

# Questions about the tenor saxophone today

A personal approach from tenor saxophonist Matt London

To me musical classifications often build barriers to what should be an all encompassing approach and experience when it comes to performing and composing. Being open to incorporating influences from any form of music, art or life is really important and helps inform us to develop both musically and individually.

Personally I feel we should try not to go down the route of older established instruments which could bring about certain expectations and restrictions on the music we play and the way we play it.

The following questions form the basis of my thought process when it comes to the classical tenor saxophone today...

- ◆ What constitutes a classical tenor sound today? With the saxophone being such a versatile instrument across many genres does one approach represent or define this field of music today?
- ◆ The importance of traditions. Does one subscribe and stay loyal to already established traditions [French, American or Raschèr etc] ? Do these even apply to the tenor? James Houlik has spearheaded his own individual sound and style, why not follow his lead?
- ◆ The eternal set-up conundrum. Why not look past the usual C\* or D styled mouthpiece? Are they really appropriate for the tenor?
- ◆ How does one approach transcriptions? Are they important? Why not play the saxophone as a saxophone instead of trying to mimic an unrelated instrument when playing transcriptions.
- ◆ The creation of new repertoire for the instrument should take precedent but how does one identify new works of quality or substance to perform and present to audiences.
- ◆ How would I describe the tenor to a composer interested in writing for the instrument? What are the instruments technical capabilities and limits, tonal characteristics, and playable sonority pallet [range] ?
- ◆ The saxophone is a relatively young instrument lets proactively help develop it and its voice for today's player and audience.

These are some of the core points I always ask myself and challenge when it comes to the classical tenor saxophone. I dislike the labels and boundaries that often pop up when asking these questions. I try to look past them and open them up. However one must be careful and think from both the players and listeners prospective.

I hope this is food for thought for some of you and would be interested to hear your thoughts and questions when it comes to playing and listening to the classical tenor saxophone today.

Big Noises!

Matt



Matt London presents a selection of original tenor saxophone works from across the UK. These pieces demonstrate the breadth of talented composers writing for the instrument today, drawing from an exciting variety of influences - jazz and popular idioms to contemporary classical and beyond.

Music by: Matt London, Geoff Eales, Andy Scott, Adam Caird, Cheryl Frances-Hoad, Graham Fitkin, Graham Coatman and Richard Rodney Bennett.

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