

# Current Comments

## Everything You Wanted To Know About Sax But Were Afraid To Ask

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*Drum on your drums, batter on your banjoes./sob on the long cool winding saxophones./Go to it, O jazzmen.\*<sup>1</sup>*

Some people collect stamps or coins. The more affluent collect paintings or antique cars. Me, I collect saxophonists.

I'm not particularly compulsive about it. I would not travel a thousand miles for just another record by John Coltrane or Gerry Mulligan. I'm really a sampler. But if I hear about a sax player who is not in my record collection, I will go out of my way to add him. I can say "him" with certainty because I have never encountered a recording by a woman sax player. It is well known, however, that a woman saxophonist, Mrs. Elise Hall, commissioned Debussy's *Saxophone Rapsodie*.<sup>2</sup>

I became interested in collecting records of sax players after my friend Danny Luciano gave me a tape of "Battle of the Saxes."

Performed by sax players Ray Fern, Joe Fortunato, Stan Ross and Dan, "Battle of the Saxes" was a rare personal taping never commercially recorded. Dan was a popular Philadelphia sax player in the 1960s. He has recorded for Molly Records and Lumar Records. Though he never practices, he still plays a beautiful sax.

The saxophone is a very important instrument in recent musical history. It was invented by Antoine Joseph (also known as Adolphe) Sax in 1838, although a patent was not granted until 1846.<sup>3</sup> (p. 10) Sax was a prominent Belgian-born instrument maker who lived in Paris. His father had also been a famous instrument maker. The saxophone he created was a single-reed instrument made of metal with a conical bore or interior tube. It combined the softness of woodwind with the strength of brass.<sup>3</sup> (p. 11)

The four most common types of saxophone are the soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone. However, both higher (smaller) and lower (larger) pitched versions also exist. And back in the twenties one of the most popular instruments was the C-Melody sax. The most commonly available are the alto and tenor. The straight version of the soprano saxophone looks very much like a metallic clarinet. The curved version is less common. Mine is a Borgani from Italy.

Unlike the clarinet, which has open holes covered by the left thumb and three middle fingers of each hand, each hole on the saxophone is opened and closed with keys. The clarinet and sax both have a "register" or an "octave" key which is depressed by the left thumb when you play in the higher registers.

\*From *SMOKE AND STEEL* by Carl Sandburg, copyright 1920 by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., copyright 1948 by Carl Sandburg. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

The right thumb is used to support the weight of the instrument. However, a neck strap is used to help support the weight of the alto, tenor, and baritone saxes.

I remember the pain in my right thumb when I first took up the clarinet in high school. It also occurs when you take up the soprano saxophone for the first time after a period of not playing.

Historical accounts tell us that Sax intended his invention for military bands. In fact, the saxophone was adopted by the French Army during Sax's lifetime. The first piece composed especially for the saxophone, however, was sacred music, a hymn by Hector Berlioz.<sup>3</sup> (p. 316) It was played in 1844. Unfortunately, as I reported to you before, this music, like many other great compositions, is irretrievably lost.<sup>4,5</sup>

In 1857, Sax became instructor of the saxophone at the Paris Conservatory. His appointment was an important step in getting the new instrument recognized by serious musicians. He produced many fine students. Sax fell in and out of political favor many times during his life and the acceptance of the saxophone in France followed his political fortunes.<sup>3</sup> (p. 215) The saxophone, however, did spread to military bands outside of France and occasionally it was used in orchestral pieces.

The instrument did not find a home in jazz bands until the second decade of this century. Leonard Feather, the jazz critic, says the sax was "a late starter in jazz. For at least two decades while this music was crystallizing, it played a negligible role. Not until the late 1920s...did it cross over the line successfully after decades of identification principally with brass bands."<sup>6</sup> (p. 92) This does not mean that the saxophone was not popular outside the jazz band. Saxophonist Rudy Wiedoeft was practically a national hero by 1926. He was personally auditioned by Thomas A. Edison and became the first famous saxophone recording artist.

Many of the most influential figures in saxophone did not fall into either "classical" or "jazz" categories, according to Ted Hegvik, assistant professor of music at West Chester State College.<sup>7</sup> For example, Al Gallodoro, known for his staccato style, played in the Paul Whiteman band in the 1930s. Andy Sanella, who was prominent in radio during the 1920s and 1930s, and Clyde Doerr, another radio figure who had a saxophone octet and led his own orchestra during the 1920s and 1930s, were also influential.

Now, of course, the saxophone is recognized as a key jazz instrument. Philadelphia has a special place in American jazz saxophone history.<sup>8</sup> It has produced an extraordinary group of musicians. Among sax players, Gerry Mulligan, John Coltrane, Sonny Fortune, and Rahsaan Roland Kirk are but a few who either got their start here or lived here at one time. And the city abounds with jazz musicians who are not as well known but have played with the best. Most of them, however, got tired of traveling or starving and took up alternative professions while nursing along their true love for music. One of my closest friends, Bunch Hammond, played bass for Horace Heidt and backed up Nina Simone, among others. His trio, including saxist Johnny Belmont and pianist Esau Coleman, plays regularly at the chic "Saloon" in South Philly.

The bible, or current authority on jazz musicians, is a bi-weekly magazine called *Down Beat*. (It is covered regularly in *Current Contents*<sup>®</sup> / *Arts & Humanities* and the *Arts & Humanities Citation Index*<sup>™</sup>.) The name of the magazine is somehow a reflection of a lot in jazz. Apart from its strict musical meaning (the downstroke of the conductor indicating the first stressed beat of a composition or the first beat of the first measure of a piece), the word has connotations of sadness in its ordinary lay usage. The word can

mean pessimistic or gloomy, as when you talk about a play with a downbeat ending.

*Down Beat* takes a poll of its readers each year to select the most popular jazz musicians in several categories. It also polls critics for their opinions of the best jazz players. Saxophone players are now chosen in the four most common sax categories—soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone.

In the last *Down Beat* poll appearing in the December 21, 1978 issue,<sup>9</sup> the most popular alto sax player was still Phil Woods. He had also won the poll the previous three years. In Figure 1 I've listed all the alto sax players who've won the *Down Beat* polls since they began and the years they won the award. In Figure 2 I've listed the tenor saxophonists, followed in Figure 3 by the sopranos and baritones. The award for soprano was only begun in 1969. The popularity of Stan Getz and Gerry Mulligan has been phenomenal. However, Figure 4 shows that jazz critics' selections don't always agree with the fans!

**Figure 1:** The winners of *Down Beat's* Reader's Polls for Alto Saxophone 1937-78.

Jimmy Dorsey (1937-39)  
 Johnny Hodges (1940-49)  
 Charlie Parker (1950-54)  
 Paul Desmond (1955-59)  
 Cannonball Adderley (1960-61)  
 Paul Desmond (1962-67)  
 Cannonball Adderley (1968-71)  
 Ornette Coleman (1972-74)  
 Phil Woods (1975-78)

My colleague and fellow jazz lover William Pryor, Boyd professor of chemistry at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, points out that the *Down Beat* list does not reflect the position of people in jazz history.<sup>10</sup> For example, soprano sax player Sidney Bechet did not appear on the list despite his considerable influence on the development of jazz sax playing in the 1920s and beyond. Nor does the list reflect a large number of sax players who are important to jazz buffs; Paul Quinichette, Bud

**Figure 2:** The winners of *Down Beat's* Reader's Polls for Tenor Saxophone 1937-78.

Chu Berry (1937)  
 Bud Freeman (1938)  
 Coleman Hawkins (1939)  
 Eddie Miller (1940)  
 Tex Beneke (1941-42)  
 Vido Musso (1943)  
 Lester Young (1944)  
 Charley Ventura (1945)  
 Vido Musso (1946-47)  
 Flip Philips (1948-49)  
 Stan Getz (1950-59)  
 John Coltrane (1960-61)  
 Stan Getz (1962-63)  
 John Coltrane (1964-66)  
 Stan Getz (1967-71)  
 Sonny Rollins (1972-76)  
 Dexter Gordon (1977-78)

Freeman, and Zoot Sims are only a few examples. Professor Pryor also comments that *Down Beat* now covers a lot of popular music and rock. Many committed jazz buffs subscribe to another, more specialized, British publication called *Jazz Journal International*.

A lot of jazz sax music may be "upbeat" but it is mostly soulful and downbeat. Probably no sax player today better reflects this new pensive, lyrical style than Jan Garbarek of Norway. Coincidentally, I am acquainted with Jan's father, Czeslaar, director of Math and Science Libraries at the University of Oslo. Recently Jan and I exchanged transcriptions when we met after a concert he gave in Philadelphia with pianist Keith Jarrett. Jan is well known to American jazz lovers through his association with Jarrett.

There is no *Down Beat* type poll for the most popular classical musicians in any category—at least not that I know

**Figure 3:** The winners of *Down Beat's* Reader's Polls for Soprano (1969-78) and Baritone (1944-78) Saxophone.

**Soprano**  
 Joe Farrell (1969)  
 Wayne Shorter (1970-78)

**Baritone**  
 Harry Carney (1944-48)  
 Serge Chaloff (1949-51)  
 Harry Carney (1952)  
 Gerry Mulligan (1953-78)

**Figure 4:** The winners of *Down Beat's* International Jazz Critic's Polls 1953-1978.

<b>Alto Saxophone</b>	Sonny Rollins
Charlie Parker (1953-54)	(1962-63)
Benny Carter (1955-56)	John Coltrane (1964-66)
Lee Konitz (1957-58)	Sonny Rollins (1967-70)
Johnny Hodges (1959)	Dexter Gordon (1971)
Cannonball Adderley (1960-61)	Sonny Rollins (1972-76)
Johnny Hodges (1962-66)	Dexter Gordon (1977-78)
Ornette Coleman (1967)	<b>Baritone Saxophone</b>
Johnny Hodges (1968-69)	Harry Carney (1953-54)
Phil Woods (1970-71)	Gerry Mulligan (1955)
Ornette Coleman (1972-73)	Harry Carney (1956)
Anthony Braxton (1974)	Gerry Mulligan (1957-58)
Phil Woods (1975-78)	Harry Carney (1959)
<b>Tenor Saxophone</b>	Gerry Mulligan (1960-64)
Stan Getz (1953-55)	Harry Carney (1965-73)
Lester Young (1956)	Gerry Mulligan (1974-78)
Stan Getz (1957-58)	<b>Soprano Saxophone</b>
Coleman Hawkins (1959-60)	Lucky Thompson (1969)
John Coltrane (1961)	Wayne Shorter (1970-78)

about. The world of classical music does not have a star system as they do in popular music or jazz. So I've had to find out the names of the great classical saxophonists by research and interviews. It may even surprise some readers that the saxophone is a classical instrument. There is a limited amount of literature for classical saxophone in comparison to the number of works available for other instruments. Nevertheless, a substantial repertoire of classical music for the sax has been compiled by Jean-Marie Londeix of the National Conservatory in Dijon, France.<sup>11</sup>

One of the pioneers in bringing classical saxophone to the attention of

the world was Marcel Mule, a French player who was a professor at the Paris Conservatory from 1942 to 1968.<sup>11</sup> (p. 189) He was one of the first players in Europe to give classical saxophone recitals. In France, Daniel Delfayet and Jean-Marie Londeix both studied with Mule and became respected classical saxophonists.

According to Temple University saxophone instructor Marshall Taylor, Sigurd Rascher, a German-born sax player who emigrated to the US, is also considered a pioneer of saxophone.<sup>12</sup> Some other classical saxophonists include Eugene Rousseau, University of Indiana; Larry Teal, retired from the University of Michigan; Frederick Hemke, Northwestern University; Donald Sinta of Ithaca College; and James Houlik of East Carolina University. Classical saxist Ted Hegvik also plays works composed by Rudy Wiedoeft in the 1920s. Golden Crest Records, the company releasing Hegvik's Wiedoeft collection says Wiedoeft "is responsible for the acceptance and popularity of the saxophone as a classical instrument."<sup>13</sup> Hemke points out that Wiedoeft's compositions "exhibit one of the earliest attempts in published American music to raise the level of saxophone performance from home entertainment, vaudeville routines and show band performance."<sup>3</sup> (p. 456)

Classical saxophonists often play clarinet in symphony orchestras, doubling on the saxophone when necessary. In the Philadelphia Orchestra, clarinetists Ronald Reuben or Raoul Querze may double on saxophone. The Orchestra will also hire extra classical saxophonists for pieces requiring them.

Often you will hear of saxophone quartets associated with various cities. The Chicago Saxophone Quartet and the Pittsburgh Saxophone Quartet are active saxophone groups that will appear at the sixth World Saxophone Congress this summer.<sup>14</sup> Saxophone players from all over the world will get together at the Congress to be held at Northwest-

ern University, Evanston, Illinois on June 28 to July 1, 1979. I hope to be there.

The Congress will be in the US for the first time in ten years and is expected to attract more than 500 players of both jazz and classical saxophone. Anyone interested in attending can do so for a \$15 entrance charge. Information is available from Frederick Hemke, School of Music, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL 60201.

Some classical saxophone selections are available on records. For your information, I've compiled a list of several of these in Figure 5.

Since the saxophone is now probably the most important jazz instrument, the number of jazz recordings with sax players as featured performers is

voluminous. Many great but short sax solos are buried in records which feature orchestras and bands. For example, you would have to listen to records by Duke Ellington's orchestra to hear some of the masterful solos by the many sax players who worked with him. Saxists Otto Hardwick, Harry Carney, Johnny Hodges, and Jimmy Hamilton are a few who played with Ellington in the 1930s and 40s. So I've limited my discography in Figure 6 to works of sax players who have made albums of solo (unaccompanied) sax recordings on American labels covered by the *Schwann-1 Record & Tape Guide*.<sup>15</sup> It is incomplete to be sure, but *Current Contents*<sup>®</sup> readers are encouraged to send in additions.

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#### REFERENCES

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10. Pryor W. Telephone communication. 23 April 1979.
11. Londeix J M. *125 ans de musique pour saxophone*. Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1971. 398 p.
12. Taylor M. Telephone communication. 27 February 1979.
13. Golden Crest Records. New records nearing completion. *Nuggets from Golden Crest Records* 1(1):2, 1979.
14. Hemke F L. Telephone communication. 9 March 1978.
15. *Schwann-1 Record & Tape Guide* 31(3), March 1979.

\*Reprinted in: Garfield E. *Essays of an information scientist*. Philadelphia: ISI Press, 1977. 2 vols.

**Figure 5:** Some currently available American-label recordings of classical saxophone works, listed by composer. When known, the composer's birth and death dates are given. The name of the work, date of composition, performer, record label and ordering numbers follow. At the end of the list, some classical recording collections, by performer, are also presented.

- Badings, Henk (1907- ). Malinconia, for saxophone (1952). Paul Brodie. Golden Crest 7037.  
 Bassett, Leslie (1923- ). Music for saxophone and piano (1968). Donald Sinta. New World 209.  
 Clerisse, Robert (1899- ). Introduction et scherzo, for saxophone quartet.  
 Nova Saxophone Quartet. Crystal S-153.  
 Creston, Paul (1906- ). Concerto for alto saxophone and band. Dale Underwood. Golden Crest 4136Q.  
 -----, Sonata for saxophone & piano, op. 19 (1939). Paul Brodie. Golden Crest 7037.

- Curtis-Smith, Curtis O. B. (1941- ). Unisonic, for saxophone and piano (1976).  
Trent Kynaston. Composers Recordings, Inc. S-388.
- Debussy, Claude (1862-1918). Rapsodie for saxophone and orchestra.  
Jean-Marie Londeix. Candide 31069, or Angel 37065; 4xs-37065.  
-----, Rapsodie for saxophone and orchestra. Sigurd Rascher. Columbia MS-6659.
- Denisov, Edison (1929- ). Sonata for alto saxophone and piano (1970).  
Trent Kynaston. Coronet 3044.
- Dubois, Pierre-Max (1930- ). Concerto for saxophone.  
Eugene Rousseau. Deutsche Grammophon 2530209.  
-----, Quartet for saxophone. Paul Brodie. Golden Crest 4131.
- Finney, Ross Lee (1906- ). Concerto for saxophone and winds. Frederick Hemke. New World 211.
- Glazunov, Alexander (1865-1936). Concerto for saxophone (1934). Ralph Gari. Citadel 6012.  
-----, Concerto for saxophone (1934).  
Eugene Rousseau. Deutsche Grammophon 2530209.  
-----, Quartet for saxophone, op. 109. Paul Brodie Quartet. Golden Crest 4131.
- Hartley, Walter (1927- ). Concerto for alto saxophone, tuba and wind octet (1969).  
Dale Underwood. Golden Crest 4136(Q).  
-----, Concerto for saxophone and band (1967). Donald Sinta. Golden Crest S-4077.  
-----, Octet for saxophones (1975). Rascher Saxophone ensemble. Coronet 3031.
- Heiden, Bernhard (1910- ). Sonata for alto saxophone and piano (1937).  
Trent Kynaston. Coronet 3044.
- Jannaccone, Anthony (1943- ). Bicinia, for flute and alto saxophone (1974).  
Max Plank. Coronet 3038.
- Ibert, Jacques (1890-1962). Concertino da camera, saxophone and orchestra (1935).  
Eugene Rousseau. Deutsche Grammophon 2530209.
- Jacob, Gordon (1895- ). Saxophone quartet (1974).  
Paul Brodie Quartet. Golden Crest 4164(Q).
- Kanitz, Ernst (1894-1978). Sinfonietta da camera, for saxophone and chamber ensemble.  
Harvey Pittel. Orion 75109.
- Kynaston, Trent (1946- ). Dawn and jubilation, for alto saxophone and piano (1973).  
Trent Kynaston. Coronet 3035.  
-----, Sonata for alto saxophone and piano (1977). Trent Kynaston. Coronet 3044.
- Lantier, Pierre (1910- ). Euskaldunak (sonata for saxophone) (1967).  
Paul Brodie. Golden Crest 7037.
- Loeillet, Jean-Baptiste (1680-1730). Sonata for recorder and continuo, op.4 no. 11.  
Harvey Pittel (saxophone). Crystal S-105.
- Mather, Bruce (1939- ). Elegy, for saxophone. Paul Brodie. Golden Crest 7037.
- Maurice, Paule (1910-1967). Tableaux de Provence, for saxophone and piano.  
Harvey Pittel. Crystal S-105.
- Mays, Walter (1941- ). Concerto for alto saxophone and chamber ensemble (1974).  
John Sampen. Composers Recordings, Inc. S-361.
- Moss, Lawrence (1927- ). Evocation and song. George Etheridge (saxophone). Opus One 16.
- Piermé, Gabriel (1863-1937). Introduction et variations sur une ronde populaire, for saxophone quartet. Nova Saxophone Quartet. Crystal S-153.
- Piermé, Paul (1874-1952). Trois conversations, for saxophone quartet.  
Nova Saxophone Quartet. Crystal S-153.
- Robert, Lucie (1936- ). Sonata for alto saxophone and piano.  
Trent Kynaston. Coronet 3044.
- Rodby, John (1944- ). Concerto for saxophone. Harvey Pittel. Crystal S-500.
- Rodriguez, Robert Xavier (1946- ). Sonata in one movement, for soprano saxophone and piano. Harvey Pittel. Crystal S-105.
- Stevens, Halsey (1908- ). Dittico, for alto saxophone and piano. Harvey Pittel. Crystal S-105.
- Van Delden, Lex (1919- ). Sonatina for saxophone and piano (1952).  
Paul Brodie. Golden Crest 7037.
- Villa-Lobos, Heitor (1887-1959). Fantasia for saxophone, three horns and string orchestra.  
Eugene Rousseau. Deutsche Grammophon 2530209.
- Wolpe, Stefan (1902-1972). Quartet for tenor saxophone, trumpet, piano and percussion.  
Harvey Estrin. Nonesuch 71302.

#### Collectors

##### Brodie, Paul

- Baroque and classical saxophone. Golden Crest S-7041.
- Recital, with saxophone quartet. Golden Crest 4143.
- Saxophone quartet. Golden Crest 4131.
- Saxophone quartet in concert. Golden Crest 4164(Q).
- Saxophone quartet on tour. Golden Crest 4154(Q).
- Soprano and sopranino saxophone. Golden Crest 7049.
- Unaccompanied saxophone. Golden Crest 7071.

Deffayet, Daniel  
Alto saxophone. Golden Crest 7051.  
Hegvik, Ted  
Saxophone nostalgia of the 20's. Golden Crest 4183.  
The legacy of Rudy Wiedoeft. Golden Crest 4155.  
Rascher Saxophone Ensemble  
Volumes 1, 2 & 3. Coronet 3030/2.  
Coronet S-3022.  
Rascher Saxophone Quartet  
Coronet S-302.  
Rosseau, Eugene  
Virtuoso saxophone. Coronet S-1601.  
Wolfe, George  
Recital music for saxophone. Coronet 3046.

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**Figure 6:** Some solo jazz saxophone recordings by performers who are also composers. No records with accompaniment are listed. The name of the performer/composer is given, followed by the name of the recording, record label and ordering number. Information compiled from *Schwann-1 Record & Tape Guide*.

Braxton, Anthony  
For alto. Delmark 420/1.  
Saxophone improvisations-series F. Inner City 1008.  
Klemmer, John  
Cry. ABC 1106.  
Konitz, Lee  
Lone-Lee. Inner City 2035.  
Lacy, Steve  
Solo. Emanem 301.  
White, Andrew  
Seven giant steps for Coltrane. Andrew's Music 30.