SAXOPHONE

Performance Notes for 2010-2011 All-State Band Auditions

by

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A. Exaggerate all dynamic markings. Make the quiet playing as soft as possible. Be very full on the loud sections, but not brassy or abrasive.

B. Eighth-notes should be detached and bouncy. Do not end the notes with the tongue, but with the breath.


A. Be somewhat flexible with the rhythm in the slow section. Do not be rigid or bland! Begin softly, but make sure you build to a true “mf” and later ‘f” when called for in the music.

B. Think of the 4th eighth-note of each measure as a pick-up note into the next measure. This will propel the music forward and keep it from becoming stagnant.

C. In the “Moderato” the tonguing should be light and delicate. In the 6th measure of the “moderato” make sure the “E” leads to the “F#.” In order to make this easier, practice this measure with the “F#” up an octave until the connection is clear. Then put it back in its lower octave, as written – the connection will remain firm.

D. Crescendo through the long notes.
SENIOR BAND: Alto Saxophone: Sonata / Heiden // 1st movement, play beginning to rehearsal #2 and rehearsal #3 to the fermata after rehearsal #4, quarter note = 132-140.

This is one of the most frequently played pieces in the saxophone repertoire and with good reason. It is very well-written and employs a number of interesting melodic and rhythmic devices throughout the entire piece. In order to get a good feel for the sections required for the region and all-state auditions, I would strongly recommend that you work through the entire movement to get a feel for it in its entirety. Bernhard Heiden was born in Germany and emigrated to the United States in the 1930’s after studying with Paul Hindemith, one of the leading German composers of the early part of the 20th Century. This German heritage colors how I view the piece musically, as Hindemith’s music tends to take on a rather brisk, almost march-like quality.

A. Do not play this movement too fast. If one gets too fast, the nature of the music begins to change and it sounds lighter and less driving than it should. I recommend staying on the low side of the recommended tempi (132) or even a bit under that at quarter note = 126.

B. Be sure to keep the dotted eighth-note/sixteenth note rhythms accurate. Put a little space after the dotted eighth notes to help with this, and be consistent. Many students play some of the dotted-eighths short and others long. Consistency in this rhythm will lead to a more consistent musical interpretation of the movement as a whole.

C. In measure 2, begin the trill on the “A” and make sure to get to the next measure in time. I recommend practicing this in three steps: First play only a quarter note “A” leading to the B-flat on beat one of the next measure. Second, add the two grace notes keeping the overall rhythm the same. Finally, add the trill to the mix, making sure the B-flat begins at the same time as before.

D. Don’t play the sixteenth notes too quickly. They can tend to rush, but must be played completely accurately. In particular, the last three notes of measures 2 and 4 need to begin on time. The tendency will be to begin them late – on the “and” of the beat, and consequently play them as a triplet, rather than the notated rhythm.

E. At number “3,” play a true piano volume here, but be careful to keep the same tempo as before. The tendency is to play this section faster because the note values are longer. Practice with a metronome so that this stays controlled.

F. The last four notes of page one – all C#’s – will be a challenge for intonation. Listen carefully, as the lower octave tends to be flat and the upper very sharp. If one adds the “G” key on the left hand along with the octave key, the middle C# will go up in pitch. Then one merely needs to lift the “G” key to jump up the octave, and the intonation between the two will be closer. The upper octave will still be sharp for most people, and one can add the right-hand “F” key during that note to further lower the pitch if necessary.

G. In the third measure after rehearsal number 4, make sure to articulate clearly on the eighth note and all of the succeeding eighth notes. These need to be clearly tongued, and a little added weight put on all of them will have a nice musical effect.

A. All tongued notes should be detached and very bouncy, but too much tongue sound is not preferred in this kind of piece. Keep in mind that it was originally written for the cello, and the kind of detached articulation sound a cello makes is rather delicate.

B. Exaggerate all dynamic markings. Most dynamic changes should be sudden and very obvious. This is called “terraced dynamics” and is a standard manner of playing Baroque music. Certainly, there needs to be some shaping of the phrases in all music, but to crescendo or decrescendo between “piano” and “forte” is rare in this style of music.