

## INTRODUCTION:

### THE AIMS OF THE BOOK AND HOW TO USE IT

My aims in writing this book were to give you a thorough grounding in basic saxophone technique; to help you to develop good general musicianship and knowledge of music theory; to encourage you to find your own voice and create new powers; and to foster a love of this exciting heritage of jazz music, which in itself is a labour of love – the part of all the musicians who have contributed to it.

Before you begin go to <http://www.schott-music.com/webcode/JmaSX12jN> and download the MP3s that come as supplementary material that will help you to get the most out of the book.

The foundation techniques of breathing, embouchure, tone production and tonguing are discussed in depth in the first part of the book. Mastery of these techniques is the key to playing the saxophone well, and an aspiring saxophonist must tackle them from the beginning or risk returning back to them, which is difficult to rectify. It is therefore essential that you feel comfortable with these techniques in Part One before you start Part Two.

This book sets out to give you a systematic approach to learning to read music, covering the main notation rhythms that jazz musicians are likely to encounter. The early tunes have deliberately been chosen as simple as possible, allowing you to focus on developing a good sense of pitch and to become accustomed to the basic fingering positions. Playing each of the tunes with the CD accompaniment is the goal, but you will need to practice slowly at first, using a metronome if possible. In the early chapters of this book, each of the simple written versions of the tune is generally followed by a more complex version to be played alone. For many of the tunes you will then be able to improvise over a backing track using some of the notes you have learned so far. By reading, learning, imitating and finally creating your own solo you will be developing skills that are essential for any musician.

Each chapter introduces either a new note or notes, a specific technical or rhythmical problem, or a new concept. Many of the chapters finish with suggestions for further listening, reading or practice, and you are advised to adopt as many of these suggestions as possible in order to gain maximum benefit from the method.

The study of music is an endless process, which is what makes it such an absorbing activity. It is natural that you should want to set yourself goals, such as playing in a band, but do not become so focused on the destination that you forget to enjoy the journey.

Have fun!

## ABOUT THE SAXOPHONE

The saxophone was invented in the early 1840s by Adolphe Sax, a Belgian instrument maker who was experimenting with the idea of fitting a reed mouthpiece to a brass instrument. The resultant hybrid soon found favour in marching bands as an instrument which combined the flexibility of the woodwind family with the carrying power of the brass.

The saxophone has never really established itself as a permanent member of the orchestra, although an impressive list of composers have written for it, including Prokofiev, Berg, Bernstein, Britten, Copland, Gershwin, Hindemith, Kodaly, Korngold, Penderecki, Prokofiev, Rachmaninov, Ravel, Schoenberg, Shostakovich, Stravinsky, Vaughan Williams, Villa-Lobos, Webern and Weill.

However, it is in the jazz world that the saxophone has achieved its greatest popularity, particularly since the 1930s and 1940s when it became the great sound, where the instrument's power and versatility was used to great effect by singers like Fletcher Henderson, Count Basie and Duke Ellington. It was during this period that the first great soloists like Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young began to emerge, and the potential of the saxophone to express tremendous individual differences in tone quality began to be appreciated.

There are four different sizes of saxophone, but the three in most common use are soprano, alto, and tenor. All of the saxophones are fingered in exactly the same way, but they are in different keys—the soprano and tenor in B $\flat$  and the alto and baritone in E $\flat$ . This book can be used by players of both B $\flat$  and E $\flat$  saxophones. It is provided with the appropriate version of the CD accompaniment and MP3 files already.

The soprano is the hardest saxophone to play in tune, while the baritone is a considerable way off. Beginners therefore usually start on the alto or tenor. If you are unable to play any saxophone, you should listen to as many examples of the different saxophones as possible. If still undecided you are probably best advised to start on the alto—you can always transfer to another type of saxophone at a later date. Try to seek the advice of a teacher or professional player before buying an instrument. Second-hand instruments can represent excellent value but they need to be expertly assessed.

## SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT PRACTICE

- Try to make the environment in which you practise as pleasant as possible. The room should be bright and well ventilated. It should also preferably not be too cluttered—if there is a lack of bare wall space the room will lack resonance and your sound will be deadened. Soft furnishings like thick carpets and cur-

tains have a particularly muffling effect. On the other hand, this might be an advantage if your neighbours complain about the noise!

- It is very important to practise regularly, every day if possible. There is no minimum! Many students make the mistake of believing that if they cannot practise for half an hour then it is not worth practising at all, but even five minutes of practice is worthwhile, and a small amount every day is much more valuable than one or two longer sessions a week. If you do practise more intensively, remember that it is more effective to play for short periods—twenty minutes to half an hour, with breaks in between, than to play for an hour at a stretch.
- Always warm up properly: first the breath, with some humming, then the tongue, by tonguing single notes; and finally the fingers, for example by playing scales and arpeggios.
- Do not expect to progress at a uniform rate, even if you practise. The foundation techniques in particular can take a long time to master. You may sometimes feel that you are not progressing at all, so you should not be discouraged. Such periods are usually followed by a dramatic leap forward.
- You can do a lot of valuable work with the instrument in your hands—singing, tapping out rhythms or listening to music for example.
- Avoid becoming obsessed with any one aspect of your playing—there are many different skills to acquire.

**PREVIEW**  
**Low Resolution**

# Part One The Foundation Techniques

## BREATHING

The saxophone is a wind instrument, which means that the breath produces the sound, so you must first learn to control your breath.

### Exercise 1

Lie on the floor on your back with an average-sized hardcover book on your abdomen and relax, observing the natural breathing process (Fig. 1). Notice that the book rises as you breathe in and falls as you breathe out. The abdominal muscles expand as you inhale and contract as you exhale.



Fig. 1

### Exercise 2

Still lying on the floor, breathe in through the mouth, holding the book for a moment in the up position, and then breathe out very slowly through the mouth, making a loud, whispered 'ah' sound, and keeping the throat open and relaxed. The book should move down in a slow, controlled way. Notice that the abdominal muscles contract slowly at first, and then gradually harder until the breath runs out. Aim to hold the sound at the same volume and intensity for 10–15 seconds.

### Exercise 3a

This is similar to exercise 2, but in a vertical position.

- Stand in front of a mirror.
- Place the hands on the abdomen (Fig. 2).
- Breathe in without lifting the chest or shoulders. The hands should be pushed out slightly.
- Exhale, making the same whispered 'ah' sound as in exercise 2.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

### Exercise 3b

This is like exercise 3a, but with the hands positioned as in Fig. 3.



### Exercise 3c

This is like exercise 3a, but with the hands positioned as in Fig. 4.

## ASSEMBLING THE INSTRUMENT

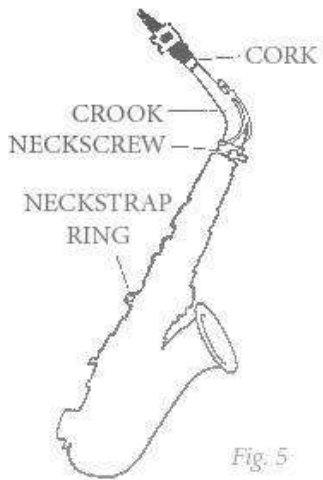


Fig. 5

- Put the neck-strap around your neck and hook it onto the neck-strap ring which is positioned about halfway down the main body of the saxophone (see Fig. 5).
- Make sure that the neck-screw is tightened and the cork is seated in the crook. The crook should point in the same direction as the neck-strap ring. The neck-screw can then be retightened to ensure that the crook is seated properly.
- Push the mouthpiece onto the work mark so that the slot or opening is facing towards the floor. The fit between the mouthpiece and the crook should be snug and the cork is tight you can apply a little cork grease (see p. 124). The position of the mouthpiece on the crook will be determined by blowing, but the cork should guide approximately 15mm of the cork should be visible.
- The position of the reed in the mouthpiece is particularly important. Reeds should always be handled with great care, since they are very delicate and easily damaged. The reed should be thoroughly moistened by placing the blade, or the upper part, in your mouth, or in a glass of water. This can be done while you are assembling the rest of the instrument together.
- When the reed is in the mouthpiece, insert it, the thickest part first (to minimize risk of damaging the reed) between the ligature and the mouthpiece. Once the reed is in approximately the right position pull the ligature down so that it is just behind the scraped out part of the reed and centralized as in Fig. 6. Make sure that the ligature does not overhang the sloping part of the mouthpiece. If the ligature is the correct size the screw threads will be visible in between the logs. The key to this tricky part of the assembly process is to undo the ligature screws just a little, so that it holds the reed in place while you make the final adjustments, by wiggling the reed up and down, or from side to side, using the thumbs and fingers.
- The tip of the reed should be level with the tip of the mouthpiece when viewed from sideways on (see Fig. 7). Take great care over this, since one millimetre too high or too low can make blowing much more difficult. Check also that the reed is straight in relation to the mouthpiece (see Fig. 8). Once you are satisfied that the reed is in the right position tighten the ligature screws a little more, just enough so that the reed cannot move. Do not over-tighten the ligature.

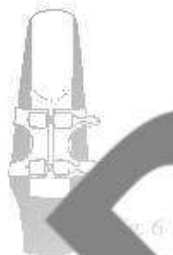


Fig. 6



Fig. 8

\* It may be easier, especially for young children, to remove the crook to perform this task.