



Clarinet students doubling on saxophones

It is becoming quite common in many school bands for clarinet students to take advantage of the extra performance opportunities available due to the upsurge in popularity of the standard 'big band' jazz ensembles.

Sometimes these new saxophone players may have a saxophone tone that is thin or 'pinched' in the middle to high register, and inclined to be quite sharp in pitch. The player may also have difficulty in producing the lower register of the instrument, tending to produce the notes sounding an octave higher.

The student blowing into the saxophone mouthpiece as if it were a clarinet mouthpiece can cause these problems. The following exercise using just the saxophone mouthpiece will help overcome the previously mentioned faults in the saxophone sound.

A clarinet mouthpiece only, when blown at an **ff** volume should produce approximately a concert pitch (piano pitch) of C on the second ledger line above the treble staff.

An alto saxophone mouthpiece when blown at an **ff** volume should produce a concert pitch A on the first ledger line above the treble staff. I find initially most clarinet players will produce a B or even a C instead. A short practice session each day learning to relax the throat to produce an A concert will help develop a "muscle memory" that will result in a better saxophone tone and more satisfactory intonation.

For those clarinet players who may be starting on the tenor saxophone, the mouthpiece alone should produce a concert G on the top space of the treble clef.

On the baritone saxophone, just the mouthpiece alone should produce a D concert on the fourth line of the treble clef.

David Brookes,
AMEB Clarinet and Saxophone Examiner
