California Ramblers, who at different times included the best contemporary musicians such as the Dorsey Brothers, Miff Mole, Red Nichols, Arnold Brilhart, and others. The band was also known as the Golden Gate Orchestra, and other groups who consisted of essentially the same personnel were the Vagabonds, the Variety Eight, the Goofus Five, and Ted Wallace's Orchestra. The California Ramblers recorded prolifically on numerous labels and were among the pioneers of the early big band style of jazz. Their music consisted largely of popular dances hits presented in clever arrangements. For many years their 'roadhouse' was the Ramblers Inn, near New York City.



Photo courtesy Arthur Rollini (brother of Adrian Rollini)

potential. He was, in fact, one of the first saxophonists to swing. He utilized the full range of the horn, plumbing the depths for bass work, and rising to the baritone range (with occasional descents) for improvised solos. Rollini, who also played the goofus, hot fountain pen, vibes, xylophone, piano and drums, recorded several hundred sides on bass sax with the California Ramblers (and various sub-groups) from 1922 to 1931, as well as sessions with Bix Beiderbecke, Red Nichols, Bert Lownes, Joe Venuti, Frankie Trumbauer, Jack Teagarden and many others - including a stint in England with Fred Elizalde. Among Rollini's arsenal of effects was his ability to produce harmonic splits at will, territory that remained otherwise uncharted for years. Three particularly good examples of Rollini's style are *San* by the University Six (hot), *Allah's Holiday* by Red Nichols' Five Pennies (sweet), and *The Meanest Kind of Blues* by the Louisiana Rhythm Kings (harmonic splits).

When Rollini left the Ramblers for a time, his chair was taken by Spencer Clark. Clark, also a multi-instrumentalist, boasts the longest recording career of any bass saxophonist: over sixty years. Clark's recorded work of the 20s includes a handful of solos with the California Ramblers (e.g. *Third Rail*) as well as a number of solos recorded in Berlin with Lud Gluskin et ses Jazz. The latter's *Milenberg Joys* amply demonstrates Clark's meaty bass line, hot solo skills, and ability to perform Rollini's harmonic splits.

Other important players of the 20s include tuba player Min Leibbrook, who doubled on bass sax for recordings by Paul Whiteman, Frankie Trumbauer, Joe Venuti, Irving Mills, and others. Leibbrook left us only a handful of solos, most notably Whiteman's *San*. The prolific Jimmy Johnston appears on record with a great many dance bands, especially novelty groups led by banjo virtuoso Harry Reser. Johnston's full, deep sound recorded will, but his role was strictly "oompah" with occasional breaks.

And the otherwise unknown Charlie Jackson played sustained bass tones for certain 1923 sides by the celebrated King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band.

Even Coleman Hawkins, the father of the jazz tenor, flirted with the instrument for some four years with the Fletcher Henderson band, though he would disavow it in later years. He too played bass lines and/or solos as called upon. His rather tortuous sound on bass sax is prominently featured in *Carolina Stomp*, *Spanish Shawl* and other Henderson sides of the period. Preceding Hawkins in this role was Billy Fowler, yet a careful listen to Fowler's Henderson sides reveals that he is playing baritone, not bass sax.

Duke Ellington's band, too, made occasional use of the bass sax. Altoist Otto Hardwick is listed in discographies as doubling on bass sax with the Ellington orchestra from 1927 to 1943, yet recorded examples are scarce. He is most prominently heard in *Doin' the Frog* from 1927.

As swing came into vogue in the 30s, and the more buoyant string bass became the standard bass instrument, the bass sax became uncommon. On a whim, soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet played a few tentative notes on bass sax for some Noble Sissle sides in the early 30s. Spencer Clark continued to use it with such bands as Dick Stabile's, with whom he is credited with establishing for the horn a more free-moving role for ensemble work. In the late 30s, tenor man Joe Garland, composer of such swing standards as *In The Mood* and *Leap Frog*, began doubling on bass sax with the Edgar Hayes swing band, replacing the baritone to give added depth to the sax section. Rollini was also active in the 30s, recording with bass sax up to 1938, at which time, weary of swimming against the tide, he switched permanently to vibes.

Just as Rollini was abandoning the instrument, in rushed Joe Rushton to grab the mantle. While Rushton's technical facility was not quite at Rollini's level, he was nevertheless a facile player and a muscular soloist. Switching between his two bass saxes, *Beatrice* and



Bass saxophonist Kenny Davern of 'Soprano Summit' fame



Jack Wadsworth

Buster, Rushton carried the instrument boldly into the 40s with a new role: that of a contrapuntal front-line voice in a traditional jazz ("dixieland") setting. Rushton moved easily from the bass line to counterpoint to solo work and back again. He even played the sax-section-anchor role for a time, with Benny Goodman's band in 1943 (with whom he appears in the films *Stagedoor Canteen* and *The Gang's All Here*). Rushton's work from the 40s is best represented on many traditional jazz sessions for the Jump label. *I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate* by McHargue's Memphis Five and *Carolina in the Morning* by LaVere's Chicago Loopers are recommended listening. In the late 40s, Rushton joined Red Nichols and his Five Pennies, an association that was to last some sixteen years, until Rushton's death.



left to right - Spencer Clark, Joe Rushton & Frank Chase in this 1954 photo. Photo by Jack Howe

left to right - Sonny Dunham and Glen Gray holding an Eb Contrabass saxophone in this 1938 photo. In 1937 Glen Gray took over the leadership of the Glen Gray and the Casa Loma Orchestra, retiring in 1950.



Yerkes Flotilla Orchestra taken on Arnold Brilhart's 18th birthday, September 30, 1922, in St Louis, Missouri at the Missouri Theatre, this rare photo includes bass saxophonist Dominic Ciffarelli and multi-reed specialist Arnold Brilhart.

left to right - (front row) Arnold Brilhart, Harold Lolstad, Dick Barton, Saxie Crimmons, & Dominic Ciffarelli. (second row) Tony Colucci, Bob Nauman, Bud Moore, Matt McCarthy, Jimmy O'Keefe & Jerry Jerome

Photo courtesy Arnold Brilhart

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Aside from Rushton's work, the bass sax all but disappeared in the 40s. Bandleader Shep Fields used it in his experimental all-reed orchestra of the early 40s, and in the mid 40s Boyd Raeburn's bass sax anchored his forward-thinking big band's sax section; but virtually the only soloists on the horn were Rushton and Englishman Harry Gold. Gold, a tenor player who had bought a bass sax from Rollini after it fell off a truck, used the instrument in a Rushton-like counterpoint/solo role with his traditional jazz group, the Pieces of Eight.

In the early 50s, swing and bop tenor man Charlie Ventura began using the bass sax for solo work with his own modernish combos, and with the Gene Krupa Trio. *Stardust* was a showpiece for his bass sax work. In traditional jazz, Rushton continued to record, notably with Red Nichols and the Rampart Street Paraders. New players assuming the counterpoint/solo role in the 50s included Jack Crook (Turk Murphy Jazz Band), multi-instrumentalist John Dengler (Billy Maxted's Manhattan Jazz Band), and Chicago clarinetist Frank Chace. On the big band front, Christian Chevalier's orchestra included the bass sax of Armand Migiani, and The Commanders included a succession of bass saxophonists in the reed section. The Commanders' 1955 recording of *The Monster* is a bass sax feature. The big-band role for the bass sax seems to have caught on in a big way in the Los Angeles and New York studios in the late 50s. Over the next decade, a number of top arrangers for modern big band found in the bass sax a voice capable of adding great depth and tonal coloration to their orchestrations. Those writing for the bass sax in this period included Johnny Richards, Pete Rugolo, Allyn Ferguson, Shorty Rogers, Gil Fuller, Clare Fischer, Enoch Light, and Stan Kenton. The availability of such fine session players as Chuck Gentry, Shelly Gold, Bill Hood, John Lowe, and Stan Webb to handle the big horn made such arrangements possible.

The last two decades have brought to the bass sax a renewed interest, and new roles. Roscoe Mitchell and Joseph Jarman carved for the instrument a permanent niche in free jazz, using it from the late 60s to the present in the groundbreaking Art Ensemble of Chicago—sometimes playing two bass saxes at once (e.g. *Odwalla*, 1972). In 1973, Mitchell recorded what must be the first unaccompanied bass sax solos: *Tutankamen* and *Oobina* (Little Big Horn). Other reed players soon began doubling on bass sax in an avant garde jazz context, sometimes combining free jazz and rock idioms: Jan Garbarek from Norway; Christer Boustedt from Sweden; Walter Huber and Peter Brotzmann from Germany; Howard Johnson and Vinny Golia from the U.S.. Brotzmann's 1976 *Humpty Dumpty* and Golia's 1980 *For the Dancers* are also unaccompanied, both employing overblowing and screaming into the instrument. The use of bass sax in modern/a-

vant garde jazz has continued in recent years. Frenchman Yochk'o Sef-fer performs on the entire family of saxophones.

Washington D.C.'s Windmill Saxophone Quartet and Holland's The Six Winds are all-sax groups sporting the bass saxes of Clayton Englar and Klaas Hekman respectively. Morten Carlsen (Denmark) plays it with Pierre Dorge and New Jungle Orchestra, and Urs Leimgruber (Holland) with Reflexionen. A new album by New York multi-instrumentalist Scott Robinson (this writer's brother), includes his *Rapture of the Deep*, a contemporary jazz piece written expressly for bass sax (and bass flute).

The bass sax has found its way into other music as well. Classical saxophone ensembles, complete with bass sax, have sprung up in recent years: examples include the Saxophone Sinfonia (with two bass saxes), Fredonia Saxophone Ensemble, U.S. Armed Forces Saxophone Ensemble, and L'Ensemble Interna-



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tional de Saxophones Bordeaux. New wave rock has also benefitted from the throaty sound of the bass sax, as used by such groups as Tin Huey, Swollen Monkeys and Star-tled Insects. A 1981 Swollen Monkeys release includes *Elephant Sex*, with Ralph Carney's bass sax and a baritone whumphing away in imitation of what the title suggests. More recently, the rap group RUN-DMC has recorded with bass sax, as has Paul Simon in his hit African-rock LP *Graceland*. And the bass sax has even been used in a folk music context, in recent albums by Canadian saxophonist Paul Brodie and by banjoist Cathy Fink. Fink's 1984 recording of *The Yodel Polka* includes an oompah bass line by Linnea Price, who at fourteen is probably the youngest ever to record on bass sax, and certainly the only female. She is the daughter of Marie Erickson, whose article appears elsewhere in this issue.

But today, the bass saxophone's most prominent role is in the traditional jazz arena, where an ever-increasing coterie of players con-

tinue to use it as a tuba and/or solo instrument. Among the current best of the Rollini school is Vince Giordano, who since the mid-70s has been using bass sax with various traditional jazz groups, as well as with pop star Leon Redbone. In an appearance on National Public Radio's, "A Prairie Home Companion," Giordano's bass sax was the subject of light-hearted ribbing by a bemused (yet impressed) Garrison Keillor. Giordano's work is well represented on recent recordings by such groups as Chicago Rhythm and the State Street Aces. Clarinet and soprano sax virtuoso Kenny Davern also played bass sax for a time in the mid-70s, recreating Rollini parts, before abandoning the saxes to play clarinet exclusively; sadly, no recordings were made. Another fine Rollini-inspired player to arrive on the scene in the mid-70s is Ronald Jansen Heijtmajer, playing with the Jazzomatic Four and other Dutch groups. A recent recording by Delirium Tremolo (banjo/violin/bass sax) shows him to advantage.

Other primary players today in traditional jazz include Russ Whitman (Sons of Bix), Paul Woltz (Golden Eagle Jazz Band and Uptown Lowdown Jazz Band), Jack Wadsworth (Great Pacific Jazz Band), and Kenneth Arnstrom (Swedish Jazz Kings). John Dengler still plays in Florida, though he has not recorded in many years; and Spencer Clark and Harry Gold, both in their 80s, remain active as well. Clark's work of recent vintage is marked by a relaxed and fluid lyricism and a beautiful tone. The most comprehensive single source of bass sax recordings today is Stomp Off Records (P.O. Box 342, York, PA 17405). This label has documented the work of over a dozen current bass saxophonists, including several named above.

If the bass sax is a curiosity, the Eb contrabass sax is an utter absurdity. Standing some 6½ feet tall, its sound cannot be adequately described. Only a handful exist, and recordings of the instrument are scarce. John Lowe recorded on contrabass sax with a sax section in 1966; Warner Wilder with a traditional jazz studio group in the early 70s; and, more recently, Anthony Braxton and Yochk'o Seffer in a free jazz context (Seffer's 1986 "La Danse des Ferrailleurs" has three contrabasses overdubbed on top of each other). And in the Believe It or Not category, several texts have C.G. Conn producing a Bb sub-contrabass sax around the turn of the century, with a range an octave below bass sax! One can just imagine the poor subcontrabass saxophonist climbing a ladder to perform on his instrument, then hitching up a team of horses to haul it home.

Perhaps the bass saxophonist doesn't have it so bad after all! ■

SOUND BEGINNINGS



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DAVE ROBINSON is a jazz trumpeter, writer, broadcaster, and historian. He is a jazz consultant to the Smithsonian Institution, music director of a youth jazz band, and a director of the American Federation of Jazz Societies. He is currently writing a bass sax discography, documenting more than a decade of research on the subject. He recently bought a bass sax (Conn Ca. 1910), on which he can almost play *Basin Street Blues*.

The Saxophone Mouthpiece

Ralph Morgan



Theme And Variations Of The Bass Saxophone Mouthpiece

Since the consensus of opinion is that Adolphe Sax introduced the bass saxophone as the first member of the family, it must follow that the first saxophone mouthpiece was also the bass. The design characteristics of that mouthpiece influenced all the succeeding ones for some 75 to 80 years. This is not to say that there were not many attempts to better or modulate that first melody line. Adolphe Sax concocted his marvelous two part invention in such a manner that the cubic volume of the interior (bore and chamber) of the mouthpiece became one of the two mathematical constants in the equations used to physical and acoustical design of the saxophone. So accurate was this work that any slight change in either the positioning of the mouthpiece on the neck cork, or the volume of the interior in cubic centimeters, will cause a noticeable change in the tuning patterns of the instrument. No doubt this fact contributed to the lack of wide variations in size and shape of the mouthpieces for many years.

In the meantime, Adolphe had also blessed us with the next smaller offspring of the family, the baritone, with a mouthpiece which, according to proper design, was only a little smaller than the bass models, especially in the all-important interior volume, as well as being almost the same length. Many players, in order to keep in tune to the demands for newer, more lively, and brighter sounding music, began experimenting with the use of baritone mouthpieces on their bass saxes, usually with the desired results, and with a minimum of tuning and response problems. The smaller baritone reed was more

controllable, and the somewhat smaller chamber of the models available in the 20s and 30s helped generate a more brilliant sound. The better players were able, with embouchure variations, etc., to overcome the minor tuning and response problems. Adrian Rollini changed to the baritone with great success, but perhaps one of the reasons prompting this change was, as he related to a friend, "Because I just can't find any good bass sax reeds, even in New York."

In preparation for this unique (perhaps historic) issue of the *Saxophone Journal*, the major manufacturers of bass sax mouthpieces were contacted for samples of their products for measuring and tabulation. The results of this venture are found in the various illustrations to follow. Please keep in mind that there may be other makes available, but they were not submitted.

To guide you in comparing the illustrations, of currently available mouthpieces manufactured for use on a bass saxophone (**Longitudinal Sections Of Mouthpieces And Cross Sections At The Largest Point In Chamber**), and my **Comparative Specification Chart**, the following information in paragraphs 1 through 8 should help focus the "Theme and Variations" of this bass saxophone mouthpiece survey.

1. Compare the interior volume figures to that of the original Adolphe Sax drawing, labeled 'A.' The greater the difference, the greater will be your problems of tuning. The low C on most bass saxes tends naturally to be flat. The smaller the mouthpiece chamber, the more this note is affected, and the higher the pitch of the notes above the staff.

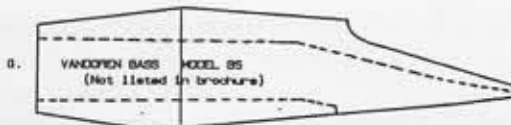
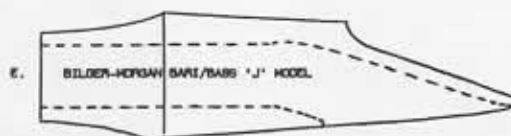
2. The cross section through the throat, as seen to the right of each drawing, determines the smoothness of air flow into the neckpipe. The more the variation from round, the more turbulence in the air column, with an increasing amount of harshness in the tone quality, and poor response in certain notes.

3. The figures for the bore size and taper shows a wide variation. The larger the taper, the greater the tendency for the mouthpiece to work loose on the neck cork.

4. The chamber size figures show the largest cross section measurement. One can well imagine that the barrel-like chamber of the sax produced a very dark but smooth sound, but with a sense of stuffiness to the player.

5. Carefully study and compare the chamber and baffle configurations as shown by the dotted lines in the drawings. The character of tone so unique to the bass saxophone should, in my opinion, be preserved as much as possible, regardless of the various types of music being performed. Sharp corners and irregular configurations, while creating an 'edge' to the sound, do it by a somewhat artificial method, that of creating turbulence in the air column, as is done by insertion of wedges. The adverse effects of this are to seriously reduce the chamber volume, causing erratic and perhaps uncontrollable pitch problems, as well as producing a harsh strident tonal quality not normally associated with the bass saxophone. I'm sure you will want to try several different makes to determine these effects if in the market for a mouthpiece, carefully noting the chamber shapes. Playing tests were conducted using the samples sent

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□ **LEO POTTS, SAXOPHONE: S159 or C159 • Maurice**
Tableaux de Provence: **Grieg** Erotik: **Sayaka Aklyama** Piece: **Hayes**
Concertino: **Relding** Serenade in Sol: **Relding** Johnny

□ **HARVEY PITTEL, SOPRANO & ALTO SAXOPHONE: S105**
• **Loelliet** Sonata: **Rodriguez** Sonata: **Stevens** Dittico: **Maurice**
Tableaux de Provence "Stimulating musically," N.Y. Times

□ **BRIAN MINOR, SAXOPHONE: S151 • Persichetti** Parable:
Lunde Sonata: **Leon Stein** Quintet for Saxophone & Strings (with
Chicago Symphony String Quartet & Lawson Lunde - piano)

□ **BARITONE SAXOPHONE: MARK WATTERS: S152 •**
Bolsmortier Sonata: **Bonneau** Caprice: **Linn** Saxifrage Blue: **Pelusi**
Concert Piece for Baritone Sax, Brass Quartet & Percussion

□ **NOVA SAXOPHONE QUARTET: S153 • G. Pierre** Introduction
et Variations: **P. Pierne** Trois Conversations: **Clerisse** Introduction et
Scherzo: **Absil** Suite "Sensational Playing," The New Records

□ **BRIAN MINOR, SAXOPHONE: S154 • Leon Stein** Sextet for
Alto Saxophone & Wind Quintet: **Creston** Suite: **Helden** Sonata (w/
Westwood Wind Quintet & Cola Heiden - piano)

□ **HARVEY PITTEL SAXOPHONE QUARTET: S155 or C155 •**
Bach Fugue: **Glazunov** Quatuor: **Joplin** Cascades: **Rivier**,
Desenclos, **Bozza** & pop tunes w/ Shelly Manne - drums, &
Monty Budwig -bass

□ **EUGENE ROUSSEAU & DENNIS BAMBER, SAXOPHONES:**
S156 • Loelliet Trio: **Smith** Mood Music: **Lamb** Barefoot Dances:
Cunningham Piano Trio "Artistically played," The Instrumentalist

□ **HARVEY PITTEL TRIO: S157 or C157 • Bach/Rodby** New
Classics Suite: **Creston** Sonata: **Villa-Lobos** Bachianas Brasileiras Aria:
Duke Ellington Medley (saxophone, cello & piano)

□ **JAMES DAWSON, SOPRANO SAXOPHONE: S158 •**
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Cello: **Hartley** Diversions: **Kosteck** Fantasy: **Dakln**, & **Caravan**

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**COMPARATIVE SPECIFICATION CHART
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us, using an old Buescher bass of the 119,000 series. The tuning characteristics were varied, as you would suppose. The best scale, not varying more than 10 'cents' (hundredths of a semitone), was produced by mouthpieces 'B,' 'D,' and 'E.' the most erratic of the models went as much as 52 'cents' sharp, or almost unuseable. Another reason to choose carefully.

6. The materials used in all the models we had were hard rubber. In the early days this was referred to as Vulcanite. Other labels were used such Ebonite, Eburnated Hard Rubber, Steel Ebonite, Metal Ebonite, etc., were used by makers. Hard rubber is generally recognized as having the capability of producing a wider spectrum of harmonic vibrations, thus giving a richness of sound not possible with metals. One mouthpiece I consider worthy of note, and perhaps a search on your part, is the first Otto Link models, the metal baritone pieces, in a #4 or #4★ facing, since it has a large round chamber, and gives good results on a bass. You may want to have it refaced to open it up, but more change is not needed.

7. The measured length of facing curve varied greatly in our models, but I did not chart them. Briefly, the longest, at 31mm, is the 1928 model Buescher. The others are, 'D' and 'F' = 30mm, 'I' = 29mm, 'E' = 28mm, 'C' = 27mm, 'H' = 26mm, and 'G' = 22½mm. There are probably variations in other facing numbers by the makers. As a general rule, the larger the instrument, mouthpiece, and reed, the longer the facing curve should be to allow maximum working efficiency for the larger reeds. The short facings will not allow the heavier portions of the reed to contribute the lower harmonics, therefore producing a thin sound, as well as tuning problems lack of proper production of the lower notes. Some of the bass sax players tell of using a 'slap tongue' approach to producing the low notes, no doubt from their use of a small chamber baritone piece.

8. The figures for the tip rail indicate the distance from side to

MOUTHPIECE MAKER	SKETCH LETTER	INTERIOR VOLUME- CC's	BORE SIZE AND TAPER	LARGEST CHAMBER SIZE.	OVERALL LENGTH	WIDTH OF TIP RAIL	BORE LENGTH
ADOLPHE SAX	A.	33.55 cc	.680/.620"	1.200"	4.960"	.790"	1.550"
BUESCHER	B.	28.6 cc	.685/.670"	.850"	5.210"	.790"	2.150"
BABBITT CO.	C.	31.75 cc	.685/.670"	.955"	5.240"	.735"	1.500"
BILGER-MORGAN	D.	30.425 cc	.686/.675"	.920"	5.236"	.785"	2.150"
BILGER-MORGAN	E.	27.43 cc	.685/.670"	.785"	5.160"	.760"	2.510"
WOODWIND CO.	F.	28.10 cc	.750/.720"	.550"	5.220"	.737"	2.808"
VANDOREN CO.	G.	26.20 cc	.705/.625"	.705"	5.320"	.800"	2.815"
RICO CO.	H.	23.92 cc	.695/.620"	.510"	5.420"	.770"	3.390"
RICO CO.	I.	24.20 cc	.695/.620"	.510"	5.420"	.770"	3.372"

INDIVIDUAL MOUTHPIECE FACINGS, PRICES, AND SOURCES

MAKER	FACINGS AVAILABLE	RETAIL PRICE	WHERE AVAILABLE
BABBITT CO.	R-25, R-26, R-27	\$134.98 Incl. Cap & Lig	Most Retail Music Dealers
BILGER-MORGAN	(Bass) 1C	\$114.50	" " " "
BILGER-MORGAN	Bar/Bass 6J, 7J, 8J	\$134.50	" " " "
WOODWIND(G. LEBLANC)	B-4, B-5, & B-6	\$104.50	" " " "
VANDOREN CO.	One facing .078"	\$150.00	" " " "
RICO (Baritone Models)	#'s 3,5,7,9,611	\$ 32.00 \$ 35.00	" " " "

BASS SAX REEDS, CAPS, AND LIGATURES AVAILABLE

BRAND NAME	REED STRENGTHS	PRICE	BOX OF	MPCE. CAP	LIGATURE
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VANDOREN	#2, 3, & 4	\$29.50	5	Set, Cap & Lig. \$55.65	\$26.40
CHARPEN	#1½ through 3½	\$63.00	25		
BABBITT CO.				Cap&Lig. Incl. with Mpc.	
AMERICAN PLATING (Standard in most stores)				No prices available.	

side, and should accomodate the width of reed being used, giving it good support. Let's compare the bass and baritone reeds:

A. Reed length - The baritone is normally about 1/8" longer than the bass reed. The blade, or scrape, of the bass is about 3/8" shorter than the baritone.

B. Tip width - The bass reed measures about .760," just over 3/4," while the modern baritone reed is from .710" to .720," varying with the maker. The longer and narrower baritone reed gives better control.

As in Rollini's day, good bass reeds are in short supply, as is good cane of any discription. In visiting some of the older dealers, especially

in small towns, one can sometimes find an old stock of reeds. I recently found some forty year old Rico and Vandoren reeds. What a joy to experience again the sharp woody flavor of a properly seasoned piece of cane! Happy Hunting!

In addition to the ligatures listed, I suggest you might check out Rovner and Winslow, who may make them. And, with those words, I will close by saying I hope I have added a little bit to your store of knowledge about the mighty bass!

Questions Regarding Sax Mouthpieces

Questions from *Saxophone Journal* readers about saxophone mouthpieces should be sent to Ralph Morgan, Morgan Enterprises, 490 Forest Drive - Springfield, Ohio 45505. □



Bill Holcombe

An Interview With Bill Holcombe By Jim Snedeker

Writing For Bass Saxophone

It's rare when two people first meet over a bass saxophone. But that's what happened to Bill Holcombe (the well-known arranger) and Jim Snedeker (a saxophonist and writer), the authors of this article. What's even stranger is that they both lived for years in central New Jersey without meeting, and it took Jim's moving to Vermont to get them together. In Vermont, Jim met Joseph Powel, who had just bought a bass saxophone from Bill. On a recent trip back to New Jersey, Jim and Bill met to discuss arranging music for the instrument; the result is this interview. Could anything be more simple?

What were your first experiences with the bass saxophone?

Well, back in the early 40s, I played with a Trenton (NJ) saxophone band led by Joe Mayer. We played regular band music, except all the parts were played on saxophones. The C soprano would play the flute parts, the Bb sopranos would play the clarinet and trumpet parts, the tenors would play the baritone horn part, right on down the line to the bass saxophone as the bass instrument. Then I played with Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians, we had six saxes, with the sixth sax being a bass. I remember the player, Ray Fox, who was a former vaudevillian who could play two sopranos at once!

I had already begun arranging for Tommy Dorsey when I began writing for my own chorale group with strings, woodwinds and brass. At that point, I began using the bass saxophone in place of the tuba. I found it had a gutsy sound that the tuba didn't have. In fact, in the

late 50s and early 60s, the bass sax became fashionable in Broadway shows as the bass instrument. This was because the upright string bass player would often double on tuba, and it was awkward when the player had to switch instruments during a number because the bottom would fall out. Shows from that time, *West Side Story*, *Music Man*, all had a bass saxophone part. I'll always remember the time I had subtlet a bass saxophone to a friend who was doing a show. A dancer fell into the pit, and completely demolished the instrument! Then in 1965 I played *We Take the Town* with Robert Preston on Broadway. I rented a bass from George Sarkis, and ended up buying it so I wouldn't have to worry about borrowing instruments again!

How does the bass saxophone benefit a saxophone ensemble?

It relieves the baritone from the bass function. Oddly enough, the real Achilles' heel of the baritone is the lower register. The notes are not that easy for the average player to play with real control. By adding the bass, say to a quartet, it lets the baritone play a true baritone role, filling in between the bass and tenor. For example, on a solid low C major chord with a sax quintet, you can put the bass on the low C (his D), and the baritone on the 5th, concert G (his E). This is quite a good note on the baritone and can be played loud or soft with ease. The tenor gets the 3rd, the E (his F#), another quite controllable note. Then you put the alto on a G (his E), and the soprano on the C (his D), and everybody has comfortable notes.

Another example of where the

bass comes in handy (Ex. 2) is when you need the baritone to play a note that the tenor can't. The tenor can't play the G concert, but with the bass present on the low C, you can give the G to the baritone instead. On the next chord, the D minor triad, the tenor can play the low A (his B), but it would be very hard to play this softly. So, if you had a bass to play the bottom, the baritone could play this note with which the tenor would have trouble. On the baritone it would be an F#, a real good note. So when you have a bass saxophone added, everybody's in a better position to play the whole passage comfortably. Here the reason for having the bass is to relieve the tenor from having to play so low.

What would you find as the ideal instrumentation for a saxophone group with a bass saxophone?

I'd say the most reasonable group in which to include a bass sax would be a sextet: soprano, two altos, tenor, baritone, and bass. Sometimes in a quintet, you can have too large a range for the number of voices. You can't go too high on the soprano or too low on the bass because with only three other voices, it's difficult to sufficiently fill in the inner notes. So if I was going to organize an ensemble and write a book for it, I'd go with the six.

What about the effect of a bass saxophone part on a piece's marketability?

Well, I think you can market a sax quintet effectively as an alternative to a brass quintet. There's a big opportunity for jobs around Christmastime, to play outdoor con-

certs and gazebo things. I've even had a request to arrange classical wedding music for saxes. The saxes have just as good a sound as the brass. With the bass saxophone present, you can arrange the music in a similar fashion to the brass quintet, because you have a saxophone to fill each of the roles of the brass:

Bass sax ► Tuba; Bari sax ► Trombone; Tenor ► French horn; Alto ► 2nd trumpet; Soprano ► 1st trumpet.

But wouldn't writing the arrangements with a bass saxophone part cut down on the number you'd sell?

I'd have to make any bass sax part I publish an optional part that could also be played on the string bass. I'm planning, in the future, to publish an optional bass sax part to take place of the string bass part. In fact, an English group called the Saxtet was over here recently, and they played some of my arrangements with the bass sax instead of the string bass part, and it worked very nicely. It's like publishing an alternate alto part to replace the soprano, since not everybody has or plays the soprano.

What are your thoughts on publishing for the solo bass saxophone?

There, you're taking a risk, of course. How many do you think you'd sell? You can't even find out how many bass saxes were ever even made!

Any thoughts on the future of the bass saxophone?

I think that with the increased popularity of the saxophone, the bass will make headway. Look at the soprano, twenty years ago it was also rarely heard, and now you have it played all over the place by jazz and pop players like Kenny G., Grover Washington, Jr., and Branford Marsalis. Chuck Mangione's sax players have all played sopranos. We have a soprano sax craze!

There's a general saxophone craze nowadays.

That's right, and the more people

there are playing saxophones, the more groups you're going to have. And the more groups, the bigger they're going to get. Sooner or later you're going to need the bass. You certainly wouldn't want a saxophone octet of four altos, three tenors and a baritone!

Just a brief aside, what do you think of a C-melody saxophone revival?

I think it would be great. Arranging for the C-melody would be fun. It could fit between the alto and the tenor. In the hands of a good player, it would work nicely. Come to think of it, the C soprano is a great instrument, too. I think there are loads of those lying around in attics!

Back to the bass saxophone; it's a beautiful instrument and is very useful, but I'm thinking about factors such as cost and availability. Aren't they made only on commission?

That's true, so if you don't already have one, it's kind of sticky, even if you do have the \$4,500 it takes to have one made. So I think it's up to the *Saxophone Alliance*, the *Saxophone Journal*, and people like me who publish for the instrument to encourage some kind of breakthrough to get more of these instruments made. One reason they cost so much is because so few are made.

What about getting schools and colleges to purchase them? That would be an ideal way for future musicians to get to know the instrument, take a liking to it and pick it up permanently.

That's a good idea. As a matter of fact, years ago the Selmer, LeBlanc, and Buffet people had a campaign to get schools to buy contrabass clarinets. A lot of places did get them and still have them. As a result, people found out what a worthwhile instrument it is, and it's had a lot of music written for it. Remember, that in the 20s and 30s, lots of bands had bass sax parts. Its use was a lot better realized then than it is now. There's no reason why that can't happen again. And with the sax craze we talked about, you're going to have so many sax players, you're going to have to do something with them. Sopranos are going to be needed, too. People don't realize that the saxophone section's role in the concert band is going to be greatly expanded soon. It could work both ways, too. For the instrument companies, they'd be able to sell the bass saxes because the schools are going to have a ton of sax players to make happy, and the schools could talk the manufacturers into making them at an affordable level. Both sides would win. And best of all, we would see a new prominence from the bass saxophone! ■

KENNY G

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Saxophone Playing Techniques

David Bilger



The Joy Of Playing Basso

It all started in the early 1970s when I was shown a most magnificent instrument, a gold plated bass saxophone in mint condition. It was made in 1926 by the Conn Company and over forty years later not even a scratch or a dent marred this beautiful bass saxophone. The bell was artistically engraved, as was customary years ago, and I was truly in awe. Also, it was in its original case and with what appeared to be the original mouthpiece (a large "dill pickle" mouthpiece with an excavated, round, smooth chamber). Of course, I asked to play it and I was pleasantly surprised at the full-bodied, rich, mellow low tones that I was able to produce. That night, a discussion took place with my wife, Dorinne, at which time I tried to convince her that we really did not need to buy a new washer and dryer, but that I really needed that bass saxophone. At any rate, the next day I bought it, and never regretted it, although Dorinne may have regretted it on wash day!

I loved to practice for hours on that instrument and also enjoyed researching the history of the basso. I was surprised to learn that the bass saxophone was the first saxophone that Adolphe Sax invented in the early 1840s - yes, even before the alto!

In the summer of 1975 I had the pleasure of being asked by Sigurd Rascher to play the basso at a very special workshop in Schenectady, New York. I had a marvelous time playing day after day of saxophone ensemble music consisting of transcriptions and originals. It was a thrill to play with Carina Rascher and the other members of the original Sigurd Rascher Quartet plus

other fine saxophonists. The "special" part of the week was a recording session which resulted in the release of Volume I of the Rascher Saxophone Ensemble recording. It is still available through Woodwind Service. It inspired me so much, that I still take the basso wherever I can (it's a bit large for the overhead bins on an airplane) to colleges, universities, and public schools to work with saxophone ensembles.

Several years later, I organized and conducted the Saxophone Sinfonia, a professional ensemble of eighteen top notch players. The original instrumentation was two sopranos, eight altos, four tenors, two baritones, and two basses.

Recently the contra-basso has been added, thanks to Paul Cohen who loaned it to us and thanks also to Dan Gordon and to our son, Dan, who played it. Incidentally, a Saxophone Sinfonia album which was recorded right after our Lincoln Center debut is also available through Woodwind Service.

Several of the best basso players that I have had the pleasure to play with and/or conduct include Lee Patrick, Joseph Powel, Barbara Christopher, Bill Reinecke, Bruce Weinberger, and Dan Bilger. Also, one of the finest players, a wonderful musician and a good friend was the late Kenneth Deans. He was affectionately referred to by all who knew him as "Buddy."

And now let me share just a few brief but very important points on playing the basso. Naturally, the bass saxophone is not as readily available as the alto, but there are many in existence. I recommend that you look around for one in decent condition and have it repadded

if necessary. If you can't find a used one, there are two instrument manufacturers, Selmer and Keilwerth, who will now make a bass saxophone for you on special order.

THE BASSO MOUTHPIECE

Next, the mouthpiece is probably the most important of all considerations. First of all, it must have a chamber large enough to function as a bass saxophone mouthpiece for proper tuning and response. Since full-bodied, solid, rich bass tones are usually desired, a large round-chambered type of mouthpiece is crucial for the basso. I've played several other types and some baritone saxophone mouthpieces and often times a buzz, edge, an uneven scale, poor intonation, or lack of responsiveness can occur. However, I have found that a baritone saxophone reed does work quite well on some bass saxophone mouthpieces. My present set up is a Bilger-Morgan 1C bass saxophone mouthpiece, a Rovner ligature, and a LaVoz or Vandoren medium baritone saxophone reed. For a detailed explanation of the bass saxophone mouthpiece, please refer to Ralph Morgan's article in this issue.

INTONATION AND ALTERNATE FINGERINGS

If the bass saxophone players or prospective bass saxophone players use only one suggested fingering from this article, the following one should be it. I recommend that you play the 4th line D without using the octave key! Instead use the high D key as an octave key while you are fingering a low D. I've used this with much success on almost every

► Continued on page 64



David Demsey

Bass Saxophone Publications

In the past several years, the bass saxophone has been used most widely as part of saxophone ensemble works. This column will survey several of these large pieces and one new solo piece for bass saxophone.

Walter Hartley is a prolific saxophone composer. He has written for almost every combination of saxophones, and for every size instrument as well. He has recently published two works which utilize the bass saxophone. The first composition is, *A William Billings Suite* (1987, Dorn Publications; saatb,bs-\$10.00). It has three short movements, the last two of which are contrapuntal "fuguing tunes" which were innovations of their time, in part because of their much faster tempo than older psalm tunes. The sections are: Shiloh (A Christmas Carol); Kittery (The Lord's Prayer); and Sheffield. The bass sax carries the bass line exclusively here, but the sections are orchestrated so that each instrument is in its most sonorous register (except for Alto Sax I, which has a tessitura above the staff). These pieces are excellent tools for teaching ensemble playing and good intonation to inexperienced players in a public school or college curriculum, and they would enhance a concert program.

Hartley has also published a new work for bass saxophone and piano, *Sonatina Giocosa* (1987, Tenuto Publications / selling agent Theodore Presser-\$10.00), written for bass saxophonist Joseph Powell, and discussed in more depth by Laura Hunter in this issue. There are three movements: an energetic Allegro molto, featuring mixed meter; Allegretto grazioso, a lilting 3/4 felt "in one;" and Quodlibet:

Poco vivace, scherzando in rapid 6/8. There are alternate solo parts included for tuba or string bass. It would seem that the idiosyncracies of these other two instruments would limit the more agile bass saxophone, but Hartley has managed not to sacrifice musicality or overall effectiveness. Hartley's melodic lines are long and arching, with an angularity reminiscent of Hindemith.

A transcription for larger ensemble is Hector Berlioz's *Chant Sacre*, arranged by Jean-Marie Londeix (1987, Billaudot; ssaaattbb,bs-\$25.00). Strong saxophone transcriptions of later nineteenth-century works are a rarity. This piece is of particular interest to saxophonists because it was used in an 1844 Berlioz performance to showcase Adolphe Sax's new instruments, including woodwinds and brasses; the low saxophone part was undoubtedly played by Sax himself. Aside from providing a bit of a history lesson, this piece is a good teaching tool as well, since many of the passages feature interlocking eighth-note arpeggios. Some of these sections involve the bass saxophone. On the negative side, the manuscript is uncomfortable to read at times.

Another composer who was closely involved with the birth of the saxophone was Georges Kastner. His *Sextour*, arranged by Sigurd Rascher (1982, Ethos Publications; saatb,bs-\$15.00) is a piece from the same period as the Berlioz, possibly the same year. It appears to lay claim to a number of "firsts." Originally it was part of Kastner's *Method complete et raisonnee de saxophone*, the first saxophone method book. It also seems that this is the first piece of chamber music written

exclusively for the saxophone.

Rascher's arrangement remains in the original all-saxophone version, modernized to omit the use of saxophones in C and F. The style may sound flowery and overly dramatic to our modern ears, but this work will give young saxophonists a good representation of mid-nineteenth-century Parisian chamber music. Although the bass saxophone has an active early role, it is relegated to bass line to support for most of the work. The bass has the important role of propelling the piece, especially in the faster 6/8 sections. To add further historical perspective, Rascher includes a well-documented two-page treatise entitled "Georges Kastner and the Saxophone."

Tempo di Viennese (1987, Dorn Publications; ssaaaattb,bs-\$22.00) is an original work for saxophone choir by John Worley, a composer who is known more for his powerful Neo-Romantic solo works for alto or tenor saxophone. Originally a movement from his Suite for Saxophone Choir, this work borrows from the tempo and lilting flavor of the Viennese waltz style, but uses a more contemporary harmonic and melodic language.

Intrada for Saxophone Sextet by Arthur Frackenpohl (1986, Shawnee Press; saatb,bs-\$18.00) is a short, fanfare-like contemporary work which was written for Jim Stoltie at the Crane School of Music in Potsdam. An effective concert opener, it is unusual among the ensemble music we have surveyed in that it features all of the saxophones with equal amounts of independent and solo passages, including the bass saxophone. ■

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Record Reviews

Mel Martin



Bix Beiderbecke
BIX AND HIS GANG

BIX BEIDERBECKE AND HIS GANG
Adrian Rollini and Min Leibbrook
(Swaggie S1271)
Swaggie Records
Box 125, PO, South Yarra
Victoria 3141, Australia

Bix Beiderbecke - Cornet; Bill Rank - Trombone; Don Murray - Clarinet; Adrian Rollini - Bass Saxophone; Frank Signorelli - Piano; Chauncey Morehouse - Drums; Izzy Friedman - Clarinet; Min Leibbrook - Bass Saxophone; Tom Satterfield - Piano; Harold MacDonald - Drums; Lennie Hayton - Piano; Harry Gale - Drums; Roy Bargy - Piano; George Marsh - Drums

This good sounding package recreates the 1927-28 recordings of the Bix Beiderbecke group featuring the legendary Adrian Rollini on bass sax on one side, and bass saxophonist Min Leibbrook on the other. Rollini played a key role in the Beiderbecke band utilizing the bass saxophone as both a bass instrument and a solo instrument. To do this, of course, required a great amount of technical ability, tenacity, and a lot of wind. He couldn't just lay back and wait for his solo turn. He was always functioning in the ensemble, adding a crisp drive and punch when playing rhythm parts and jumping out for some very strong solos and breaks.

The selections he is featured on are all very well known: *At The Jazz Band Ball*, *Royal Garden*

Blues, *Jazz Me Blues*, *Goose Pimples*, *Sorry*, and *Since My Best Girl Turned Me Down*. The ensemble work swings very hard but tends to be a little busy to my ears, especially the work of clarinetist Don Murray. But it is Beiderbecke's beautifully swinging leads and Rollini's rollicking sound, that are the outstanding performances of these sides. Also included here is Bix's famous solo piano outing of *In A Mist* which is a wonderful, whimsical gem.

Side two is a somewhat different ensemble but features the same basic instrumentation with the bass sax played by Min Leibbrook. On some tracks the pianist is Lenny Hayton. Could this be the same Lenny Hayton that was later married to Lena Horne and was her conductor for many years (trivia buffs please respond.)? The titles on this side are *Somebody Stole My Gal*, *Thou Swell*, *Ol' Man River*, *Wa-Da-Da*, *Rhythm King*, *Louisiana*, and *Margie*. The performances seem to lack some of the spark of the other sides recorded a year earlier, perhaps due to the absence of Rollini, or the fact that they are more "arranged," as opposed to the looser approach of the earlier dates. Interesting though, is the use of the major seventh chord in *Ol' Man River*. Leibbrook tends to drop out behind the soloists where Rollini kept up a more relentless drive. It's akin to the bass player not playing behind certain soloists in a group. He also solos less than Rollini did.

These sides are definitely worth checking out for their value of the way the bass sax was used in this era as both an ensemble and featured solo instrument and, especially, the very strong playing and concept of Adrian Rollini. ■

Concerning Record Reviews

Because of the large number of new saxophone recordings being released each month, it is not possible for *Saxophone Journal* to review every new release, due to limited space in our magazine.

It is the policy of *Saxophone Journal* to publish record, compact disc, and cassette tape reviews which emphasize the positive aspects of an artist's achievements. In fairness to all saxophone artists, however, we will publish regularly a complete list of all new saxophone recordings. Hopefully, this will give recognition where it is due. At the same time, we invite artists to send new recordings for review consideration, to the Editor. □

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SWEET & HOT
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 Audiophile Records
 3008 Wadsworth Mill Place
 Atlanta, GA 30032

Spencer Clark - Bass Saxophone; John Everett Morris - Piano; John Adams - Guitar; Mike Bodolosky - Drums; Paul Burgess - Bass Viol

This record is an interesting document of one of the rare instances when the bass saxophone is a featured instrument in a small ensemble, playing leads and solos,

and not just being used for a novel effect. Sounding one octave below the tenor, in B-flat, the bass sax is showcased in this fine set of standards with a rhythm section of piano, guitar, bass and drums and on three tracks with overdubbed saxes, all played by Clark.

Not a modernist by any stretch, Spencer Clark has roots that go back to his fascination with Adrian Rollini, for whom he eventually subbed in the California Ramblers, an early improvising group from the mid-twenties, which also featured, at one time or another, Arnold Brillhart.

Working his way through a nice set of standards, Spencer Clark makes optimum use of the many timbres available on the usually unweildy big horn. He uses appropriate registers and a kind of gentle approach that is actually quite appealing. His playing on *Makin' Whoopie*, *Out Of Nowhere*, *There'll Never Be Another You*, *Watch What Happens*, *Stompin' At*

The Savoy, *Moonlight In Vermont*, *It Had To Be You*, *The Shadow Of Your Smile*, *Call Me*, and *Deep Purple* is relaxed and to the point. He never resorts to the kind of slap-tongueing and comic effects that are associated with the bass sax. Instead, he displays a legato, sonorous approach that bespeaks of a long and experienced career. Occasionally, I longed for the sound of a higher register only to realize that he was playing at the top of the horn! He puts *Moonlight In Vermont* in the key of C to allow for the use of a low B-flat, one octave lower than the lowest note on the tenor.

On *Try A Little Tenderness*, *Don't Get Around Much Anymore*, and *Blue Moon*, Spencer does a nifty job of overdubbing two altos, two tenors, and bass sax. He highlights the resonant sound of the bass in his self-made section, nicely demonstrating how much the bass can add to a section. It would have been good to hear a soprano to in-



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crease the breadth of sound.

All in all, this is a nicely balanced album and can be listened to for it's musical values and not just for the novelty of Clark's instrument which bespeaks well for his high level of musicianship. While not breaking any new ground here, Spencer Clark demonstrates that the bass saxophone can be a fine and flexible lead and solo instrument as well as a resonant support for the rest of the saxophone choir. ■

Joseph E. Viola Paul Wagner



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stay in the public's ear where it belongs. The bass saxophone is an interesting phenomenon in that it is the first saxophone built by Adolphe Sax in 1840. One hundred fifty years later (1990) there is a dedicated group of bass saxophonists worldwide who make up a camaraderie of musicianship.

The bass saxophone was immensely popular in the United States during the 1920s, and it still is in the various 1920s revival

groups active today. Because of this stereotyped image of how the instrument should be played, an important voice in the saxophone family has been under utilized. There are some notable exceptions, which we will bring to your attention in our review/overview of several recently released recordings sporting a bass saxophone player. The focus of our reviews is on the bass saxophone, so we apologize for the unceremonious dismissal of the

other saxophonists - sorry fellas, maybe next time...

The bass saxophone covers the full range of timbres traditionally associated with other members of the saxophone family. Its sound can be comical to hauntingly lyrical, with gradations of emotional appeal inbetween. From a purely commercial mass audience point of view the calls for bass saxophonists are non-abundant. Although Wally Kane has done a pretty effective job of supplying bass saxophone sounds to millions of American youth via the popular Sesame Street television show. Try this: It's time for you to depart for an engagement and you realize the bass sax won't fit into the transportation provided; or better yet try taking a bass saxophone on public transportation! Minor annoyances? Perhaps.

Our review/overview of selected recordings begins with the The Nuclear Whales Saxophone Orchestra and the bass saxophone playing of Art Springs - then Ronald Jansen Heytmajer's bass saxophone with the World Saxophone Orchestra, Leo van Oostrom's bass saxophone on the Solo movement of *Licks & Brains*, and finally Scott Robinson's bass saxophone on his composition titled *Rapture of the Deep*.

WHALIN'

The Nuclear Whales Saxophone Orchestra

This recording was a self-produced cassette (The Nuclear Whales/Whaleco Music) recorded live direct to a 2-track with Dolby SR at Studio D, Sausalito, California on February 11, and March 4, of 1989. Side one is a remake of the old Hollywood Saxophone Quartet literature, however, side two is where bass saxophonist Art Springs comes to the fore. The arrangements themselves dictate pretty much a traditional use of the bass saxophone - bass lines most of the time. Art Springs' bass saxophone does a splendid job of providing the group with an abundance of "bottom." He uses a substantial amount of slap tonguing for the bass lines and most of the moving lines. Perhaps overdone at times,

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perhaps not! In a solo on *Medley Schmedley* there is a slight loss of pitch definition but the strength of Springs' soloing adroitly proves the bass saxophone's potential in the more naked solo medium. On *Harlem Nocturne* the bass is used more melodically and the break away from the rhythm bass line style is most enjoyable. The final tune, Irving Berlin's *Alexander's Ragtime Band* (arranged by A. Frackenpohl), turns the bass loose on an exciting traditional ragtime style bass line.

In our opinion, *Whalin'* provides a scintillating exposure for Art Spring's bass saxophone and The Nuclear Whales Orchestra is a praiseworthy assemblage of fine musicians. For booking information call: 1-408-425-4721. ■

World Saxophone Orchestra

The bass saxophonist on this compact disc recording is Ronald Jansen Heytmajer. The World Saxophone Orchestra is a 12-member European saxophone ensemble conducted by Ed Bogaard. Among the large saxophone ensembles in the world today, this group is one of the elite saxophone ensembles. The music of composers Poulenc, Debussy, Gabrieli, Vellones, Berlioz, Ravel, and Milhaud is presented on this CD, all arranged by the eminent French saxophonist/teacher, Jean-Marie Londeix.

Capriccio by F. Poulenc is first and the total ensemble playing is admirable. Bass saxophonist Heytmajer handles the rapid passages nicely and with a light tongue that blends well with the rest of the saxophone voices. The Debussy *Miniatures* "medley" really champions this kind of specialized ensemble writing and playing. The ensemble blends so perfectly that the music, and only the music, commands your attention - you forget the ensemble and enjoy the music! The serious potential of saxophones to perform as a total unified choir voice is clearly demonstrated on the *Miniatures* medley. There is some especially sensitive bass saxophone work on the Mazurka movement. The lower reeds excel again on the Clair de Lune movement. Taking a

step back and looking at an ensemble of this nature it is important to note that the bass saxophone clearly belongs.

The *Ballade* by Vellones offers an interesting musical idea through the use of a saxophone choir to support a piano solo. Other selections on this CD include *Canzona XV* (Gabrieli), *Chant Sacre* (Berlioz), *Scaramouche* (Milhaud) *Trois Pieces* (Ravel), and *Le boeuf sur le toit* (Milhaud).

Special mention should be made concerning the bass saxophone playing on this CD recording. Ronald Jansen Heytmajer's ability to integrate his bass saxophone playing into the musical scheme of the World Saxophone Orchestra is simply excellent. ■

Licks & Brains

Bass saxophonist Leo van Oostrom gets things going on the title composition *Licks & Brains*. Composed by the Swedish composer Klas Torstensson, *Licks & Brains* is a triptych for saxophones with the following parts: *Solo* for bass saxophone, *Licks & Brains I* for saxophone quartet, and *Licks & Brains II* for saxophone quartet and large ensemble.

Licks & Brains is a very abstract composition that begins with the movement titled *Solo* for unaccompanied bass saxophone. The abstract nature of this opening movement requires bass saxophonist Leo van Oostrom to utilize slap tongue, combined with a sort of deadened tone effect. This is alter-

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nated with the saxophonist's own breathing and an occasional physical grunt-like sound. The nature of this movement is to repeat itself in a kind of cycle reminiscent of a gigantic heavy piece of machinery winding up for a day's work. Something slightly different is added in each cycle for good measure. As stated on the CD notes, "both tone production and mechanism (action) are amplified out of all proportion, evoking the sensation of an extremely heavy and complex piece of machinery being revved into motion; the musical development comes off the ground with a great deal of struggle." For those interested in the avant garde use of the bass saxophone, this is it! *Solo* movement is dedicated to Leo van Oostrom, who first performed the work on October 8, 1988 at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

Licks & Brains I, for saxophone quartet, takes up where the bass saxophone left off and continues to propel the total composition forward somewhat in the style of a big band sax section heading for a more extended and refined repertory of pitch, articulation, and ways of playing: enter *Licks & Brains II*! The music now appears somewhat in climax as both a mixture of already presented idioms, and the

final and more complete message of this entire "triptych for saxophone" runs its intended course.

The bass saxophone, because of its physical size and playing characteristics, has perhaps the greatest potential for creating abstract sounds. Leo van Oostrom's bass saxophone playing on the *Solo* movement of *Licks & Brains* proves without a doubt that the bass saxophone can function quite easily in the contemporary idioms. ■

Winds Of Change

The final journal in our overview of selected bass saxophone recordings is Scott Robinson's new LP titled *Winds Of Change*. One tune, *Rapture of the Deep*, is composed by Scott Robinson and features this talented multi-instrumentalist on the bass saxophone. The bass saxophone is clearly in the hands of a talented player on this take. Scott Robinson turns this cumbersome instrument into a beautiful lyrical voice with its own unique personality. In Scott's words, "...an instrument I plan to use more in the future." This recording session was produced by Scott Robinson, whose comments on the jacket's liner notes aptly mirror the title, "music, for me, is a kind of alchemy - a transformation of feelings and ideas into sound. All experiences, from

the joyous to the most painful, are potential raw materials for musical expression. Changes in life bring about changes in the music." -hence the appropriate title, *Winds Of Change*.

What better way to end our overview of these recordings than to suggest that indeed the bass saxophone is truly a musical instrument capable of producing, "winds of change!" ■

David Liebman



Tom Buckner Gerald Oshita Roscoe Mitchell



New Music
for
Woodwinds
and Voice

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Roscoe Mitchell

(1750 Arch Records S-1785)

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Berkeley, Ca 94709

Roscoe Mitchell - Bass and Tenor Saxophones, Eb Soprano Clarinet; Tom Buckner - Voice; Gerald Oshita - Sarrusophone, Baritone Saxophone, Conn-O-Sax □

Roscoe Mitchell is one of the four members of the pioneering group, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, which has been together for over twenty years. Their use of instrumental combinations achieving an extended range of colors has been one of their major contributions. Among the woodwinds used in that group is the bass saxophone played by Mitchell. He is a master of using an instrument to create a consistent color over an extended period of time. Mitchell sticks to one sound for long periods of musical length within a given piece. He is very consistent as well as insistent! In the kind of music he chooses to play most often, this is a

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very strong factor. This is because the dissonant or sometimes frantic nature of his style calls for repetition as a unifying compositional factor.

This particular combination of vocalist Tom Buckner and Gerald Oshita who plays sarrusophone, baritone sax and Conn-O-Sax features Roscoe on the E-flat soprano clarinet and tenor sax as well as the bass. Two pieces feature the bass sax. It is played in such a way on *Prelude* and *Textures for Trio*, that sometimes one forgets that it is a saxophone at all.

Mitchell chooses to strongly emphasize the low, almost subliminal nature of the instrument on these tracks. On both pieces, he drones away along with either the baritone or sarrusophone (itself, an even lower ranged instrument) to such a degree that you are drawn into the depths of music's lowest ranges. The playing is for the most part subtle, both in activity and dynamics. Yet, the effect is quite powerful, especially on *Textures*.

The music sounds quite improvised to my ears, although I would guess there are some specific points of departure notated. In the end, it doesn't really matter, because this record creates an atmosphere or environment which is much larger than what you would think three musicians could do and one of them is the voice only! The musicians play extremely together and consistent in their approach.

Roscoe Mitchell is definitely one of the music's most challenging saxophonist. He has found a way to incorporate the avant garde techniques of jazz with the sound and feel of contemporary classical music. He treats the bass saxophone as an extension of his compositional attitude. Of course, more of his bass playing can be heard on the many available records by the Art Ensemble. ■

ELEPHANTS CAN DANCE

The Six Winds

The International Saxophone Sextet
(Sackville 3041)

Sackville Recordings

P.O. Box 87 Station J

Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4J 4X8

Ad Peijnenburg - Baritone; Frans Veermerssen - Alto; Bill Smith - Sopranino; Dies Le Duc



-Soprano; John Tchicai - Tenor; Klaas Hekman - Bass

This rather recent recording (1988) features an extended version of the standard saxophone quartet. The addition of the bass and sopranino saxophones to the normal instrumentation gives this international collective a strength and coloristic variety which is quite interesting. There is a built-in power of six musicians largely improvising which for me is the highlight of this record.

There is what I would categorize a definite European slant to the music. That is the free music tradition which European jazz players have been heavily involved in continuously since its beginnings in the 1960s. In this idiom, the line between improvisation and written music is thin. Also, the developments of twentieth century classical music is keenly felt in both

the forms and harmonic colors heard throughout. The jazz tradition as Americans understand it, coming from Black culture primarily, is only a small part of this European improvised music style. When musicians like the ones on this recording improvise collectively, the music really takes off. Also, evident at different points is the sense of humor these musicians bring to their music. There is a seriousness for sure, but not so much as to disallow the type of humor which comes from odd and novel sounds played on the saxophones.

The bass saxophone is a wonderful addition to the saxophone group because its percussiveness and low timbre causes the role of the baritone to be considerably freed. It joins the melody instruments more and behaves similarly to the tenor in a normal saxophone quartet. It is a "swing" instrument in this case, in that it can go either up or down without sacrificing the overall texture. Also, with the stereo mix of baritone and bass on either channel, the bottom player is thick and even. This is nicely demonstrated on the tunes, *Drum Drie* and *The Teacher and the Creature*.

Bass saxophonist Klaas Hekman displays a smooth, very musical sound on this normally unwieldy instrument. On *Elephants Can Dance*, his solo shows a mastery of percussive techniques as well as some

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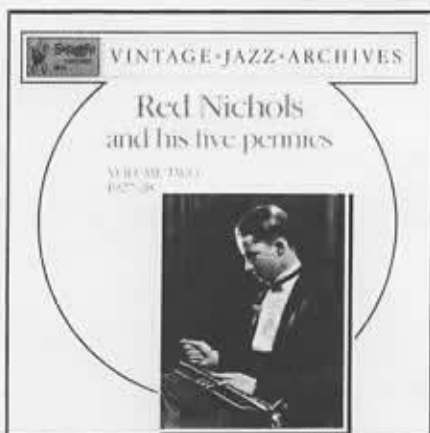
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multiphonic sounds. In truth, Hekman gets quite a bit of space in this group. In fact, I would say he leads the group along with the soprano and sopranino saxophones. On some of the more frantic tracks, he shows that the bass saxophone can be nearly as fleet as the higher saxes. Also, his arrangement of the classic Thelonious Monk composition, *Monk's Mood* is a wonderful example of rich orchestration. My favorite track is *The Undressing* by Frans Veermerssen. In this piece, the group alternates between group improvisations and sustained harmonies. It's impossible for me to tell how much is written, but in any case, the result is exciting.

The members come from Canada, Holland, and Denmark: Ad Peijenburg -baritone; Frans Veermerssen -Alto; Bill Smith -sopranino; Dies Le Duc -soprano; John Tchicai -tenor, Klaas Hekman - bass. This is a good record to see how wide a range can be achieved in the typical saxophone group with the addition of the bass. It makes one want to hear more of the bass saxophone in ensemble situations. ■

Tim Price



**RED NICHOLS
AND HIS FIVE PENNIES
VOLUME II**
Adrian Rollini
(Swaggie Records 837)
Swaggie Records
Box 125, PO South Yarra
Victoria 3141, Australia

Red Nichols - Cornet; Miff Mole - Trombone; Jimmy Dorsey - Clarinet, Alto Saxophone; Adrian Rollini - Bass Saxophone; Eddie Lang - Guitar; Arthur Schutt - Piano; Vic Berton - Drums; Leo McConville, Manny Klein - Trumpet; PeeWee Russell - Clarinet; Lennie Hayton - Piano; Dudley Fosdick, Bill Trone - Mellophone; Fud Livingston - Clarinet, Tenor Saxophone; Carl Kress - Guitar; Arnold Brilhart, Walter Livingston - Clarinet & Alto Saxophone □

Red Nichols and his Five Pennies was an adventurous visionary band out of the 1920s. This reissue on Swaggie Records still carries the ear marks of a fascinating era of musical fermentation that brought together many elements of the traditional jazz, or "pop" music of the day.

A contemporary of the great Bix Beiderbecke, Red Nichols was a gifted and versatile cornet/trumpet player and band leader. But my review will focus on the bass saxophone playing on this vintage 1920s recording.

Side A sports Adrian Rollini's bass saxophone on a hot break on Hoagy Carmichael's *Riverboat Shuffle*, followed by Pee Wee Russell on clarinet. Other cuts on Side A with Adrian Rollini's bass saxophone include *Five Pennies* (recorded in New York, June 20, 1927) featuring everyone in the band with a solo or break; *Mean Dog Blues* (recorded in New York, June 25, 1927); *Eccentric* (recorded in New York, August 15, 1927) where Adrian's bass saxophone "set the stage for the trumpet trio's well rehearsed and executed passage." Lennie Hayden's arrangement of *Ida, Sweet As Apple Cider* "would have earned Red Nichols and his Five Pennies a 'gold' record in the twenties if they had them then. It has been reported that the two issued takes of *Ida* sold over a million copies, the second take being the most common and widely used," and is kicked off by Adrian Rollini's beautiful bass saxophone lead for a full chorus. For historians, both versions of *Ida* are presented on this vintage LP. *Feelin' No Pain* is the final cut on Side A and Rollini splits a chorus with guitarists Eddie Lang and Dick McDonough.

All of the cuts on Side B were made in 1928, and as stated on the LP jacket notes, "In 1928 the Pennies would go under another personnel change. Adrian Rollini was at this time unavailable for Nichols' free-lance activities," hence, no Rollini on Side B.

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New Products

On this recording session Adrian Rollini's bass saxophone mood ranged from hot to exultant. Let's just say there is a lot of passion as he belted out short phrases containing figured bass licks, counterpoint and interplay with the melody. On one chorus alone Rollini made a tight concise musical statement before, in many instances, stepping back for the next soloist. How many improvisors can do that today? Food for thought!

One interesting observation on Side B is the appearance of Arnold Brilhart's clarinet and alto saxophone on the tune *The Japanese Sandman* (two takes to compare) - recorded in New York March 2, 1928. For those who recall an interview with the legendary Arnold Brilhart appeared in the March/April issue of *Saxophone Journal*. Arnold Brilhart knew Adrian Rollini personally and played with the great Rollini in *The California Ramblers* (1924). Some interesting comments about Adrian's bass sax mouthpiece are revealed by Arnold in the "New Products" section of this issue. ■



CLASSIC BLUES
Classic Jazz Ensemble
Ralph Norton
(Delmark Records DS-221)
Delmark Records
4243 North Lincoln Avenue
Chicago, IL 60618

Ralph Norton - Bass Saxophone; Doc Kittrell - Cornet; Armin Von der Heydt - Clarinet/Bass Clarinet; Ron DeWar - Clarinet/Tenor Sax; Jack Kuncel - Banjo, Kazoo, Vocals; Phil Pye - Drums

This Classic Jazz Ensemble *Classic Blues* LP is a ground

breaking musical statement by an amazing "traditional jazz band" from Chicago. But, this is no run-of-the-mill "Dixie" band, nor a band imitating classic jazz playing from the past.

Ralph Norton on bass saxophone frequently uses his bass sax within the framework of the rhythm section. When he steps out of that environment he gives the CJE a great four-horn front line. A native of Peoria, Illinois, Ralph Norton also leads his own band - The Varsity Ramblers, and doubles on cornet, which is his first axe. As stated on the jacket notes, "He's a fervent admirer of Adrian Rollini, who pioneered the instrument." One tune that is especially great to hear Ralph's bass saxophone solo is on *Everybody Loves My Baby*. It is an intriguing and musically color filled number.

One of the other unexpected pleasures of this set is Ron DeWar's tenor sax and clarinet playing. Ron's name is familiar to me from the University of Illinois Jazz Band of the 1960s. Also, the late Joe Farrell used to tell me about how great Ron's excellent musicianship was. A total monster!

The repertoire on this LP ranges from the Oliver/Armstrong classics *Canal Street Blues* and *Chimes Blues*, to 1920s pop tunes that have become jazz standards such as *Melancholy*, *Lonesome Road*, and the rarely played *Hello Lola*. Other tunes are Jelly Roll Morton's *Sweet Substitute*, and a composition based on an unfinished manuscript by Floyd O'Brien titled *Floyd's Classic Blues*. ■



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ARNOLD BRILHART SPEAKS ABOUT THE BASS SAX MOUTHPIECE AND RELATED PRODUCTS MARKETED BY RICO PRODUCTS

Legendary mouthpiece maker, Arnold Brillhart, who currently works as a consultant and product developer for the Roy J. Maier Corporation, states, "There are very few bass saxophone players who play bass saxophone mouthpieces. Of the eighteen players who I have either worked with (including the great Adrian Rollini), or contacted recently, most of them used baritone mouthpieces and reeds. They include: John E. Lowe, Jack Nimitz, John M. Setar, Jack B. Wadsworth, Gene Cipriano, Jay Migliori, John Mitchell, Vince Giordano, Spencer Clark, Arthur Rollini (brother of Adrian Rollini), Dave Robinson, Bob Tricarico, Scott Robinson, Don Sodice (Tex Beneke Band), Dominick Cifarelli (Yerkes Flotilla Band of the 1920s), Adrian Rollini, and John Clarke.

The only companies that might still be producing a bass saxophone mouthpiece are the old timers like Selmer, Woodwind, or Babbitt. Our company used to make bass saxophone reeds, but we haven't produced them for several years. In addition, all of the bass sax mouthpieces that I have ever heard of were made of hard rubber.

I owned and played a bass saxophone in my high school band days, and even at that time the instrument, when played using a regular bass sax mouthpiece, sounded very stuffy and out of tune. I chose a good baritone mouthpiece, and using baritone reeds and its transformation into a good playing bass saxophone which played in tune in all registers, was amazing!

When I worked with the California Ramblers (about 1924), Adrian Rollini played a baritone mouthpiece and reed on his bass sax. In my opinion, and that of many other musicians, Adrian was probably the best bass saxophone player of all time. He even played a complete line of altissimo harmonics on the bass sax, which at that time was a rare occurrence. But even before my experience with the California Ramblers, I worked with the Yerkes Flotilla Orchestra (1921-22), and our bass sax player was Dominick Cifarelli, who also played a baritone mouthpiece on his bass sax. He was a fine concert player who played with the old Creatori Band.

Our new baritone saxophone mouthpieces, marketed by Rico, are ideally suited for use on the bass saxophone. They include the baritone Grantonite B5 and B7 baritone mouthpieces, and the newest Metalite M9 and M11 baritone mouthpieces. Our baritone mouthpieces use standard tenor ligatures. Recommended reeds are the baritone reeds marketed under the brand names of Rico, Rico Royal, LaVoz, or Rico Plasticover. ■

With Kindest Regards, I Remain,

Arnold Brillhart

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"The Mirafone Corporation does not stock the bass saxophone. It would take sixty days to get one once ordered. The Keilwerth SX90 bass saxophone can be obtained through any Mirafone/Keilwerth dealer, and if someone does not know of a dealer, they can call Mirafone in California and I (Georgine Freiburg) will help them find a dealer in their area. Call 1 (800) 821-9448. Before we special order this instrument, we do require a deposit, and the instrument comes with a full one-year warranty." ■



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Michael Skinner, Marketing/Educational Products Manager for D'Addario & Company, sole U.S. importers of Vandoren products, is pleased to announce that Vandoren manufactures and sells a Vandoren bass saxophone mouthpieces which has a suggested price of \$150. "Our baritone sax ligature fits our bass sax mouthpieces and has a suggested list price of \$26.40. We also make bass sax reeds in strengths of 2, 3, and 4 with a suggested list price of \$29.50 per box of five. All of these products are available at major music stores around the country or can be ordered through any Vandoren dealer. Stores in major metro areas would include Rayburn Music in Boston, International Woodwind and Brass in New York City, The Sax Shop Ltd., in Evanston, Illinois, Kurt Heisig Music in Santa Cruz, California, and Brook Mays in Dallas, Texas - as well as many other fine music stores in the United States and Canada who sell Vandoren products." ■



BASS SAXOPHONE MOUTHPIECES AND ACCESSORIES AVAILABLE FROM G. LEBLANC

George M. Pitel, Products Accessory Manager for G. Leblanc offers the following information regarding bass saxophone mouthpieces, and related accessories marketed by G. Leblanc. "The Woodwind Company Original Series bass saxophone mouthpiece, model 2568, comes in three facings - B4, B5, and B6. They are available from any G. Leblanc dealer and from Harris Teller. The Woodwind bass saxophone mouthpiece is made of hard rubber, called "Steel Ebonite," and has a suggested retail price of \$104.50. The G. Leblanc bass saxophone cap, model 2239, has a suggested retail price of \$15, and our bass saxophone ligature, model 2209, has a suggested retail price of \$11.50. The G. Leblanc bass saxophone reeds are the Marca Superieure, and come in strengths of 2, 2½, 3, 3½, and 4. They are sold in boxes of ten reeds with a suggested retail price of \$43.95 per box. ■



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Selmer does in fact manufacture a bass saxophone. They have recently retooled and are now offering a Super Action 80/Series II model bass saxophone. It features an entirely redesigned bore (smaller diameter than the previous model). Tone hole sizes and locations have been altered as well. Due to the neck opening diameter, this model must be played with a Selmer Paris mouthpiece.

In addition, the SA80/II bass saxophone features completely redesigned keywork like that found on the other members of the S80/II alto and tenor models. A high F# key is standard. The bow guard and neck bow toric joint are featured, like the SA80/II alto and tenor models, for an air tight instrument. The neck bow water key is made from cork with a metal booster. Series II padding with metal tone boosters is standard.

The Selmer Paris Super Action 80 Series II bass saxophone is referred to as a model 56. The 1989 suggested list price is \$8,155.00 (outfit includes case, mouthpiece, cap and ligature).

Selmer manufactures a bass saxophone mouthpiece in the S80 Series. The stock number is S406, and has a suggested list price of \$225. All Selmer Paris bass saxophone mouthpieces are manufactured from hard rubber solid bar stock material and come in tip openings - very close (B*), close (C), medium close (C*), medium (C**), medium open (D), and open (E), with facings in the same order respectively matching the tip openings - medium short, medium, medium, medium, medium and medium.

Selmer Paris Omega reeds are manufactured for bass saxophone. They are available in strengths 1, 1½, 2, 2½, 3, and 3½. The suggested list price is \$71.50 for a box of twelve reeds. ■

*Stan Garber
Marketing Manager/Band Instruments
The Selmer Company*

Saxophone Playing Techniques

Continued from page 49

basso that I have played and I have played countless bass saxophones. This tone will now respond much easier and usually will also have a fuller tone and better intonation.

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Here are a few other suggestions: If low D is flat or difficult to start on, try opening the low C# key. The low C# key may also be kept on for low Eb and low E to help the response and to bring the pitch up slightly. For low F, try opening the low Eb key if the F is slightly flat or a little stuffy. For low G, try opening the chromatic F# key and for low A, open the G# key. For low C, often times this tone must be lipped up. Also be sure that the low B and Bb keys are sufficiently raised as to not cause the C to be stuffy and even flatter. For low B and Bb, if these tones are sharp and you can't lip them down far enough, the pitch can be lowered by placing a self-adhesive piece (about 4" by 5" or whatever is necessary of Dr. Scholl's foot foam pad) inside the bell opposite the low B and Bb tone holes. I have only given suggestions on the low tones, but these are the ones used the most by the basso and should be mastered before worrying about the middle and upper registers.

BASS SAXOPHONE MUSIC

I can tell you from first hand experience that with the proper equipment, proper teaching, and sufficient practicing, the possibilities are limitless for the basso. It can do much more than just play short, detached bass accompaniment figures. It can sing a beautiful

legato melody as in the bass solo of Carl Anton Wirth's *Portals* for saxophone ensemble. It is capable of fast technical passages as in Erwin Chandler's *Sinfonia* and Georges Kastner's *Sextuor*. Incidentally, the Kastner is an original saxophone ensemble piece written in 1844! Although it has been arranged by Sigurd Rascher for SSATBBs and published in that instrumentation by Ethos Publications, the original instrumentation called for two sopranos in C, one alto in F, two basses in C, and a contrabass in Eb.

The basso can also play high tones which have their own unique color and pizzicato tones as in Walter Hartley's *Octet*. It can also whisper on all the tones or play fortissimo low tones to rival a large church organ pipe. I've also performed on the basso in concert as a solo instrument. The solo literature is limited at the moment, but I feel that the bass saxophone has a bright future. The saxophone is currently the largest selling wind instrument in the world, so who knows what composers and players will do with this marvelous family of instruments? As for the idea of majoring on the bass saxophone in college - who knows? Remember, not all of the string players play the violin. Some play the viola and some the cello, and some even the basso!

A note to band directors: Why not purchase a basso and a soprano and start a saxophone ensemble? It will be great fun for the students and also a terrific learning experience. You can teach balance, tone, blend, intonation, phrasing, etc. and most of all, the joy of music making. Wouldn't this be better than instituting a "saxophone discouragement program" if you have too many saxophone students? This topic was also discussed by Dr. Lee Patrick in the Summer 1988 issue of *Saxophone Symposium*.

One last thought; as with all of the saxophones, the bass saxophone likes to be practiced a lot and then it behaves in a much nicer manner.

THE ELOQUENT SAXOPHONE



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