



Analysis Saxophone Techniques of Eric Marienthal: Case Study of “Blue Water”

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Abstract. This Research objective are: Analysis Saxophone Techniques of Eric Marienthal: Case Study of “Blue Water”. The research methods include: 1) Literature review. 2) Data collection. 3) Data analysis. This research study introduces the personal biography of saxophonist Eric Marienthal and analyzes his saxophone piece "Blue Water. " This research found three saxophone techniques: 1) Muted Tonguing. 2) high note. 3) High F sharp "Money Note". The results of this research are summarized as follows :1) To found more effective practices. Eric Marienthal does not just show technique when playing, but uses it according to the needs of the piece. 2) To found the preparation steps for saxophonists who appreciate the Eric Marienthal style learn more about saxophone techniques, improve their understanding of music, and make their playing more musical and expressive.

Keywords: Eric Marienthal, Saxophone technique, Smooth Jazz, Fusion Jazz.

1 Introduction

In the field of modern music education, saxophone, as a popular instrument, attracts a large number of students and music lovers.

Previous academic research has delved into saxophone playing techniques and teaching methods. On the one hand, the education of Western wind ensemble is becoming increasingly prominent in art colleges and universities, but it has long been plagued by problems such as outdated teaching ideas, outdated content and monotonous teaching methods. [2] On the other hand, China has continuously developed more than 30 sets of sax grading textbooks since 1987, and the popularity of grading has surged, especially from 2005 to 2009.[4]

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In the music education of Saxophone, there is also research aimed at specific performance techniques. Mastering the high vocal range is essential to improving the treble, tone quality, and intonation. Although resources are currently limited and inconsistent, a study investigating the methods used by university saxophone professors showed the overall benefits of making high notes, general instructional materials, and a clear approach to making high notes in saxophone performance, providing useful guidance for other saxophonists.[5] Similarly, articulation techniques such as long legato, slider, and staccato have a significant impact on musical expression.[3]

Moreover, Philosophical studies on musical performance offer profound insights into expression, performer-instrument dynamics, and technique-emotion interplay, deepening our understanding of music's transformative power. [12]

Eric Marienthal (Fig. 1), born on December 19, 1957 in Sacramento, California, is a renowned saxophonist known for his outstanding performances in jazz, pop and jazz fusion. Eric Marienthal studied at Berklee College of Music, where he received an excellent education. His career began in 1980, when he began performing with the famous New Orleans trumpeter Al Hult. Upon his return to Los Angeles, Eric became a member of the Chick Corea Elektric Band, with which he recorded six albums, two of which won Grammy Awards. As a music educator, he has written several instructional books and produced instructional videos, providing a wealth of learning resources for learners. In addition, he is actively involved in philanthropy, organizing charity concerts every year in support of the High Hopes Head Injury Program. [1] [6] [7]

Through an in-depth study and analysis of Eric Malintal's music, To help students improve their playing skills and understanding of music.



Fig. 1. Eric Marienthal

2 Research Methodology

2.1 Research Process

- 1) Data collection includes document data, sheet music, and social media.
- 2) Analysis of Eric Marienthal's songs.
- 3) Summary of information.

2.2 Data Collection

- 1) Document study: Eric Marienthal's teaching materials and sheet music.
- 2) The study of social media is data from performance videos.

3 Saxophone Techniques of Eric Marienthal: “Blue Water”

"Blue Water" is The first single from the famous album "Just Around The Corner". Its charm lies in its success in attracting a large number of fans who love pop jazz music. The song marks the first collaboration between Eric Marienthal and Culbertson, and their talents are perfectly combined on this track, showing an unparalleled musical understanding. The tune reached number one on the National Smooth Jazz Radio charts at one point, a testament to its popularity among music fans.

The style of the song leans towards R&B, with a strong rhythm and dynamic feeling, which makes you want to rock to the rhythm. The melody is sensual and beautiful, complemented by the liveliness of the keyboard harmonies, the psychedelic coolness and the vibrancy of the saxophone sound make the whole piece sound rich and layered.

At bars 66-69 and 111-117, Eric Marienthal brought the mood of the piece to a thrilling climax with a clever melodic push and a rousing high note.

In bars 66-69 (Fig. 2), Marienthal uses Muted Tonguing's continuous push into the High Notes, making the melody full of layers as it advances.



Fig. 2. The music score of "Blue Water" 1

In bars 111-117 (Fig. 3), Marienthal uses Double Tonguing to propel the melody, a technique that produces a rich and intense tone that makes the melody more intense throughout the passage.



Fig. 3. The music score of "Blue Water" 2

In bars 55 and 71 (Fig. 4), the notes A and B in the red box and F and B are played in a Muted Tonguing manner, which makes the melody of these two phrases clean and

clear, and the hopping is significantly enhanced, thus making the two phrases appear more powerful.



Fig. 4. The music score of "Blue Water" 3

In bars 96 and 102 (Fig. 5), Eric Marienthal uses the Money Note to bring out the two high notes. To dare to use this adventurous approach in a predominantly R&B style piece fully demonstrates Eric Marienthal's bold innovation and mastery of musical style. These two points are like the finishing touch, not only add a lot of color to the whole music, but also become the highlight of the whole melody, eye-catching.



Fig. 5. The music score of "Blue Water" 4

4 Eric Marienthal's usual playing techniques

4.1 Muted Tonguing

"Muted Tonguing" is vital in jazz sax playing, enhancing rhythm. It involves using the tongue to dampen part of the whistle's vibration. Placement can vary; Eric Marienthal prefers left side with the front of his tongue. Initially uncomfortable, it requires practice to control whistle vibration. Ensure breath support; without it, the tongue may hinder sound production. Practice is key to mastering this technique for vibrant saxophone playing. [8] [9]

4.2 High Notes

Playing high notes on saxophone involves controlling overtones for various fingerings. Eric Marienthal advises increasing breath pressure to ensure throat openness. Avoid biting the mouthpiece, which damages sound quality. Incorporate high notes into arpeggios or scales, maintaining consistent mouth shape and lower lip pressure. Marienthal suggests a 60% breath to 40% lower lip force ratio for full, pure sound. High note performance relies heavily on breath control for accuracy and beauty, emphasizing its importance in saxophone playing. [10]

4.3 High F sharp "Money Note"

High F sharp, known as the "money note," is easily achieved with alternate fingering. According to Eric Marienthal, focus on pressing the lower lip against the whistle's center and tilt it forward. Maintain ample breath and pressure. Angle the saxophone slightly towards your body for optimal effect. Ensure a moderate reed hardness and correct mouthpiece position for successful execution. Practice breath control and tone expression for a richer performance. [11]

5 Conclusions

we thoroughly studied one pieces of music performed By Eric Marienthal: "Blue Water".

First of all, Marienthal fully demonstrated his keen sense of melody in the performance, especially in the first half of the repertoire. Following the traditional saxophone approach, he pays attention to the clarity and flow of the melody, and creates a musical atmosphere that is easy to understand and feel by the audience through simple and elegant playing.

Secondly, Eric Marienthal skillfully uses a variety of playing techniques, such as Muted Tonguing, High Notes and some Little Trick Licks, which are not only a demonstration of technique, but also an important tool for him to enrich his musical expression.

Thirdly, Eric Marienthal's performance in the Solo part is even more eye-catching. He showed his own unique musical language, through the innovative way of playing and the treatment of notes, presented a distinctive Solo paragraph, making the whole performance more expressive.

Through these in-depth performance analysis, we have a deeper understanding of Eric Marienthal's musical personality and his ability to control different musical styles. He is not only a skilled saxophonist, but also an original and expressive musical artist. His music, not only has a profound traditional music foundation, but also has the spirit of continuous innovation and exploration, which makes his music full of vitality.

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