

# The Saxophone



## *Early History*

The saxophone is probably the most popular of all the woodwind instruments. Not only that, but it is the most modern of all the instruments. In 1846, Belgian Adolphe Saxe decided that he wanted to fill in the pitch and volume range between the clarinets and the brass in the marching band. Basically, he was looking for a louder version of the clarinet. Hence, the saxophone was born and comes mostly in four forms: soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone (tenor being the most popular).



## *Later Developments*

Since the saxophone is so new, very few changes has been made to the instrument itself. Only a few alterations and additions have been made to its basic mechanisms (key structure).

On the other had, performers such as John Coltrane have been able to pioneer or create new uses for it in performance. So,

Coltrane did not modify the instrument itself, rather he modified some of the playing techniques.



## *Beginning Players*

The saxophone is probably the easiest of all the woodwinds for beginning musicians to pick up. However, there are a few physical requirements that a student needs to have in order to be successful on the instrument:

1. Students must be big enough to hold the instrument.
2. Both hands must be big enough to hold the instrument properly. The hands (especially the left hand) must be able to reach the proper playing position without touching any of the other keys.
3. Normal teeth, lip, and chip formation make it easier for students to learn the instrument. Students with overbites, under bites, crooked or straight teeth, or even thick or thin lips may have to adjust

their mouth position to get a proper sound.

## *In Performance*

The saxophone is probably the most versatile of all the woodwind instruments. It has made many progressions in all genres of music, especially in jazz. Players such as John Coltrane, Coleman Hawkins, Charlie Parker, and Lester Young have all found ways to adapt the saxophone to their own style of jazz. Other musicians like Kenny G continue to make the saxophone popular in the popular music category. Rock groups, such as the Cherry Poppin' Daddies and Glueleg, are including the saxophone in their repertoire. Even many composers are finding ways to incorporate the saxophone into orchestral pieces. The saxophone can also be used in marching concert bands.

