



Greg Banaszak

Career Management

Musical Versatility And Audience Assessment

In this column Dr. Eugene Rousseau will be sharing his thoughts on career possibilities for concert saxophonists. Dr. Rousseau has pioneered the study and advancement of all aspects of the saxophone and has set a precedent of playing which has secured a place for him in the history of the saxophone. He was appointed as Professor of Saxophone at the Indiana University School of Music in 1964. He has been doing ongoing work for the Yamaha Instrument Corporation as Chief Consultant of Research and Development, as well as designing his own line of reeds and mouthpieces. He first recorded many of the great works written for saxophone that have now become standard repertoire over the years.

VERSITILITY

First of all, anyone beginning a music career has to realize that there is not a big market even for the most talented and well-schooled players. There is no guarantee of a job in the teaching area and certainly not in the playing area of concert and classical saxophones. To have a large concert schedule, such as a violinist or pianist, is still a rarity, but it is much better than it used to be. My advice to anyone determined enough to go into it seriously is know your instrument very well, know your repertoire, know the techniques on your instrument (such as multiphonics), harmonize quarter tones that are in tune, and strengthen your tone. Aside from working on all the different aspects of playing the saxophone, what else can you offer? Today we can't put all our eggs in one basket. Can you double on



Saxophonist Eugene Rousseau

any instrument? Can you teach other areas needed to be a well-rounded musician, such as music history, theory, or appreciation? Can you improvise or play with an understanding of the jazz idiom? Can you play in the saxophone section of a jazz ensemble? I ask these questions because I feel it all starts with versatility. Being versatile certainly was a large part of my career. The person who is just a classical saxophonist is very rare indeed. My first degree was a Bachelor of Music Education with clarinet as my main instrument. My Master of Music was in oboe. I received my PhD from the University of Iowa. I taught marching band, concert band, and woodwind techniques classes, as well as serving in the military for two years. What really opened my eyes was studying with Marcel Mule. I was fortunate

enough to receive a Fulbright at the time. I've always liked teaching students at any age or level of playing. Teachers of young or beginning students should take great care in explaining embouchure and making sure the student fully understands the various aspects of proper saxophone embouchure. The fundamentals cannot be stressed enough at any level.

Professional saxophonists aspiring to teach at the university level should be schooled in the entire saxophone family, including some exposure to soprano and bass at some point in their career. Some saxophonists try to specialize on only one member of the saxophone family, be it alto or soprano. As saxophonists we can't afford to let any of the instruments within the saxophone family go by the wayside. I don't require any of my saxophone students at Indiana University to major on only alto. I have students who feel their major instrument is the baritone saxophone, but they still have to play the other instruments as well.

In terms of repertoire, we can divide it very easily. We have what is now accepted as standard works, such as the *Villa-Lobos*, the *Creston*, and the *Glazounov* along with a tremendous amount of new repertoire that has come out that can't be ignored. We've just gone through two weeks of reading new compositions at Indiana University. Everyone is required to play a new piece and professionally record it as well. Recording these works also exposes the student to the studio. When you're looking at this new repertoire, there are many extended techniques required of the saxophonist. You should know multiphonics, quar-

ter tones with good intonation, and altissimo.

PERFORMING

We should first ask ourselves, “Where do we find an audience for the music we’re presenting?” You should try to perform as much as possible, be it through a friend, a colleague, or other universities and concert series. You have to assess your audience as well. If I’m going to play for the saxophone congress, I’m going to try to venture forth, maybe perform a new work using sophisticated techniques. This same work might not necessarily fly with your average audience. I’ve performed the Denisov *Sonata* for the average, concert-going audience and they accept it very well if they know what is coming! I might speak to them about all the multiphonics, quarter tones, and its jazz influence. They really like that aspect of the performance. I feel we not only have to play really well, but we also need to educate a little bit. All performers should be able to speak to their audiences without any apprehension. One should speak slowly, sincerely, and loudly. Also, you shouldn’t be afraid to demonstrate what you’re trying to explain. I’ll have my students make some comments about the work they’re going to present within our saxophone studio recital. You cannot assume the audience understands what you’re playing just because you as a player know. Speaking allows the audience to be more of a part of the performance because you’re bringing them in and you’re sharing what you have to offer with them. In turn, they appreciate more of what you’re doing on stage. §