The When, Why and How of the BASS SAXOPHONE

by ADRIAN ROLLINI (of Fred Elizalde's Savoy Music)

THIS article is the first of a complete series in which Mr. Adrian Rollini, now with Fred Elizalde's Savoy Music at the Savoy Hotel, and admitted by every authority as being the finest exponent of his instrument, will deal exhaustively with the use and performance of the Bass Saxophone in the modern dance band.

Adrian Rollini

IT is now an admitted fact that a Bass of some sort is an essential instrument in a "dance" combination of *anything over five strong*.

In every dance band, no matter how large or small, some instrument playing a bass part there must be. This, of course, is because the bass notes mark the main beats which are really responsible for denoting the measure in which a number is written (as distinct from any purely rhythmic embellishment), to say nothing of the necessity of the bass to complete the harmony and balance.

Why not piano and drum?

It may be urged that the bass drum and left hand of the pianist are sufficient for the purpose, but authorities on the matter do not agree that this is so.

As regards the piano: if one is going to thump it loudly enough to get the bass through, the tone is going to suffer, for the pianist's touch will be ruined and his execution hampered. In realising the necessity for a sufficiency of bass the pianist, in his attempt to give it, will develop merely what in America is known as a "boxer's left hand." One might as well get a sledge hammer and bang the keys—it would sound just as musical.

The importance of bass pitch.

As regards the bass drum, the same thing may be said as far as tone is concerned: bang it and you get nothing but a hopelessly unmusical noise. Also the pitch of the note cannot be varied on the bass drum, a very serious shortcoming, as every one who has even a small knowledge of the theory of music is aware that the most essential note in a chord as far as harmony is concerned is its bass note.

There are many other reasons why drums and piano are inadequate for the bass in a band of even such comparatively small size as I have suggested, particularly when one takes into consideration the large tone of the remaining instruments (such as saxophones and/or brass), which usually comprise it, but I do not feel it necessary to spend time going into them, as all who realise the true usages of the modern rhythmic combination will agree that those I have given are quite sufficient to prove the case.

Which one?

Assuming, then, that I have convinced you of the necessity of a bass instrument, the next question which arises is which one is it to be?

For practical purposes, our choice is limited to three:

Sousaphone (Tuba);
String Bass; or
Bass Saxophone.

Their respective merits and demerits

The Sousaphone has the advantage of a naturally large and resonant tone in the hands of even a very moderately experienced player.

But against that it is very difficult, in fact, I might almost say impossible, to execute rapid passages on it with that degree of crispness, cleanliness, and correct accentuation and phrasing which are all so essential to illustrate the true rhythmic meaning of the phrases necessary in modern dance music.

There will be, of course, numerous persons—particularly, perhaps, those who, because they play Sousaphone, would wish to defend it—who will wage wordy warfare with me on this statement. To them I would say, listen to any gramophone record in which one of the admitted star Tuba players is performing. You will never hear him attempt passages with any more than four notes at the most to a common time bar.

Those who go in for more rapidly moving breaks and/or phrases, only do so because they want to copy stuff they have heard played on other instruments, their experience having not yet taught them how impossible this is, but if you listen to *their* records it will certainly be proved to *you*.

An additional drawback to the Sousaphone is that it is heavy and cumbersome in performance alone. It weighs approximately 24 lbs., and you always have that weight on your shoulder. Those who play Tuba will probably agree that the amount of lbs. commences to feel like as many tons when they play long hours.

The String Bass

The String Bass has one particular advantage—its tone. Compared with the Tuba it is very much sweeter and generally more pleasing to the ear. For anything from a medium-sized hall to the small club or private house ballroom its volume is more than sufficient, and in even inexperienced hands it never sounds raucous.

Another advantage is that the effect obtained by what is known as "slapping," and producing such a satisfactory rhythm, can be featured.

Then, too, there is the "pizzicato" which can be used with great effect in dance playing.

These effects of slapping and pizzicato cannot be imitated on the Tuba.

But like the Sousaphone the string bass has its disadvantages.

While the execution of certain star performers is such that they can finger and bow as rapidly as can a good violinist or 'cellist on his instrument, the average player, I might even say the player far above the average,

never acquires sufficient technique to execute as rapidly as is often necessary in the dance band.

Then, too, the tone, though good when it does arrive, takes a long time to come out of the instrument, and not only that, it comes out, when playing *Arco*, without anything like sufficient attack. A *good* bass player always starts bowing a fraction of a second *before* the beat, so that his bow is actually half-way across the strings by the time the beat arrives. How many have such a sense of rhythm as will enable them to judge *exactly* how long in advance to commence so that they will be perfectly in time—a feature so very essential in dance music? And perfect tempo, of course, doesn't necessarily mean attack.

Also there is the question of comfort when playing. It is pretty trying to have to stand up all the while.

The Bass Saxophone

The Bass Saxophone has all the advantages and none of the disadvantages of the Sousaphone and String Bass.

(1) Its quality of tone is quite as pleasing to the ear as that of a string bass. Its volume (in the case of a well-made instrument) can be made to compare favourably with that of the Sousaphone without any loss of sweetness; equally it can be diminished to less than that of the string bass without affecting its clarity or definition in slow or rapid passages. Naturally the foregoing depends on the ability of the player, and I am prepared to admit that it is somewhat more difficult to obtain a good tone on a Bass than on any other Saxophone, because when playing an ordinary bass part, such as is found in any commercial dance orchestration, the notes have to be comparatively short, and are disconnected (insomuch as there is usually a crotchet rest in between each). Consequently one must develop an ability to attack and yet retain tone. But after all, the extra practice necessary is well worth the result.

(2) Execution is easy compared with the Sousaphone or String Bass, particularly in rapid passages. On the Sousaphone variation of pitch is obtained partially by keys and partially by lipping. On the String Bass one has to make one's own notes according to the position of the finger(s) on the string(s). On the Bass Saxophone—which is fingered the same as any other saxophone—every note has its key(s) which produce it. The keys are so set as to permit of the rapidest execution.

(3) The effects of "slapping" and "pizzicato" as obtained on the string bass are easily produced on the Bass Saxophone by slap-tonguing, though as a matter of fact slap-tonguing has long been *passe*.

(4) The Bass Saxophone may be—in fact, generally is—played while supported on a metal stand, the performer sitting down the while, and thus the strain put upon him is of a minimum. This is an important point.

(5) The range of the Bass Saxophone is decidedly larger than is necessary for the uses to which it can be put. It is two octaves and a fourth.

But the greatest of these . . .

(6) But probably the greatest advantage which the Bass Saxophone possesses over the Sousaphone and String Bass is that while the latter are by virtue of their limitations confined to the performance of bass parts only, the Bass Saxophone may be used as well and with great success for solo melodies and taking such essential parts as those usually played by trombone. It is at once a melody and a rhythmic instrument.

My future articles will be devoted to explaining to you how to play and use the Bass Saxophone in a dance band, but don't be in too much of a hurry to order one, for next month I will tell you what features an instrument most likely to suit your requirements must possess.

The When, Why and How of the Bass Saxophone No. 2

SELECTING *the* INSTRUMENT

by ADRIAN ROLLINI

of Fred Elizalde's Savoy Music

I WANT to devote the whole of this month's chat with you to a few words on selecting the best kind of bass saxophone.

I feel—and I think you will agree with me—that it is a great mistake to obtain an inferior instrument to commence with, with the idea that when you become more proficient you will change it for a better one. First, you are sure to drop a good deal of money over the transaction, and secondly, if you start with a poor instrument it will not only hamper your progress, for you will never know whether your faults are due to yourself or the instrument, but you will have no confidence in it, and thus it will be for ever a deterrent to your progress.

The tonal quality of a bass saxophone will be governed to a great extent by the weight of the metal from which it is made. If this is too heavy—of too thick a gauge—the tone will be dead and lack resonance, if it is too light the tone will sound "tinny." A happy medium is the ideal.

The instrument is built in B♭. Its range should be from low B♭ (concert A♭) to high E♭ (concert D♭). Some are built with keys going up to high F (concert E♭), but I do not recommend them as it complicates the mechanism and you will seldom find it necessary to go so high.

I advise silver, or—if you are a Crœsus—gold-plating. The plating has no effect on the tone (as it does, for instance, on a trumpet), but the naked brass is not pleasant to the hands, particularly as verdigris easily accumulates, which is difficult to clean off, very difficult in fact in parts which are not easy to get at without the laborious task of dismantling the mechanism.

All joints should be silver soldered.

I prefer drawn tone holes. Drawn tone holes mean that the circular rims on which the pads close are each a part of the body metal, and not additional pieces of metal soldered, brazed or sweated on. The advantage is that you cannot get a leak between the rim and the body. This is very important, as a leak only as big as a small pinhole and possibly invisible to the naked eye will seriously affect the tone—on some notes if not all.

An instrument which is designed to allow a large opening of the pads is advisable as the wider the "gap" between the tone holes and their respective pads, the fuller the tone will be. It must be realised, however, that the wider this gap, the sharper the note will be; thus, unless every pad opens the correct amount in proportion to the size of the hole, the instrument will be faulty in intonation. If you lay the instrument on the table with the pad openings facing you, the complete range of keys should form a straight line—that is to say, one pad seating or key should not be higher or lower than its neighbours on either side—though, of course, this line will not be parallel to the line made by the tops of the tone holes, for the higher up the scale you go the smaller are the keys and the gaps must consequently lessen as you ascend. The point is that the gaps should lessen in equal ratio.

Some instruments are adjusted when new so that the keys do not open as much as is desirable. Re-adjustment will put this right, *but it should only be attempted by an expert.*

The octave key is most important. It should be of the single or automatic type. The old-fashioned double octave key is detrimental to quick execution. The mechanism should be instantaneous in action and, above all, the pads must be a perfectly air-tight fit.

The supports or brackets are important for they help to prevent the instrument getting bent, should it by accident get knocked. There should be three in all—one between the bell and the body and one either side of the crook. All should be strong and solid and, above all, firmly fixed, since being separate components there is always the chance they will come apart in a cheap instrument.

The rods to which the pad arms are affixed are, you will find, carried at either of their ends by bearings drilled into the domed tops of pillars affixed to the body. Adjustment to permit of the correct amount of play in the rods is obtained by small adjusting screws screwed into the other side of the dome of the pillar, parallel with the body. Many good makes of bass saxophone are fitted with set-screws screwed into the tops of the domes of the pillars to prevent the adjusting screws becoming loose through the vibration which is set up when playing. I thoroughly recommend this.

Some makers fit an F♭ (concert E) trill key. It will be located at the back and near the base of the body. I am not in favour of this, for it is a fact, if a curious one, that the vibration invariably causes this key, more than most others, to open when it should not. Of course a heavier spring would overcome the trouble, but it would have to be so heavy that it would prevent good execution of the key when using it for the very purposes for which it is intended—*i.e.*, "trilling." On the rare occasions when a trill is required it may be obtained with the ordinary F♯ key and if you find an F♯ trill key on an instrument which otherwise meets with your requirements I advise you to wedge it shut by means of a cork placed between the top of the key and its guard or cage.

It is a good plan to have stronger springs than those normally found fitted to the high D and D♯ (concert C and C♯) side keys, as these also often open owing to the vibration set up. Of course, you cannot fix them with corks as there is no alternative way of producing the notes. In these keys the stronger springs will not, however, hamper execution.

A water key, such as is found on trumpets and trombones, should be fitted at the base of the crook to allow the saliva which will accumulate there to be drained off. An alto saxophonist can turn his instrument upside down to empty it; it is not so easy and looks bad to do the same thing with the big bass.

The mouthpiece is of vital importance, but I think I can safely say that its general design is likely to be satisfactory on a good-class instrument.

It should be made of vulcanite. I do not recommend any other materials, neither do I advise a metal lay as this gives a thin tone.

You should have the lay of the mouthpiece checked, and if necessary have it relayed, *but only by an expert.*

I advise you to use a wide opening of medium length, and play with a fairly soft reed. By this means you have the best chance of obtaining a full sweet tone with clarity in the top register and volume in the lower. It should also assist your intonation: it will make general control easier.

Every mouthpiece should have a mark showing the correct position of the ligature.

Next month I hope to deal with tone production and embouchure.

MOUTHPIECE METHODS

by ADRIAN ROLLINI

of Fred Elizalde's Savoy Music

I LEFT you in January, you will remember, with the promise to deal with tone production and embouchure.

On thinking matters over, however, I'm afraid that we shall not reach embouchure this month.

Tone production depends almost entirely on four main things :—

(*a*) The mouthpiece,
(*b*) The reed,
(*c*) Embouchure,
(*d*) Breathing,

and as before we can attempt to build anything we must have good tools, it seems that the first thing with which to deal is the mouthpiece. This I find will take up all my space this month. It is almost certainly the most important part of the instrument and one could easily write a book on it, though I only propose to deal with such matters as will need watching and possibly correction before you even buy the mouthpiece.

Beware of Stunts

First of all I strongly advise you to be careful about patent mouthpieces, of which many kinds are on the market and for which extravagant claims, which cannot always be supported, are often made.

You are generally much better off with the ordinary vulcanite mouthpiece sold with the instrument—particularly if you buy a good make of saxophone, than with some of these freaks, which sometimes boast, for example, metal facings, adjustable lays, or are manufactured from different compositions, such as glass.

Often enough some of these gadgets possess certain advantages, but these are frequently offset by failings of greater relative importance which are non-existent in the ordinary standard vulcanite mouthpieces.

At the same time there are certainly some "proprietary" mouthpieces which deserve consideration, and if they are backed by reputable persons or firms, I have nothing to say against them, except to urge you to weigh up their possibilities carefully before investing money in them.

One Man's Meat

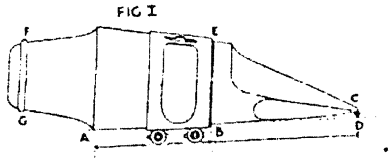
The style of lay which will give the best results is entirely dependent on the formation of the individual's embouchure, and as no two players have embouchures which are absolutely identical you can see that it is impossible to lay down any hard and fast rules.

But one's embouchure only becomes set after months, sometimes years, of playing, and the man taking up a saxophone for the first time will naturally ask what is the best lay for him to start with, and whether there is not one to which it would be wise for him to endeavour to adapt his embouchure while it is forming.

Generally speaking, as a player gains experience he will find that any lay with which he starts, no matter of what type, will not continue to suit him. But to commence with one could do much worse than employ one embodying the following points, which have the advantage of assisting the production of a good, clear, full tone in both high and low registers. They will also assist in the formation of a good embouchure insomuch as they permit of control of a medium strength reed without any unnecessary strain upon the, as yet, unpractised facial muscles or lungs.

I think the best way is to give a sketch of the mouthpiece and would refer you to Fig. 1.

FIG 1



The Bed

The line A—B represents what is called, as I expect you know, the bed of the mouthpiece. Against this bed the flat back of the reed should lie perfectly flat.

Usually it will be found that the bed is a perfect plane surface, but sometimes it is *slightly* concaved; that is to say, its section will appear *slightly* hollow if you look at it, not from either side, but endwise.

I use this type of bed myself, as I find that any slight curvature caused to the reed by the tightening of the ligature allows the curvature so formed in the reed to drop into the curve in the bed. This prevents the reed from curving outwards (instead of inwards), which would allow air to escape between it and the bed of the mouthpiece and have a detrimental effect on tone.

The line B—E represents the mark (which *every* mouthpiece *should* possess) showing exactly where the ligature should be placed.

The line B—D is a continuation of the straight face of the bed indicated by the line A—B.

From the point B the mouthpiece discontinues its straight line and is cut away to its tip marked C.

The Lay

B—C is, as I again expect you know, the lay of the mouthpiece, and is very important.

Special attention must be paid to the size of the opening at the tip—measured as shown by the line C—D. The variation of a fraction of an inch will have a very marked effect. I recommend you to start with an opening of 3/32 of an inch.

To return to the lay. All mouthpieces do not necessarily leave the straight (marked by the line A—B) at a point exactly opposite the ligature mark. The point may be anywhere nearer C within an inch of C. It all depends on how the mouthpiece has been "layed"—as it is termed.

According to how near to, or far away from, B the straight line (A—B) is discontinued, so the mouthpiece is said to have a long or short lay.

A Long Lay—and Why

My recommendation (as shown from B—D) is, as you will now appreciate, a long lay, though many saxophonists may not agree with me that this is advisable. Here is my reply:

Place a thin wooden ruler on a table with about two inches projecting over the side of the table

top, and, while holding the ruler hard down on the table with one hand, make the projecting part vibrate by giving it a flick with the other hand. To make it vibrate you will have to put quite an amount of force into your flick.

Now increase the projecting part of the ruler to, say, eight inches. To make it vibrate your flick will not require nearly so much strength.

The ruler is equivalent to the reed. With only a short piece of the reed free to move a much greater pressure of air is necessary to make it vibrate; with a longer piece free to move, less pressure is necessary.

In addition, the longer the piece of the reed that is free to vibrate, the greater the movement in the tip will be, thus it is easier to control it by the embouchure.

In other words, by the laws of leverage, the longer the lay the easier it is to control.

Beware of Leakages

You may then ask why not continue the lay even to the base of the mouthpiece and thus make that portion of the reed which is free to vibrate longer still. The answer is that the reed must be an airtight fit against the mouthpiece for all that part of both reed and mouthpiece which is *outside* the mouth: if it were not, the breath would escape from the opening instead of passing into the body of the instrument, which would impair both the volume and quality of the tone.

Curved Lays

Notice, too, how in Fig. 1 the lay (B—C) is not a straight line but a curve. The lay is very nearly straight to commence with, the amount of curve increasing slowly as it nears the tip, until, as the tip is almost reached, the curve becomes quite pronounced.

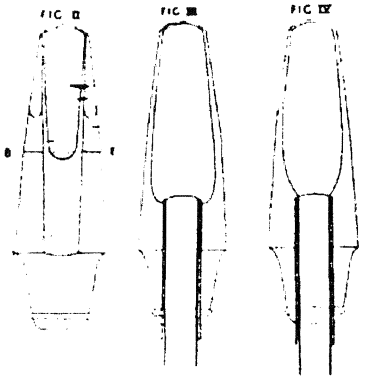
The Slot

If you will look at the back of a mouthpiece you will see that the slot (as it is called) which runs from tip towards the bed is cut down usually about as far as the ligature position mark. Personally, I am in favour of having the slot elongated until it comes slightly below the ligature mark, as shown in Fig. II.

The Bore

It is of greater importance than one might at first realise that the bore of the mouthpiece should be small enough to fit closely on to the neck when the neck is covered with but the thinnest layer of cork—barely over one-sixteenth of an inch is quite thick enough.

Many players argue that if the mouthpiece has a large bore it is



quite a simple matter to make it a good fit by re-lapping the neck with a thicker layer of cork. A moment's thought, however, will prove what a fallacy this is.

The inside of the mouthpiece is known as the tone chamber, and I think it will readily be obvious to all that it is of some importance that the passage of the air through it into the body of the instrument should not be impeded by any obstruction.

At the best the end of the neck is bound to form a shoulder which in itself must act as an obstruction (this is clearly visible from Fig. III.) and the thicker the cork the greater the obstruction will be.

It has been suggested to me that this obstruction formed by the neck could be obviated by fashioning the tone chamber of the mouthpiece as shown in Fig. IV.

The idea is certainly ingenious but hardly practicable for this reason: Everything would be all right as long as the mouthpiece were pushed right home on to the neck as far as it could go. But immediately the position of the mouthpiece had to be altered to tune the instrument trouble would start. If the mouthpiece required pushing further on to sharpen the pitch this couldn't be done because of its interior formation; if the mouthpiece had to be withdrawn to lower the pitch, a nasty "pocket" would be formed between it and the end of the neck, which would defeat the whole object of the suggested new formation of the tone chamber

Ligature Position

Care should be taken to position the ligature correctly according to the ligature position mark (as shown in Fig. I.).

If the ligature is too far up or down the mouthpiece it will have the effect of altering the lay insomuch as the amount of the reed free to vibrate will be lengthened or shortened.

It is advisable to make sure also that the ligature is not screwed up too tightly and that equal tension is applied to both screws. Too much pressure on one or both of the screws will cause the ligature to pinch the sides of the reed, which will curve the reed instead of allowing it to lie flat against the bed.

Both screws should be finger tight and greased occasionally to permit of easy and consequently fine adjustment. If the screws are not greased, stiffness due to dirt or corrosion may cause one to believe the screws are sufficiently tight when in fact they are not, or alternatively to permit of excessive tightening by making it impossible to feel just when the ligature has commenced to grip the reed.

The Re-enforcing Ring

All mouthpieces should be encircled with a metal ring near the base. This prevents the mouthpiece from splitting.

Prevent Warping at all Costs

Finally, the material from which mouthpieces are made warps easily from excessive heat or cold, and as any warping will affect the lay as well as the rest of the mouthpiece, care should be taken to keep it in a more or less even temperature.

Wash it only in tepid water.

Bass Saxophone:—The When, Why and How, No. 4

MAINLY ABOUT REEDS

by ADRIAN ROLLINI of Fred Elizalde's Savoy Music

THIS month I want to talk to you about reeds, which have often been called, and I am sure not without ample justification, the saxophonist's curse.

The real difficulty with reeds is that it is so difficult to tell at sight a good one from a poor one, and so not only does one often waste a good deal of money in buying those which turn out unsatisfactory, but in addition much annoyance is caused by continually having to change them during a performance, for many cannot tell how a reed is going to appeal to them until they have played on it for some little time.

A good deal has already been written about how to select a reed, but I think there are one or two points which I can profitably add.

Generally speaking, there are two factors which will govern the performance of a reed: (1) the quality of the cane of which it is made, and (2) the manner in which it is cut.

With regard to the cane, the most important point is that it shall be well seasoned. You can tell whether it is by its colour. An insufficiently or improperly seasoned reed will have a very pale greenish hue, usually mostly noticeable in the spine—that is to say, the imaginary vertical line running from the centre of the tip of the reed to the centre of the point at which the reed starts to taper.

A well seasoned reed will be of a golden brown colour, and the bottom half—the half below the tapered half—will very often be mottled with dark brown spots.

A good test of a well seasoned reed is to smear very freely with saliva the top or tapered half and then blow through the reed from the bottom or thick end. This should cause bubbles to appear on the saliva. The theory is that if a reed is thoroughly seasoned it is also thoroughly dried out, and being so, will be porous, thus allowing the air to pass through it when it is dry.

The best cane for reeds is that having a strongly defined and *straight, close* grain. The grain should show up in the form of many parallel lines running from the top to the bottom of the reed. In the best reeds these lines will be reasonably evenly spaced.

Reeds with crooked or irregular grain are apt to warp after very little use.

A good way to examine the grain is to cut a hole the size of the reed in a piece of cardboard, place the reed over the hole, and then hold both reed and cardboard against an electric light. The light will show up the grain and the cardboard surrounding the reed will prevent the light from dazzling the eyes.

With regard to the manner in which the reed is cut there is not much to say, as most makes of reeds are satisfactory in this respect.

When reeds are graded it is best I think to buy medium strength. Reeds classified as hard are usually too hard for the average performer, while soft reeds become too weak after they have been used for any time.

If you can find a reed which does not need any trimming or shaving so much the better. If you must soften a reed by shaving it, shave only the outsides of the tapered part and do not touch the spine, particularly near the middle of the reed where the taper commences; if you do you will take all the spring and life out of the reed.

The *slightest* shaving will have an appreciable effect, and as one can always take a little more off but never put any on, be careful you do not shave off too much.

The best means of taking down a reed is with OO sandpaper or very fine emery. If the reed is likely to need much treatment a safety razor blade may be used.

If by accident you make your reed too soft you can correct it by clipping off about 1 32 in. with a reed clipper. But don't forget you cannot do this more than once or twice at the most, as you shorten the taper each time.

The strength of a reed which has become weak by constant use may be temporarily increased by inserting a cigarette card between the reed and the mouthpiece and gently prising the reed back.

A reed will last longer if you take it off after every time you have played and wipe it dry.

Always keep your mouthpiece clean.

Care should be taken in fitting the reed to the mouthpiece.

Above all take care not to overtighten the ligature. It should be barely finger tight. If it is too tight it will warp the reed.

The tip of the reed and the tip of the mouthpiece should be flush, and to enable this both must be identical in shape. Often you will find that this is not so, and thus it will be necessary to re-shape the tip of the reed. To do this hold the reed hard against, and on top of, the flat face of a coin (a penny is usually about the right size) with the portion of the tip of the reed to be removed overlapping. Then, from the underneath, burn off the overlapping part with a match. You will find that the coin will prevent the reed from burning too far down; in fact, when the overlapping part is burnt away the flame will extinguish itself.

While still holding the reed in the same position against the coin, with the tip of the finger brush away the charred end of the reed with a circular motion of the finger around the coin.

Always moisten your reed all over by sucking it before commencing to play. For this it should be removed from the mouthpiece. If you do not moisten it all over before playing, the reed, if it is a well seasoned one, will warp, since one part, the part in your mouth, will become wet before the other part.

Bass Saxophone—The When, Why and How. No. 5.

TONE PRODUCTION

by ADRIAN ROLLINI *of Fred Elizalde's Savoy Music*

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 negatived.

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 reeds—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.

UNLESS he has mastered certain essentials—to wit, the power to control his breathing, the correct means of passing the breath into the instrument, the cultivation of the requisite facial muscles and last, but probably most important, the production of the correct embouchure—the best instrument in the world fitted with the best mouthpiece and the most perfect reed won't enable him to produce a good tone.

Of course, like everything else, tone production on the bass saxophone is a matter of practice, and before going further I must at the risk of boring you repeat the advice so often given previously by writers on the saxophone in these columns.

Start with practising sustained notes. Play sustained notes one at a time and do not proceed even to short scales until you can attack each one of the notes on the instrument in perfect pitch and with good tone; hold them in absolutely even pitch (without any attempt at vibrato) throughout their duration. At first have a rest and take a breath between each note.

This procedure should be adopted even more stringently by players experienced in playing other saxophones, because the bass, being larger, requires more breath to fill it (thus the breath control and breathing, it will be found, are somewhat different) as well as a different embouchure.

Start practising your sustained notes at middle *G* and progress slowly, semitone by semitone, to the extreme high and low notes. The nearer you get to the extremes of the instrument, the more difficult is it to produce good tone, and you should not wander from the middle register until you have thoroughly mastered it.

Only when you can attack and sustain each note perfectly should you attempt to play scalic passages. I know it will be monotonous, but believe me—and I speak from personal experience—it will pay you handsomely in the long run.

I have found many who otherwise might have turned into good exponents become nothing but mediocre players because having rushed on 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 or control to support it.

You will find it will help you greatly if you, as I and many other players do, fix a piece of rubber on to the top of your mouthpiece in such a position that your teeth can rest on it.

There are two reasons for this:

Firstly so much vibration is caused, particularly by the lower notes, that the shiny, slippery mouthpiece will not only jar the teeth, but cause such an amount of movement as actually to shake the whole head and so prevent the lip muscles from exercising that fine control so necessary for execution and tone production.

Secondly, your teeth will make indentations in the rubber, thus assuring that you always hold the mouthpiece at the same spot. This is important because change of position of the mouthpiece in the mouth requires change of embouchure, and one cannot expect his embouchure to become set if he is continually changing it, particularly when learning the instrument.

The rubber may be an ordinary motor car inner tube repair patch. It should be about ½ in. long by say, 1 in. wide and affixed by means of tyre repair solution about ¼ in. from the tip of the mouthpiece. To make it adhere, the polished surface should be roughened by a fine file, or better still, glass paper, on that portion of the mouthpiece which the rubber is to cover.

ACTUALLY the teeth of the upper jaw should touch the rubber at a point about ¼ in. from its end nearest the tip of the mouthpiece. Doubtless this will surprise you as that means that the teeth are only about ½ in. from the tip of the mouthpiece, and only a very small portion of the mouthpiece is in the mouth. But you must remember that the reed and mouthpiece of the bass saxophone are very large, and the more of them you put into your mouth the heavier your control of the reed must necessarily become and the more strain you will place upon the muscles.

For perfect execution and good tone you need to be able to influence the reed as much as possible with the least exertion, and as the lightest part of the reed is at its tip the nearer within reason you get to this point the better.

As regards the actual embouchure—that is to say the position of the lips and teeth and the muscles employed, and generally how the reed is controlled, how vibrato is obtained, etc.—the points are precisely the same on the bass as they are on other saxophones and as so much has

already been written in these columns on them I would only be wasting space by repeating it.

A very important point in tone production and execution is the position of the instrument. Above all things make yourself comfortable and free.

The bass saxophone may be supported by a sling or on a stand, but in either case it should be so adjusted that the mouthpiece comes easily into the mouth, without any straining of the posture of any part of the head, neck, arms or body. To permit of this it is essential that the mouthpiece should be retained, not dead horizontal, which is the case when the instrument is held vertically on its stand, but at about the same angle as when playing the smaller (alto, for instance) saxophones. To enable this the instrument should be held at an angle across the body as shown in the photographs herewith.

SEE, too, that the neck and mouthpiece are not too high, owing to faulty adjustment of the stand, thus causing the head to be forced back.

The positions of both the body and the saxophone, as shown in the photos, are the positions in which I actually play. Both photos are of the same position, but one shows side and the other front view. I mention this in case you may think that the angle of the saxophone has been changed for front and side views.

Note that there is nothing cramped or grotesque about the body, that the easy uprightness of the body allows natural breathing, and that the arms and hands are in such a position as to allow the fingers to fall easily on the keys.

The type of stand you use is of the utmost importance as on it depends the position of the instrument, and, in consequence, your comfort and freedom of breathing, blowing and manipulation of the keys.

The stand in the photo is by no means a work of art as regards looks, which is not surprising, as I made it myself out of an old music stand.

But it has the advantage of being fully adjustable and so permitting the instrument to be placed in the best and most comfortable position. It takes the whole weight of the saxophone as well as retaining it in the correct position. If I were to move away the saxophone would stay just as it is, but, nevertheless, is not held too rigidly to prevent slight movement for ease during performance.

Next month—

"THE APPLICATION OF GLISSANDO."

by BEN DAVIS

—a most interesting and valuable article dealing with the production of Slurs and Glissando, and how these devices are employed for rhythmic purposes.

Unfortunately, I do not know of a place where stands as suitable can be bought. Perhaps some instrument maker would like to produce one? I would be willing to assist in any way possible.

The thick horizontal top piece of the stand, one end of which is hooked to fit into the ring on the back of the instrument, is merely a hollow tube. It is not a fixture and slides along the horizontal part of thinner crooked bar, over which it fits as desired.

The height of the thin crooked bar is also adjustable by a thumb screw in the bottom tube into which it fits, which bottom tube is attached to the tripod base.

THE crude strap, to one end of which is attached a swivel clip-hook which I clip into the wire guard of the tone hole near the end of the bell, the other end of which is attached to the crooked upper arm of the stand. This is bound to the said crooked upper arm of the stand tightly enough to prevent it from slipping when playing, but not so tightly that one cannot slide it up or down the crooked upper arm for adjustment purposes.

Two other photos show the type of sling I recommend when it is not possible to employ the stand.

These articles are not intended to constitute a tutor for the bass saxophone, so I can pass over such things as how the various notes are fingered, and with the one hint to keep your fingers close to the keys to enable rapid execution—we can proceed next month to the commencement of the more interesting part of the subject—how to use the bass saxophone in the band, which in time will bring us to hot playing and all the other things so essential to the modern dance band saxophonist.

Bass Saxophone—The When, Why and How. No. 6

The PROBLEM of TRANSPOSITION

by ADRIAN ROLLINI *of Fred Elizalde's Savoy Music*

AS most people know, the bass saxophone is built in B♭ in the same way as the tenor and soprano saxophones, and consequently must be considered as a transposing instrument.

Now, I suggest to anyone who intends to take up the bass saxophone that they learn it as an instrument built in C, thus avoiding the difficulties of transposition.

At first thought this may appear to present many difficulties, but this is not so. To quote parallel cases, the tenor trombone is built in B♭, and tubas are built in both B♭ and E♭, but in each of these cases the instruments are learnt as C instruments, with the result that they can be played from parts written in concert without transposing.

The Advantages of Concert Pitch

This brings me to the point I wish to stress. If a performer learns the bass saxophone with "concert fingering," he will not have to bother at all with transposing when reading from "concert" parts. He is not likely to be called upon to play from tenor saxophone parts, and certainly not from alto saxophone, clarinet, trumpet, or any other transposing parts, and therefore will perforce *have* to play from parts scored in concert pitch, which will necessitate constant transposition if he learns the bass saxophone with ordinary fingering.

The method of "altering the pitch," so to speak, is extremely simple, and consists merely of naming the keys on the instrument a note lower than they are usually called.

To explain further: The bottom key, on the bass saxophone, is called B♭, but sounds A♭ concert. It is easy enough when learning the instrument *always to regard the key as A♭*, so that, when reading a part written in concert, and the note A♭ appears, this key is automatically fingered. And so on throughout the whole compass of the instrument.

Doubling.

Even for the saxophone player who intends to use the bass merely as a "double," this method of learning the instrument is equally effective, the only possible objection being that he will have a different fingering on the bass from that on any other saxophones he may play.

But he has a parallel to this in doubling on the clarinet, which most saxophone players do nowadays, and yet which does not cause them any confusion in the fingering of either the clarinet or saxophone.

Creating a Demand

These articles have been written primarily for the individual who intends to specialise on the bass saxophone, and the point has been raised to me that there is not enough demand for saxophonists who play bass only.

I have dealt in previous articles with the subject of the advantages of the bass saxophone as compared to the string bass or tuba in the dance band, and my answer to the point raised is that since there are practically no performers who have specialised on the bass saxophone, leaders have had, as yet, no opportunity to recognise its value. They regard it now as more or less of a freak "double," but once the instrument's possibilities are recognised, there is bound to be a demand for it, and players who have taken the trouble to study the instrument properly will surely reap the benefit.

Parts to Use

Some of the advantages of the bass saxophone over string bass and tuba have been already pointed out, but there are others. For instance, in a small combination possessing only two saxophones, the bass could be used as a third for occasional saxophone trios, in which case probably the best part to use would be the 'cello.

Here again the advantage of learning the instrument in "concert fingering" becomes apparent, since 'cello, trombone, piano, or even violin parts can be used without transposing.

One point about using these parts must be borne in mind, however, and that is that these melody or harmony parts must only be used occasionally for special effects (such as completing a saxophone trio or taking a solo chorus) and after this the performer must return to his normal duty of keeping a rhythmic bass going. In this instance, too, the advantages of the "C method" are again apparent, since one does not become involved in sundry different keys and transpositions whilst switching from one part to another.

Balance

Incidentally, whilst on the subject of changing from bass to harmony parts, it must be borne in mind that, though it is more or less correct to "pump out" the bass parts, the harmony parts must be played to balance with the other instruments, and in particular must not overpower the lead.

Register

We must regard the bass saxophone as a composite instrument for the purpose of discussing the best register in which to play.

Whilst playing harmony or melody parts, it is advisable to keep well on the upper part of the instrument. Rapid passages in the low register, although used now and then with effect in the old Goofus Five days for recording, are of no use at all in ordinary dance band playing, as not only would they fail to be heard by the average listener, but this style of playing is very much out of date.

The compass of the instrument from its middle C (the B♭ concert a ninth below C on the piano) to its highest note is the only practicable register for harmony or melody parts. (*En passant*, it is advisable to keep a melody or harmony passage high up on the instrument, even if this necessitates using a lower or higher note of the chord than the one given on the part in order to keep within the desired compass.)

On the other hand, whilst playing bass parts, use the low register from the same middle C (B♭ concert a ninth below middle C on the piano) to the lowest note on the instrument (A♭ concert).

Obviously, to play bass parts up in the same compass as the tenor saxophone is a waste of time, as the result will only be to produce a note too thin to be of any value, and unequal in strength to the volume of a bass. The general rule, therefore, is "harmony parts up and bass parts down."

Bass Saxophone—The When, Why and How. No. 7

PLAYING BASS PARTS

by ADRIAN ROLLINI *of Fred Elizalde's Savoy Music*

HAVING covered what one might call the theoretical ground of the bass saxophone, —that is to say such points as how to select the instrument, how to hold it, how to blow it, with which I dealt in previous issues—we are now ready to get down to actual playing, the side of the subject which is, perhaps, more interesting.

Preliminaries

Let us consider first the employment of the bass saxophone for the performance of bass parts—a use for which it is particularly adapted.

Most of the bass parts of the printed commercial orchestrations are merely a series of the root notes of the chords employed, and, as such, may be said to present a very unambitious and disconnected effect in themselves. The best way to appreciate this point is to play an ordinary bass part unaccompanied and exactly as written.

Whilst we should not let our bass part turn itself into a sort of "bass-tenor" part, the effectiveness of it is greatly enhanced if a little melodic "shape" is introduced, without, of course, it must be realised, sacrificing in any way the primary function of the bass of establishing a rhythmic foundation. In brief, we should try to make a bass part which will stand alone as a simple melody, and while not being a series of detached "twos-in-a-bar," yet not contain a melody of such complication or prominence that it will overshadow the actual air of the composition or the counter-melody, or in any way lose its rhythmical function, or its duty of being the foundation on which the chord formed by the higher instruments stands.

Building up a Part

To illustrate my ideas I have chosen the number "I Must Have That Man" (Lawrence Wright Music Co.). It is particularly suitable since the bass part of the printed orchestration is a good example of the average "two-in-a-bar" type, and, while it has one or two places worthy of special comment may be said to be such that it is not really difficult to improve upon and embellish it.

My idea of how it might be simply improved without going in for anything extreme or hot will be seen in the revised rhythmic accompaniment for bass saxophone which I have written out (see page 682). This is the sort of thing I would play on my bass saxophone, were I required to take the place of a string bass or sousaphone. My version conforms to the harmonies of the chorus in $B\flat$ (marked A) in printed orchestration, and may be played with it.

My revised version can, of course, be played by string bass or tuba (except for the break, which, I quite realise, would be difficult on such instruments).

Written up for Ease of Reading

It will be noticed that the printed bass part (which for your convenience I reproduce on the lower stave of Ex. 1, the upper stave being the melody) is written an octave higher than my revised version on page 682. Actually the note sounded by a bass player playing from the printed part would not be the $E\flat$ written in the first bar of Ex. 1, but the $E\flat$ below. The printed part is "written up an octave" for ease of reading by the avoidance of ledger lines. I have written my version in the register in which it will actually sound; I think it better as it gives the correct impression, and there are so few ledger lines that it is unnecessary to attempt to simplify the reading by avoiding their use. In fact, ledger lines would be more in evidence if I had written the part up an octave—for example consider the break.

Concert Pitch

Take particular note that both the parts given here—the reproduction of the printed part and my revised part—are written in *concert pitch*; that is to say, have not been transposed for the bass saxophone, which is a $B\flat$ instrument like, for instance, the tenor saxophone. You will remember that in last month's article I advocated learning the instrument in *concert* fingering, and this is an excellent example of the advantage of this method. If, on the other hand, you are playing the instrument with recognised saxophone fingering, the bass part must be transposed a tone up to conform to the key of the printed parts.

Bar by Bar

Perhaps the best way for me to assist those wishing to write bass saxophone parts for themselves is to go through my version bar by bar, and, by comparing it with Ex. 1, explain as far as possible, in the brief space at my disposal, the alterations I have made.

Bar 1 of my version is the same as the corresponding bar of the printed part (Ex. 1). The straight two-in-a-bar establishes the rhythm and tonal key immediately, and as this is an important necessity, there is really no need to make any alteration.

Bar 2.—Here I have slightly altered the printed part, adding the passing note F, leading to the $G\flat$ of the harmony and returning to the $E\flat$ of the printed part. This is a good example of what one might term the "internal lead-in." It will be seen that there is a sustained note in the melody in this bar., Sustained notes have the disadvantage of lacking rhythm and, to overcome this, the "empty" spot in the melody is filled in by the embellishment of the bass part, thus keeping not only the rhythm, but the continuity of a melodic line going to the listener's ear when the original melody rests.

Bar 3 merely uses different notes of the chords of the harmony. The last note of the previous bar (the $E\flat$ of bar 2) is followed by the low $B\flat$ on the first beat of the third bar in order to preserve the melodic "shape" referred to in a previous paragraph. The jump of a fifth to the F, the next note, is lighter in effect than playing the D of the printed part.

Bar 4 is similar in construction to bar 2.

The Melodic "Shape"

Bars 5 and 6 provide an excellent example of the melodic "shape" to which I have referred. Commencing on a note of the chord, it descends by step to the F given in bar 6 of the printed part. Compare the euphony of the printed part and that of the embellished version, and the reason for my advocacy of the melodic shape will be clear.

Bars 7 and 8 are worthy of particular notice. With the exception of an added passing note (the $E\natural$ in the seventh bar) the printed part has not been altered, except with regard to rhythm. The ascending passage of the printed part is sufficiently full in itself and requires little or no embellishment. A slight and simple alteration of the rhythm is all that I think necessary or even advisable to improve the phrase. It should be appreciated that this eighth bar completes a phrase and a lead-in to the next phrase is highly desirable. The notes of the printed part are quite satisfactory as a lead-in—another reason for not unduly altering them.

Bars 9 to 14 inclusive are a repetition of the first six bars. It is neither necessary nor desirable to make the part too diverse or complicated, and consequently it is sufficient to repeat bars 1 to 6.

Bars 15 and 16 are exactly as written in the printed part. They establish the change of harmony or chord for the middle phrase, and moreover, since there is so much going on in the melody line, any added notes in the bass part would tend to a jumbled and "muddying" effect. Again the reason for not altering them.

The Break

Bars 17 to 22 again demonstrate the descending melodic shape which is merely a scalic passage with inserted passing notes leading to the solo break on the 23rd and 24th bars. These scalic passages in the bass are, when the harmony permits of their appropriate introduction, very effective. You may remember Al Davison drew attention to this point in his review of the bass accompaniment to Bix's trumpet solo in Paul Whiteman's record of "Sweet Sue" (page 597, col. ii, of the June, 1929, MELODY MAKER).

With regard to the Break. Breaks should always be kept in the "solo" register of the instrument (as explained in last month's article), and in the present instance it will be seen that it proceeds from the low *F* up to the solo compass by a leap of an octave.

Do not make your breaks a mere jumble of as many notes as possible—it is far better to have a few notes ingeniously placed and properly displayed by correct phrasing and accentuation.

The break in this case is built on the chord of *F*(7th) in the 23rd bar and $B\flat$(7th) in the 24th.

The "Lead-Out"

Bars 25 to 30 inclusive, are a repetition of the bars 1–6, and, consequently, need no further explanation.

The last four bars are exactly the same as in the printed part (written in actual pitch) and form a join-up to the verse. It is, therefore, reasonable to suppose that since there is no melody going, the melodic instruments have some more or less complicated figures to perform, and it is advisable not to "cloud" the effect by altering the rhythm or notes of the "lead-out," as these bars may be termed. Although not so in the present case, frequently the "lead-out" is the modulation into another key, and, consequently, any faking on the part of the bass—which carries the fundamental harmony changes—might destroy the desired effect.

A Few General Hints

(1) Do not play in too staccato a manner. Give each note its full value, and try to strike the happy medium between over-shortness and "doughiness."

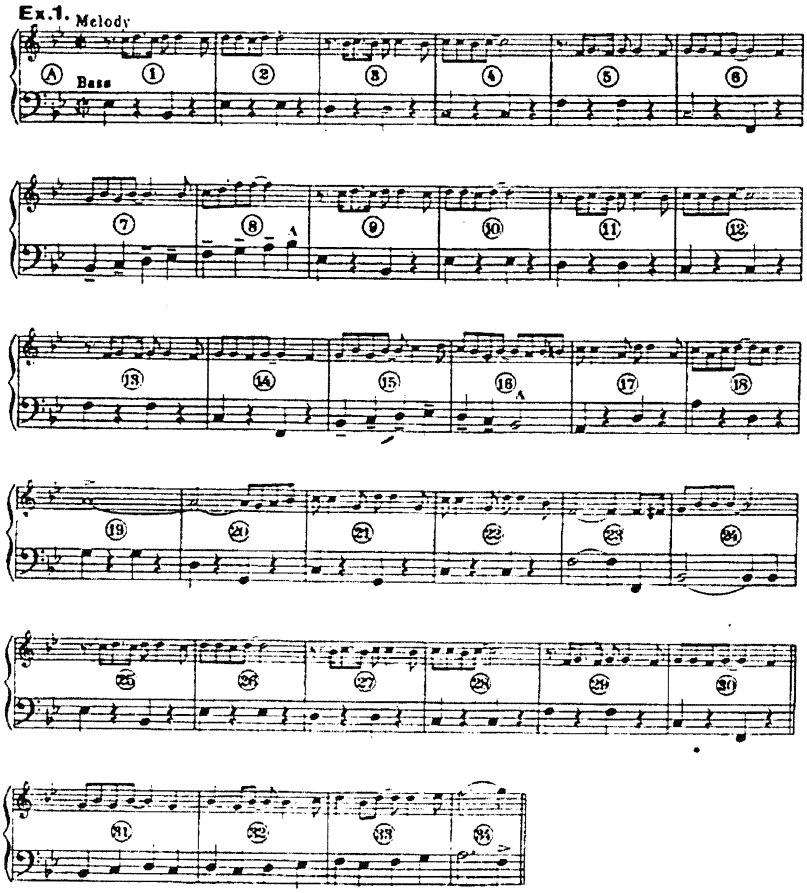
(2) Do not, in any circumstances, get into the bad habit of slap-tonguing every note. This destroys the full-bodied effect desired, and gives a sound similar to a tap on a wood-block, which is obviously useless as a rhythmic bass part.

(3) The desired amount of volume, attack and length of sustentation can best be judged and obtained by breathing once every two bars. Do *not*, in any circumstances, breathe between each note, otherwise, besides the performance suffering, the performer himself, after playing a chorus or two, let alone solos in between, will feel as if he had done a five-mile run!

(4) With regard to embellishment in general, it is wise to avoid the use of grace notes, as these have a deadening effect. The exception to this more or less general rule is that they may be satisfactorily included when they can precede a sustained note which is the fundamental harmony note of a modulating chord.

(5) With regard to leads-in. Many players of all instruments think these are only necessary at the commencement of a chorus. Actually they are essential at, generally speaking, the commencement of every phrase—that is to say every two, four or eight bars, according to the construction of the melody. The length of the lead-in, of course, depends upon how much "space" there is between the phrases of the main melody. Sometimes there is room for only just one quaver; other times they might run to as much as seven crotchets—work this out for yourself.

Ex.1. Melody



The Bass Saxophone—The When, Why and How. No. 8

BREAKS—Their Phrasing and Accentuation

by ADRIAN ROLLINI of Fred Elizalde's Savoy Music

IN my last article I gave you a bass part such as I would play myself "on the stand." It included a simple break, about which I had a few things to say.

Since I intend this month's article to deal entirely with breaks it would be as well, perhaps, if I repeated the general remarks about breaks that I made last month.

Play breaks, generally speaking, in the upper register of the instrument, which is more suitable than the lower, owing, not only to the contrast provided by the rest of the bass part, but by its audibility, for, in a crowded ballroom where one has to make oneself heard above the shuffling of feet and other extraneous noises, a break played "down below" would probably either be totally inaudible or sound no more than a muddled jumble.

Not Too Many Notes

Speaking of a jumble, brings me to the next important point. I have said it before, but, owing to its importance, I make no apology for repeating that it is not merely unnecessary, but highly inadvisable to use too many notes in a break. A few notes skilfully accented are infinitely more effective than a jumble of "fireworks."

When to Play Breaks

I have frequently been asked to say if there are any particular types of numbers into which breaks should or should not be interpolated.

This question is unanswerable to a certain extent.

If we take a sweet melody number like "Dinah," one would probably think that a hot break would be entirely out of place—and so it would in the majority of cases—but I have heard this number worked real hot, when it absolutely cried out for—and got!—the meanest of breaks.

So what it really comes down to is that there are no hard and fast rules on this matter: it all depends on the manner in which the number is being treated, and exactly where to draw the line must depend upon your own perspicacity and general intelligence.

Where to Play

There is another little matter which you should bear in mind. In ninety-seven cases out of a hundred the "break-bars" will be the fifteenth and sixteenth bars of the chorus. But don't fall down over the other three occasions, for in two of the instances the break will be on the twenty-third and twenty-fourth bars, whilst in the remaining case the chorus might consist of an unusual number of bars (as in the old number "Red Riding Hood," which had a 40-bar chorus), in which case there is no saying where the break will come, except, of course, that it will be at the end of an eight-bar phrase.

However, in the vast majority of cases, one "feels" where a break is called for, and if the other members of the band also feel that way, why, then, it's pretty certain that is the right place for a break!

What Not To Do

There is no particular kind of break for any particular kind of number—as I have just said, it depends so largely on the treatment that the number is receiving.

There is, however, one particular kind of break that any self-respecting player does *not* play, and that is one that is written for, or played by, another instrument. Too often the enthusiast, thirsting for new breaks, hears a marvellous one on a record, takes it down, and probably trots it out on his particular instrument, which is, more often than not, totally different from the one that played the break on the record. Apart from such obvious inequalities such as compass, pitch, the vast difference between, say, brass and saxophone technique, and so on, there are the more subtle differences of phrasing and accentuation. It is almost impossible for an instrument of one family to phrase and accent exactly like one of another.

Phrasing of Breaks

This brings us to the important matter of phrasing. Now here is a paradox: vitally important as phrasing is, there is very little to be said about it in regard to breaks!

The reason for this is that in almost every case an ordinary two-bar break should be played in one breath.

One breath should be more than sufficient to play any two-bar break on the bass saxophone, particularly if the player takes a deep one just before playing the break.

Obviously a collection of notes with neither phrasing nor accentuation is absolutely meaningless, therefore the responsibility of making a break not very intelligible, but arrestingly stylish, lies—once having got the notes—in accenting them.

Now, it is practically impossible to put on paper the finer nuances of accentuation, and therein lies the difficulty in the actual writing of breaks. However, I will try my best to make my meaning clear.

Accentuation

Accentuation on wind instruments depends, for the most part, on tonguing, and here we come up against another apparent paradox. *Do not, as a general rule, tongue separately the notes in a two-bar break.* Possibly by now you, my reader, are completely bewildered. I have told you that you must not split a two-bar break into phrases, but that you must rely on accentuation, and then I have told you that you must not tongue! The catch

in it lies in what is known for want of a better term, as "legato-tonguing."

The method of producing this can best be described as a sort of very half-hearted attempt at tonguing, during which the tongue, instead of producing the familiar "tu," gets a much softer and gentler sound, best described as "tooo."

To aid this effect, the flow of breath should be momentarily—only momentarily—impeded.

It is a pretty safe general rule to lay down that one should never wholly tongue a hot break, but should rely for accentuation on the legato, or half-tonguing, described above; the outstanding exception being, of course, when there is a "stab" note that is slightly sustained.

Accenting Passing Notes

It is easy enough to ascertain the notes on which to build a break. The harmony of the bars in which the break is to be played can be obtained from the piano part and it will be found, in the great majority of cases, to be based on the dominant seventh of the key in which the tune is written.

The four notes of this chord, however, are seldom sufficient in themselves on which to build a break, therefore *passing notes* are utilised.

Now a passing note is one that moves by step to or from a note of the chord, and it will be seen that this allows an enormous latitude in the choice of notes without going too deeply into advanced harmony.

It is only necessary to say of passing notes that it is inadvisable to accent them, speaking generally. If a series of passing notes were accented, and the actual notes of the chord played so lightly as to be ghost notes, the effect would probably be as though one were playing in a totally different key.

Remember that passing notes are only used as conveniences to prevent the "breaking up" of the melodic line of the break.

Some Examples

I give herewith some examples of breaks for bass saxophone.

One at least is difficult, and will require first-class execution if played in fast fox-trot tempo.

Ex. 1

Example 1 will, on first sight, appear to contradict some of the dicta laid down in preceding paragraphs, so I will endeavour to explain the apparent discrepancies.

It has been said that it is inadvisable to accent passing notes, yet the *F*♮ in the first bar is accented. This note happens to be the ninth of the *E*♭7 chord, and, therefore, can hardly be described as a passing note.

The next accented note (*G*♮) is part of the chord.

In the second bar will be found *A*♭, *A*♮, *B*♭ and *B*♮ and *C*♮. These, with the exception of the *B*♭, are not notes of the chord, and yet should be accented.

This is where the legato-tonguing comes into use, and those notes in this break that are not notes of the chord and yet should be accented are marked by an asterisk. They are not really accented but only played with slight legato-tonguing.

(Note that this break is based on the chromatic scale.)

Ex. 2

I have said that bass saxophone breaks should be kept in the upper register. Ex. 2 shows how a little contrast may be introduced by a sudden descent—and ascent.

In this break, by reason of the sudden drop of an octave and a half, the fourth quaver is accented *without* any additional accentuation by the player. The second bar is played even more legato than the first—hence the phrase mark.

Ex. 3

Example 3 has nothing calling for detailed explanation.

Note the legato-tongued notes, and the slight slur from the *C*♮ to the *E*♭ in both bars.

All the foregoing breaks, of course, can be adapted to other keys, but Examples 1 and 3 can only be transposed lower, as they are, in their given form, at the extreme top of the instrument, and if transposed higher, would call for complicated fake-fingering.

For a similar reason, Example 2 can only be transposed one key higher (to *A*♮), otherwise it would be out of the compass of the instrument.

Ex. 4

Example 4 is perhaps the hardest of the examples given, and calls for quite a considerable technique. It is rather an "exception to the rule," and every note should be legato-tongued, with a slight added emphasis as indicated. (Notice that the "accented" notes in the first bar are accentuated by the mere fact of the octave jump.)

In regard to this break, it is a good stunt to play it *accompanied by pp drum rhythm.*

Bass Saxophone, the When, Why and How. No. 9.

SOLO CHORUSES

A Few Pointers

by ADRIAN ROLLINI

THIS month brings us to the last article of the series, and I propose to devote it to solo choruses.

Doubtless this portion of the subject is that in which you will be most interested, and may consider, perhaps, that it should have been the beginning, rather than the end of the course. If so, I can only reply that in my opinion it is essential to assimilate first the rudiments I have endeavoured to cover in my earlier articles. To draw an analogy, one does not attempt the integral calculus until one has mastered the multiplication tables.

Past Lessons

I dealt in previous articles with such matters as "legato-tongueing," "ghost notes," "phrasing," and so on, and you will perceive that in a chorus of "You're the Cream in My Coffee," given on page 887, full use is made of these various important details.

Another point to remember is that the playing of solo choruses is *not* the bass saxophonist's main function. His part in the band is, as I have tried to make clear, to replace or augment the string bass and or tuba, whilst joining in as a part of the saxophone section when occasion demands.

He is only called upon for solos in order to add that spice of unexpectedness and variety which is the essence of dance music.

Only Now and Then

The bass saxophonist must not predominate as a soloist. He must be content to add the rhythmic background, and must only "shine" occasionally. To be more explicit, don't butt in with a thirty-two bar solo in every number; be content to lay off for at least every other one, and then, perhaps, put in a half-chorus. Don't forget that the bass saxophone has a most individualistic tone and that over-insistence of it will only become monotonous.

Circumstances alter cases, of course, and when the band consists of, say, piano, banjo, drums, alto, trumpet, and bass saxophone, the bass will have to come to the fore as a soloist far more than it would in a larger band where there would be more instruments of different "colour" to take solos.

The exact proportion of solo choruses played depends on circumstances and one's personal judgment. The only golden rule is—"Don't overdo it."

The Chorus

On page 887 will be found a hot chorus for bass saxophone of "You're the Cream in My Coffee" (Chappell and Co.). It is practically the same as I would play it "on the stand," or for recording. Some of the subtleties which I would like to have included I have had to omit, because it is impossible to convey adequately these finer points within the limits of paper and ink. Also everyone knows that no two players will give an identical interpretation of the written notes in music of this class, and I have thought it best to steer clear as far as possible of anything the interpretation of which cannot be made quite clear from the written notes—that is to say, clear to those with at least a good understanding of the generalities of "dance" rendering.

The chorus given conforms to the harmonies of the printed orchestration, and can be used in conjunction with it.

Take note that it is written in *concert*, and is *not* transposed. The reason for this was fully explained in a previous article, and need not be gone into again.

No Lead-in

No lead-in is given, for the simple reason that in this case none is necessary. It is a mistaken idea to adhere slavishly to the practice of a solo lead-in immediately preceding a solo chorus. As has been explained, leads-in can occur anywhere before or after a phrase, which may be within the chorus itself, and one should not insert one for no other reason than that a solo is about to be played.

Some melodies have natural leads-in, one or more notes leading up to the actual tune, and such instances obviously call for a solo lead-in. In the present instance, however, the melody starts right on the beat. (This rule, like every other, is open to exceptions, and the player again must rely on his own judgment.)

How Hot?

Much controversy has raged round the question whether the melody shall be recognisable or not in a hot chorus. This is a bald way of putting it, but that is what it amounts to.

I am of the opinion that the listeners should at least be able to recognise part of the melody. If they do, they will be able to follow the subsequent wanderings among the harmonic structure with far greater interest.

I have followed this plan in the present instance, and the reader will observe that in the fifth and sixth and the twenty-ninth and thirtieth bars the original melody is clearly recognisable. (It is, of course, a reiteration of the same phrase.) It is a good plan to "announce" the chorus in this way whenever possible. Just a phrase here and there—preferably the same one—embellished very slightly, if at all.

The method of "tongueing without tongueing," fully explained in a previous article, is utilised in several places in the chorus.

Legato-Tongueing

I have marked with an asterisk the notes to which it is to be particularly applied. They occur in the 1st, 3rd, 16th, 17th, 21st and 23rd bars. These are only the occasions when the application of this method are most necessary—throughout the whole chorus, except where especially marked otherwise, it is advisable to "legato-tongue."

Phrasing

Phrasing is, perhaps, the most important factor to be considered. One must remember that the bass saxophone is a very large instrument and requires a greater amount of effort than a smaller one. Hence it is obviously ridiculous to attempt too long phrases. Nevertheless, in the accompanying chorus I have really phrased in eight-bar sections, but to render execution easier, I have subdivided these eight bars into shorter

Truth in Advertising

The Kinema Show Bill which shrieked:

All Talking!
All Singing!
All Dancing!
All Laughing!

And the wag who added in pencil

All Wet!

phrases. For instance, the first eight bars are subdivided into phrases of three, three and two bars respectively.

Balanced Phrasing

Likewise the second eight bars. (Note that there is really a phrase-finish after the third quarter-note (crotchet) in the 14th bar.)

The next two phrases of eight bars are treated in a similar fashion.

There is really no special reason for this particular form of subdivision. The chorus could quite well be divided into equal phrases of four bars each, the only objection to this being that it is so stereotyped. Again, this is a matter for individuality, but do remember to keep some sort of balance between the phrases.

Expression Marks

I have inserted several *crescendo* and *diminuendo* marks in the chorus, and due attention to these will, I think, greatly enhance the finished effect.

The chorus starts *mezzo forte* and works up to a double *forte* on the 9th bar. The high *C* at the beginning of this bar should be *hit*.

On the 11th bar observe a *diminuendo* sign and a *tenuto* mark. In effect, these two are dependent upon each other, the effect being that the *B*♭ half-note (minim) shall be held for its full value, at the same time decreasing in volume.

The "Whip-up"

On the 12th bar we have a "whip-up." If you know how to do it, well and good; if you don't, here's a short explanation.

The "whip-up" is, theoretically, a chromatic run up from about an octave below the note to which it is desired to whip up. Theoretically, all the notes should be fingered, but as a matter of fact the period of time is so short that no more than the "front-plates" of the sax. are used.

It is played with a big *crescendo*, and the final note is attacked very *sforzando*.

Here is the only way it can be described in musical notation:—

Take particular heed of the 17th and 18th bars. These do not constitute a solo break, but yet embody a break which was given as an example in my last month's article. This has been done deliberately to show how the examples given may be applied, not merely as solo breaks, but as the foundation for a complete phrase. A few notes have been altered, particularly in the 2nd bar, but the structure is substantially the same as Ex. 1 in last month's article.

The break on the 23rd and 24th bars calls for little comment. It is also built up on the principles indicated in the chapter on "Breaks," and requires no explanation. Observe the "legato-tongueing" and the accentuation.

Finis

Eight more bars bring us to the end of the chorus and the end of the series.

I have done my best to make clear some features of the bass saxophone, and by virtue of my experience and study of the instrument I hope I have been able to make the path a little smoother for those anxious to take up the instrument thoroughly.

The reader must not think that this series of articles has exhausted the subject. I could go on for ever, more or less, and still there would be a lot unsaid. But I trust I have said enough to start off the student on the right track, after which it is far better for him to find things out for himself. Didn't someone once say something to the effect that "the fruits of self-accomplishment are infinitely sweeter than those of second-hand success"? Well, maybe not, but it's true anyway. Wishing you luck. *Adrian Rollini*