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Saxophone without mouthpiece

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Conclusion

At the beginning of this practice-led research, I was driven by a desire to uncover the layers of meaning behind the techniques and practice of SWMP playing. I saw these techniques as a defining and infinite source of artistic inspiration and committed myself to developing them in a way that no other saxophonist had previously attempted. My artistic quest began with the question of how to most effectively transmit the artistic potential of these techniques to a broader audience, as well as to the specialists with whom I work closely, namely saxophonists, composers, and music researchers.

Through this deep investigation, I have begun to understand that these techniques are steeped in a myriad of issues that have hindered their more widespread adoption among saxophonists and composers. These problems include:

- Troublesome understandings of contextualization and historical legitimacy
- Disparate levels of inclusion in prominent saxophone guides
- Misconceptions concerning proper basic training and knowledge transmission among saxophonists and composers alike
- A repertoire that, while important, is not (yet) widely recognized as part of the contemporary saxophone repertoire
- A lack of notational guidelines for composers

Given these issues, I have investigated how to best solve such problems and bring a richer and deeper understanding of SWMP techniques to saxophonists, composers, researchers, and the general public. Through my research, I have aimed to provide clarity, context, and a robust framework that can support the wider acceptance and artistic exploration of these innovative techniques.

In this dissertation I have uncovered knowledge about these techniques, demystified them, placed them in a historical and aesthetic context, and codified the practicalities in response to the problems and questions which have surrounded them. In Chapter One, I have examined several musical developments which formed fertile grounds for SWMP to come into existence and to evolve. The emergence of SWMP did not happen in an isolated void: experimentation and an interest in novel sounds can be traced from the 1900s into the present day. In the 1920s-1930s, Vaudeville and dance band saxophonists would experiment heavily with tricks to amuse audiences (Levinsky 1997). Despite a clear and concrete lack of proof, it can be assumed that saxophonists continued to experiment with novel sounds between the 1930s and 1980s when composers started incorporating SWMP techniques in their work. Daniel Kientzy's foundational research on classifying all possible sonic phenomena on the instrument, serve as evidence of the evolution of extended techniques including SWMP. In 1980, the first known composition was written using SWMP techniques: In *Do-Mi-Si-La-Do-Ré* (1980/1981) Costin Mioreanu used trumpet sounds on the saxophone marking an important entrance for these techniques into the contemporary performers tool kit. From this point onward, composers began to

write for SWMP in an exponentially increasing fashion. Currently, more than 250 works by notable contemporary composers incorporate SWMP techniques.

Prominent saxophonists have played a defining role in bringing legitimacy to contemporary saxophone techniques throughout the past decades. Without the staunch advocacy from Daniel Kientzy, Jean-Marie Londeix, Marcus Weiss, Marie-Bernadette Charrier, Claude Delangle, etc. the saxophone would not be the wind instrument as many contemporary composers see and use it today. Their commissions, performances, research, recordings, and influence have not only reshaped the conventional understanding of saxophone technique but also inspired a younger generation of saxophonists to explore similar and dissimilar innovations through their instrument. Despite the wealth of knowledge these trailblazers of the saxophone community have added to the collective knowledge of contemporary saxophone performance practice and education, SWMP techniques are still not fully understood. My observation is that this practice has not received the detailed study that it deserves. I hope that my practice-led artistic research has contributed something to close this knowledge gap.

Especially from the 20th century on, the landscape of music was continuously evolving, driven by a broader trend towards experimentation and innovation in both the tools and methods of music creation, including the use of instruments, computers, and extended techniques. It seems likely that this also influenced the saxophone community.⁴⁵ Luigi Russolo, a pivotal figure in this experimental milieu, articulated a radical reimagining of music in his 1913 manifesto *The Art of Noises*. Russolo contended that the advent of machinery in the 19th century had irrevocably altered the auditory environment, making traditional music, with its historical conventions and limited sonic range, inadequate for modern sensibilities. He advocated for the incorporation of mechanical and urban noises into music, envisioning *intonarumori* or noise instruments that could produce a more extensive array of sounds. I also mentioned the contributions of Edgard Varèse, who in his manifesto *The Liberation of Sound*, underscored the transformative potential of electronic music in expanding the timbral and expressive capacities of sound. Varèse posited that electronic music should complement rather than replace traditional instruments, suggesting a synergistic relationship between the two. The influence of Russolo and Varèse - which is echoed in both conventional and non-traditional saxophone techniques later on - continued after World War II, a period that witnessed a pronounced shift in musical focus towards the exploration of sound itself, leading to the development of new performance techniques and the establishment of symbiotic composer-performer relationships. This era saw figures such as John Cage and Luciano Berio, alongside saxophonists like Daniel Kientzy, championing modern and progressive techniques that significantly influenced contemporary compositional and pedagogical practices. The concept of *musique concrète instrumentale* provided another framework for understanding the innovative potential of saxophone techniques. Helmut Lachenmann's

⁴⁵ Proof of this can, for example, be found in (free) improvised music – see below.

ideas, which prioritize the physical act of sound production over the concrete sonic results, can also be recognized in the practice of SWMP. Also Lachenmann challenged certain aesthetic conventions, prompting a reevaluation of the artistic value of non-traditional sounds. Through the lens of *musique concrète instrumentale*, SWMP techniques acquire additional historical and aesthetic significance, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation.

The impact that composers, performers, and improvising musicians have brought to the sonic evolution of the saxophone cannot be understated. Jazz and improvising musicians consistently adapted and created new techniques and sounds on the saxophone, often inventing techniques that composers and classical saxophonists adopted later. In their book *The Techniques of Saxophone Playing*, Weiss and Netti highlight improvisation and the explorations of the postwar avant-garde as major aesthetic contributions to modern saxophone sound and embouchure.

By briefly analyzing Marc Vilanova's *Saxophone Miniature II*, Christine Abdelnour's solo set from Paris, and Ben Eidson's *Solo Saxophone I*, I illustrated how the innovative uses of SWMP techniques were concretely adapted in improvisations. Both analyses also highlighted the artistic value of these techniques outside of the classical style of playing. Here, they served to enrich the sonic space of the sound worlds in which the two artists were performing.

Over 250 pieces now incorporate the SWMP techniques, with numerous composers contributing to this evolving repertoire. Performers and ensembles also played crucial roles in commissioning and presenting new works. Also, my own commissions have led to new works which have become part of the SWMP repertoire. Additionally, my saxophone quartet, The Ensemble du Bout du Monde, has specialized in performing demanding and difficult works, and challenges composers to include SWMP techniques to their fullest artistic possibilities. I also included two analyses of solo works that use these techniques, *For Felipe M.* by Stratis Minakakis, and *Go Within* by Eleni Ralli. The analyses were added in order to demonstrate the artistic and practical applications of these techniques. Through them, I aimed to underscore the dramatic and innovative potential of SWMP in contemporary music.

In Chapters Two to Five, I have discussed the more pragmatic, technical, and pedagogical ideas of SWMP techniques. Several years ago, before starting this practice-led research, studying these techniques and the repertoire utilizing them was a frustrating and confusing task due to the lack of knowledge on the subject as compared to other extended techniques. Running to search for basic information in Weiss and Netti's *The Techniques of Saxophone Playing* or Kientzy's *Saxologie* made it seem as though I was only just cracking the surface on the possibilities. Now, through my research, I have developed a more profound approach to the pedagogy of these techniques – something that has been lacking in all previous resources. Readers of my thesis can hear all the sonic possibilities,

mimic my fingerings, and attempt to produce similar results. The repertoire is available to be perused in a continually updatable format where new compositions can be added at any time. Composers have access to up-to-date knowledge on the SWMP techniques with transparent transposition guides, notational suggestions, and practiced-based knowledge on how to use them or what to potentially avoid in a composition. Through bespoke videos saxophonists and composers may now gain direct knowledge by seeing and hearing me perform these techniques and giving step by step instructions on their production. The thesis allows a wider audience to engage with this material, and, most importantly, shows the artistic potential of the SWMP techniques.

For the air pitch technique, I have offered essential information on how to approach various playing positions, detailing the different ways to shape vowel and consonant sounds, and demonstrating the unique transitions from this technique to others. Regarding the tongue ram technique, I have expanded the knowledge on its sonic outcomes and dynamic possibilities, while also linking it to other contemporary extended techniques for saxophone and flute. I have enhanced the understanding of the trumpet sounds technique by providing foundational advice on the distinctive buzzing embouchure, addressing common misconceptions about embouchure placement, and offering detailed demonstrations of different articulation structures that performers should master. The saxo-flute hybridity technique, which had been relatively unexplored by other scholars, allowed me to uncover a wealth of new information. Most notably, I discovered that this technique is feasible on all saxophones, regardless of their tube size.

I continue to practice these techniques with care and resilience, making myself a better musician. In the course of this research, I have performed music using SWMP techniques countless times all over the world, educated several colleagues and their students about the techniques and their proper usage, and have been invited to perform pieces using SWMP techniques at international festivals. I have also released several albums that prominently feature these techniques, and I continue to commission composers who write music for SWMP. Artistically, these techniques have made me a better and more inquisitive musician: I look for novel ways to approach music and techniques; I am more open to difficult or dense notational practices because I have encountered, analyzed, and performed many scores with many different notations; and I have become confident with these techniques so that I can inquire if a specific notation is serving a passage, gesture, technique, or entire parts of the score to the best, or to allow myself to suggest better ways of notating. The collaborative demands of these techniques – whether between composer and performer, performer and performer, or performer and notation – have opened doors to new and interesting dimensions of music-making. This has fostered in me and my collaborators a sense of exploration and openness to the unknown, encountering it with more precision, clarity, and musical intentionality. Through this research project, SWMP may gain renewed interest from performers and composers.

Tackling the problems associated with notation has been an important and necessary part of this research project. I saw from my first encounter with the SWMP techniques that the signs and symbols used to present them were disjointed and had little to nothing in common. Providing an understanding that notation is an important issue for both composers and performers was essential in my discussion in Chapter Six. I sought to bring more clarity and coherence to the proliferation of various notation systems in the SWMP repertoire. Analyzing the roots of contemporary notation highlighted its positives and negatives starting in the 1980s and moving closer to today. Distinctly important to my inquiry were three facets at play with each other: first, the idea that one of the objectives of notation is to eternalize a composer's sonic ideas as cogently as possible; second, the composer-performer-material-score-electronics relationship is a complex intertwined web where all these entities are interacting with one another; and third, that when working from any score there is a pivotal role the performer plays as co-author. With this in mind, I advocate for two things when it comes to notation for SWMP. First, a more standardized model for notating these techniques upon which composers can expand. After critically examining, practicing, and performing many scores using SWMP, I have come up with my own thoughts on such a notation model using guidelines that prioritize clarity and ease of dissemination. These guidelines are just that, a model for composers to use should they want to. Recognizing that notation is a highly individualized (artistic, aesthetic, technical, or practical) choice made by each composer, or sometimes the result of a certain ignorance regarding notation possibilities for SWMP techniques, I will never insist that composers accept my notational suggestions as absolute. Furthermore, standardized guidelines for notation do not result in standardized performances. Regardless of the notation – standardized or not – performers will always bring their unique perspectives, cultural backgrounds, and identities to their performances.

Many composers have told me that they do not know how to properly notate SWMP techniques. This brings me to my second point, the importance of a composer-performer relationship when working on new sonic landscapes, especially in the context of SWMP. Citing Barthes' "The Death of the Author," the meaning of a text is determined by both author and reader (the author usually also being the first reader). Barthes' claim is that the author (composer) cannot claim the exclusive right on knowing what a text (score) means; the reader (performer) can have their own ideas about the text (score) as that text (score) is by definition open to a multitude of interpretations impacted by many different factors. Barthes' idea can also be applied to emphasize the interplay between performers and composers. A score will be interpreted by a performer, who imbues meaning into the work. By working with a score that is by definition open to multiple interpretations, a performer has to make choices as to how it can be played. This could of course take place in close consultation with the composer. Therefore, I advocate for more discussion between saxophonists and composers on which notation works best to convey certain musical ideas, thus shedding light on the dual importance of the artistic intention and the clarity of notation.

Future of SWMP Techniques - https://youtu.be/3q0BmlC9_sc

In terms of the practice of SWMP, I believe I have provided a solid foundation upon which further research can be built. As such, this research presents the continuation or renaissance of this practice. My hope is that every saxophonist will be curious enough to explore the sonic possibilities of SWMP techniques; that composers will be inspired to incorporate them into their works; and that the field will continue to develop due to these advancements. Through such curiosity, future artists will continue to realize Luigi Russolo's vision of fostering "the comprehension, the taste, and the passion for noises" (Russolo 1913: 12). Any and every sound – some previously considered as noise, that is, as non-musical sounds – can be translated into music, and, in the hands of the right performer or composer, hold artistic value.

Had I possessed unlimited resources, primarily time and finances, I would, for example, have delved into the ultra-microtonal fluctuations that occur while working with these techniques. Distilling knowledge concerning microtonal sounds would unlock another artistic potential for composers and could provide new insights for performers. Additionally, I would have liked to explore auxiliary techniques as extensions of the four main techniques discussed here: for instance, the potential of jet whistle sounds with saxo-flute hybridity or the possibilities of glissandi with tongue rams. This additional work and exploration can be pursued separately from this dissertation, as the primary focus here was to establish a cogent and comprehensive understanding of the four main SWMP techniques.

The future of SWMP remains to be written. Will these techniques continue to be utilized and explored by composers, improvisers, and performers in the next 10, 25, 100, or more years? Will saxophonists maintain their curiosity about these methods of playing? In a world of ever-changing trends, contemporary playing techniques only remain relevant if their advocates present them compellingly. The future of these techniques depends on several factors: whether saxophonists embrace them in their practice, whether composers incorporate them in innovative ways, and whether these techniques can transcend and evolve further. Ultimately, their future starts by how we understand and treat them today.