

ALTO SAXOPHONE— TO THE SIDE OR BETWEEN THE LEGS?

by Neal Postma

*H*onestly, this is one of the more debated questions in the saxophone pedagogy world. This is more debated than brands of saxophone to start on, what reed strengths to play on, mouthpiece choices, etc. And it draws some very passionate arguments. Here is my take and the reasons I have to support them.

Let's start with alto sax, the others will be discussed later. More important than where you put the saxophone to play is what it does with your body as a result. You want the mouthpiece to enter the mouth without having to bend your neck to the side, up or down. At the same time, your wrists should not be obstructed or resting on the leg. Beginner players are generally smaller, so if they put the horn between their legs, the lower stack of keys will be too low. As a result, the student will cock their wrist to reach the keys because their leg is in the way. For these students, I have them

put their horn to the side of their leg. As a student grows, their legs get bigger, so if they keep the saxophone to the side, the angle gets bigger and bigger. Eventually, it will be the point that they will need to turn or cock their head to reach the saxophone. At this point, they are likely tall enough that they can place it between their legs without obstructing the wrist.

So, in short, I believe that both are used depending on the size of the student. Tenor and baritone, however, always to the side! This is not disputed like alto. These horns are far too big to put between the legs.



Saxophonist and pedagogue NEAL POSTMA holds degrees from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (MM) and the University of Colorado (BM) and is currently a DMA Candidate at the University of South Carolina where he serves as an Instructor of Music Appreciation. He is also on the faculty of Claflin University teaching applied lessons on saxophone. As a concert saxophonist Neal has performed across the United States, Europe and Asia. He has given recitals at universities and various regional, national and international conferences.



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