

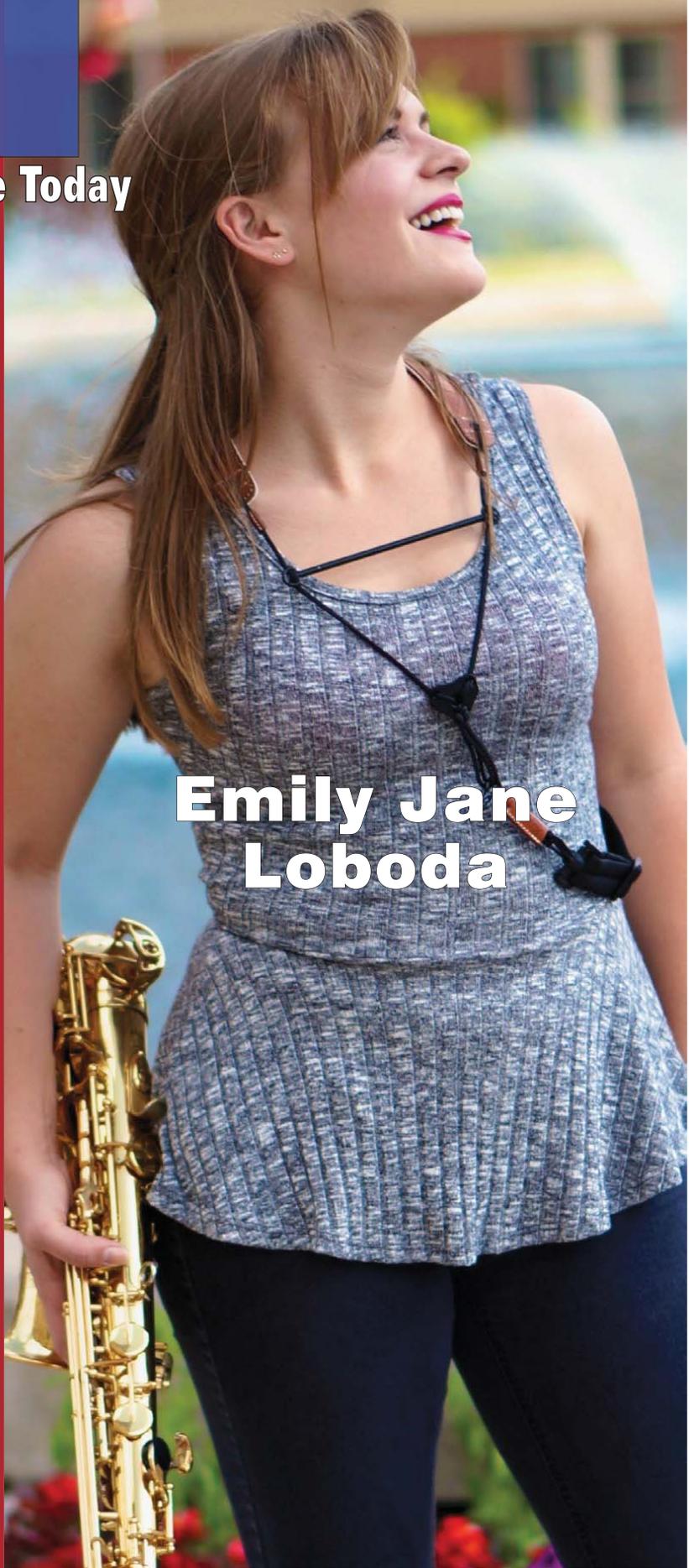
# ST

Saxophone Today

Sept/Oct 2016



**Kris Allen**



**Emily Jane  
Loboda**



# Emily Jane Loboda

Emily Loboda's Website

It's tough to make it in the saxophone world. Not only are there a new crop of graduate students moving on from the world's top universities every year, but you need to be able to rise above the tumult of all of those young artists. What you need is something special, and that is exactly what young up-and-coming saxophonist Emily Jane Loboda has going for her. She has a killer combination of immaculate technique, extraordinary musicianship, finely crafted rhythmic exactness, superior ears, lyrical refinement, and the ability to be adaptable and play with ease not just in a wide variety of musical styles but in a similarly wide variety of ensemble configurations, and she does all of this with apparent ease. Her abilities are undoubtedly heard in her solo performances, but also in the wide variety of chamber performances she has done throughout the United States in her percussion saxophone duo Interrobang, and with the saxophone quartet Ataraxia. Orchestras are also taking notice, having had her appear as a soloist with them in Michigan and North Carolina. In the world of saxophone competitions, Loboda is working her way up the ladder by building a solid resume:

- state winner for the [2014 North Carolina MTNA Young Artist Woodwind competition](#)
- winner of [University of North Carolina at Greensboro's 2016 Concerto Competition](#)
- winner of [Central Michigan University's 2014 Concerto Competition](#)
- Previously she was a semi-finalist in the [2016 North American Saxophone Alliance quartet competition](#)

- semi-finalist for the [Plowman Chamber Music Competition in 2011](#)

- state winner for the [Tennessee Music Teachers Association Conference in 2011/2012](#), and was selected as alternate for nationals at MTNA Southern Division.

She performed the world premiere of *Journal Entries of an Introvert*, by Evan Boegehold at the 2016 North American Saxophone Alliance Biennial Conference, and has performed premieres of works by John Mackey, Binshan Zhao, and Frank Nawrot, giving the Southern Region/North Carolina premiere of *Second Study for Alto Saxophone, Video, and Electronics: pulp*, by James Thorpe Buchanan.

Classical saxophone is not her only focus as she is currently earning a post-baccalaureate certificate in jazz studies and finishing her Doctor of Music Arts degree in Saxophone Performance at the [University of North Carolina at Greensboro \(UNCG\)](#). Currently teaching at [Mitchell Community College in Statesville, North Carolina](#), she holds degrees from Central Michigan University and Tennessee Technological University.

***I always like to start by asking about equipment. Why did you choose a Selmer Series III soprano?***

I had a really good friend who had the instrument but had only played it for a year. It was brand new and I borrowed it from her. She eventually sold it to me for a very good price. Since then I've thought about looking for a Yamaha, but I really love the sound I get on my horn and haven't been able to give that up. I'm all about the sound and the Selmer has a great sound. It's a little harder to play than some of the Yamaha's I've tried, but I can't give up the sound.

# Interview By Thomas Erdmann

*On alto you play a Yamaha. What was better about that horn as opposed to the other ones you tried?*

I've had my Yamaha for 10 years. I got it when I was a junior in high school. I've tried out others since then, but I love it. It's a Custom Z which is usually associated as a jazz horn. Most classical players like the Custom EX's. I like how the Custom Z plays and how the key work is done. They changed some of the key work on the EX's and they just don't feel right to me. I did upgrade the neck to a V1 from the neck that came with the horn. The neck change totally changed the sound of the instrument and the response is great. I'm so happy with the horn I have no need to try anything else so I'm sticking with it.

*You use Selmer Paris mouthpieces on both the alto and soprano for your classical work. Why those, and why those for classical music?*

On the alto I play a Selmer Paris Larry Teal mouthpiece that was refaced by Bob Scott who's out of Lansing, Michigan. He does great work. I've had that mouthpiece since I was in high school. I love the sound. The mouthpiece originally had some weird tendencies, such as being harder to play low notes on and it was slightly out of tune. I gave it to Bob two or three years ago and it came back perfect. The sounds I can get from the mouthpiece have a lot of color.

I played on Vandoren mouthpieces for about a year during my master's degree, the AL3 series, and I liked them because they were very consistent and had a great sound, but I couldn't play as loud on those as I wanted to and there weren't as many colors as the one I'm playing now. They were still great mouthpieces and I have kept it as my back up mouthpiece but I had to switch back to my Selmer Larry Teal. That was when I had it refaced and I fell back in love with the Selmer.

On my soprano I played on an SL4 until about six months ago. I've had that mouthpiece for about eight years, but I think it was getting older and it was time for something new. So I needed a new mouthpiece, and UNCG got a big shipment of Selmer mouthpieces. I tried one of them and fell in love with the Selmer Paris S90 190. I picked it because it plays like my alto mouthpiece but it's for the soprano and that's what I've been looking for. I'm still getting used to it, but I love all the colors I can get out of it.

*You use Vandoren reeds for your classical work. What is the asset, for you, of those reeds when playing classical music?*

I've always played on Vandoren reeds. I've tried out some other ones but I always go back to the Vandorens. There is a lot of depth to those reeds and I've found that over the years I have discovered exactly how to sand them down to become my perfect reed. With these reeds I can use about eight reeds out of a box of 10. I've tried other reed brands and I find I can only use about two of them out of a box and they do not last very long. I can, most of the time, make a Vandoren reed last up to a full year.

The past four recitals I've played, including the one I did last Sunday at UNCG, I played on a reed that was a year or almost a year old. The one I used for my recital in April was from February last year. I've figured out how to make them last, and once you let them sit they get really great. I've

never been able to do that with any other type of reed.

*What is your secret to making a reed last so long?*

I'm glad you asked because I've wanted to tell people about this for so long. Most people try a reed and if it doesn't work they throw it directly away. What I do is get them out of the box and sand them against the grain of the reed, just one or two passes with some really fine sandpaper; normally people sand with the grain, but for some reason sanding against the grain seals the reed. I get the reed to just the right strength and if it doesn't sound great I'll play on it for a day or two and then let it sit for a month or two.

After time has gone by I'll pick it back up and try it again for a few days. If it's still not good I let it sit for a couple of months again. After doing this two or three times, about six months later, the reed ages, or something, and they play wonderfully. If the reed starts to die again I will again let it sit for a couple of months, and it will be fine when I pick it back up a few months later. I think people give up on reeds too quickly.

*For your jazz playing you use D'Addario reeds. Why those for jazz?*

In the saxophone world I'm not as picky about reeds as some people. I've tried to learn to play on reeds that may not be the best. If it's too soft, for example, I've taught myself how to play on those kinds of reeds which also allows me to get more reed usage out of a box. For my jazz playing I'm still experimenting. I've played in jazz bands throughout my schooling but it hasn't been until recently, the last two or



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three years, that I've started to invest a lot of time in jazz. I just got the new mouthpiece at the beginning of the year and tried a bunch of reeds with it.

I tried some Vandoren reeds on it and wasn't really happy with how they sounded. Then I tried out the D'Addario reeds, the 2 Hard ones, and they played wonderfully. I can get a big loud sound out of that setup. Playing really loud in a jazz band is different than playing really loud in classical music, and I have had to get used to that. This mouthpiece and reed setup has helped me in distinguishing my jazz sound.

*One of the things you're doing within your graduate DMA work is **building your jazz abilities.***

*This includes upcoming jazz lessons with Branford Marsalis from an assistantship you won. Is it possible, if a saxophonist wants to be a working musician in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, to just specialize in either classical or jazz, or is it really imperative these days to have abilities in both?*

I feel as a classical player you need some other things to specialize in if you want to teach at the college level. I'm doing a lot of jazz and music education work, in addition to the classical saxophone work, at UNCG. I think it's important to have some other things. There are so many saxophonists out there right now who are trying to do the same thing I am; get their doctorate and get a job teaching at a college somewhere.

If you just play the saxophone you need to have something else, like also being good at jazz, and it helps if you can teach additional kinds of classes or are comfortable teaching other woodwind instruments. I think it's imperative today to have both classical and jazz abilities, but 10 years ago it wasn't as important. I think I would have a really hard time finding a job if I wasn't working on having abilities in both areas.

*Your recording of **the Bach transcription piece is incredible.** There is a special affinity saxophonists have with playing transcriptions of Bach's music, and many saxophone teachers require their students to perform his music. You are able to perform the piece with an exceptionally light yet perfectly pointed and clear articulation style. How do you help your students develop their articulation skills to the high degree you have?*

I'm actually working on that with one of my students this afternoon. I tend to articulate a little differently than some other saxophonists. I'm sure you heard on some of my recordings I can have a hard driving articulation. I like that because it can bring more energy to the music. I, of course, used a lighter style on the Bach, but I still play with the same idea. When I'm teaching I think the main thing people forget when articulating is how important your air stream is behind the tongue. Tonguing on the reed in a light style,

### Emily Loboda's Equipment

**Soprano** - Selmer Series III, a Selmer Paris S90 190 mouthpiece for classical and a Vandoren SL4 mouthpiece for jazz, a Copper Woodstone Original Handmade Ligature for classical and Vandoren Optimum Ligature for jazz, Vandoren Java Green Box 3½ reeds for classical and Vandoren Java Green Box 3½ reeds for jazz, and a Breathtaking Strap Lithe Premium Camel saxophone strap.

**Alto** - Yamaha-YAS 82Z with a GP V1 Neck, a C. Robert Scott refaced Selmer Paris Larry Teal mouthpiece for classical playing and a D'Addario Jazz Select D7M .078" (2.10mm) mouthpiece for jazz, a Copper Woodstone Original Handmade Ligature for classical and Vandoren Optimum Ligature for jazz, Vandoren Blue Box #3 reeds for classical and D'Addario Jazz Select #2 Hard reeds for jazz, and a Breathtaking Strap Lithe Premium Camel saxophone strap.

with a fast light staccato style, can be a really hard thing for younger players to do. I have to really push to the student that they need to focus their air stream and if they do this it will be easier and better.

I tell them to think about their air stream like they are blowing through one of those really tiny coffee straws, to really focus their air. You have to blow pretty hard to get air moving through those straws. That usually helps them get their air stream and tongue moving and working together.

Also, people get confused about the whole tip-of-the-tongue-on-the-tip-of-the-reed thing. Actually you should tongue a little further back on your tongue. I show with my hands how your tongue is not going flat at the reed, it's at

an angle, and a lot of younger students think incorrectly about their tongue position which creates problems. Some saxophonists do what's called anchor tonguing, and I'm really more in the middle of that style, and so my tonguing is a little different than most.

*One of the things students tend to stumble over, with regard to playing Bach's music, is the wonderful lyricism his music includes. **Your lyricism is spectacular** on your recording of the Bach, as well as on the second movement of Decruck's Sonata for Saxophone and Piano and the slow section in the first movement of the Fuzzy Bird Sonata. How do you help your students develop their lyricism to the high extent you've developed yours?*

That's one of the big things I like to emphasize to both my students and in my own playing. I'm all about music being lyrical and musical. I tell them, "If anything, you need to focus on that, musicality and lyricism, more than the technique needed in the moment. If you're in a performance think about where the line is going and not about one note to the next note or the technique needed that's coming up." Lyricism and musicality are very hard to teach. Technique can be more easily taught because I have certain exercises I can assign to help them learn certain licks in the repertoire, but lyricism and musicality are something you feel and that's a hard concept to teach.

At the beginning of anything my students and I do, I tell them the first thing they should do is really exaggerate the dynamics on the page. Most of the time the composer can have the musician do what they want with the dynamics they write, and once the student starts to exaggerate that they can add their own dynamics as well as focusing on having really long phrases and knowing where each phrase is going. I have them point out the high points in lines. If they keep doing that they will start to hear and feel the lines, and then they can develop their own kind of musicality within a piece.

Students generally don't have the opportunity to play in ensemble with a pianist until they come to college. Your interplay with your pianist throughout Yoshimatsu's Fuzzy Bird Sonata is excellent. The rubatos, accelerandos, and the way your lines match rhythmically as well as musically are perfect. **It's as if both of you are of the same mind.** Do you have suggestions to help college students to be effective in their limited time with a pianist in order to make music at the highest level possible?

I've been working with a student who is putting a piece together with a pianist and they've only had two rehearsals before the performance. About four or five years ago I started doing something that would have helped me so much during my undergraduate years because limited rehearsal time with the pianist before a performance; there was only chance to run your music once before you played it in front of people. This made me quite nervous because I hadn't had time to come to understand what was really going on with the piano.

What I do is have the students' purchase a recording which I pick out, so I know it's a quality performance, and have them listen to it every day at least once. At a certain point in a semester I ask the students to come in and play the piece, and the piano part, a rhythm or specific melody line, during the rests in their part.

The idea behind this is when they get with a pianist they are not counting through the rests but listening to the piano to know when to come in next. When anyone is really nervous they can be caught off guard with counting rests, and lose their spot not knowing if you're counting the fourth or fifth measure of the rests. If students know exactly what the pianist is doing and are listening to the piano carefully they will be less likely to get lost. This practice technique also helps in other ways. Younger students especially have a problem when they start working with pianists, but if you can get them to key into the piano part they will start to relax and move with the lines, realizing it's a duo and not just a saxophonist with an accompanist and that's when the real music happens.

One of the things I'm most impressed with in your playing is **the incredible rhythmic accuracy and metric**



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*perfection you exhibit when playing fast notes. This is superbly seen on the third movement of Decruck's Sonata as well as on the Yoshimatsu Fuzzy Bird Sonata. How do you practice in order to be so perfect with regard to your rhythmic exactness at extremely fast tempos, even when the rhythms extend over the bar line and the wicked changing meters on the Yoshimatsu composition?*

There are things I've been doing that I learned from my undergrad professor, [Phil Barham at Tennessee Tech](#). He is a great teacher and he gave me little tricks, you could say, to learn technical passages, because I was not the best at technique when I was an undergrad. I couldn't play fast and I couldn't learn pieces as quickly as other people could. He gave me all sorts of tips which I still use and pass along to my students. They involve taking a chunk of a technical passage and changing up how you play the rhythm. What you do is hold one note, within a group, longer than the others. You do this five or six different ways within a given passage.

*You also play the passage with an entirely random rhythm, but with all the right notes. These rhythmic tricks always make the technique in music click for me; it's like you're connecting different parts in your brain. You come to really know the music because you're playing it so many different ways. Mr. Barham would tell me, "Almost all missed notes are because of a missed rhythm," and not because you don't know the notes.*

I also do a practice technique using the metronome, to make sure I'm perfectly in sync with it, I call it drowning-out-the-met; met for metronome. I have the metronome on

and when I play a downbeat I will accent the note extremely loud, so if I can't hear the metronome I know I'm right in time, but if I hear the metronome I know I'm playing either in front of the metronome or behind it.

Using this method I learned I had a tendency which I didn't know I had, rushing. I would always get to downbeats before the met. I thought I was playing with the metronome, but I wasn't. I run into this a lot with students and use this exercise a lot. I also set the metronome so that it's beating sixteenth notes, or whatever the subdivision is. Then I'll bump it down to eighth note subdivision, and then quarter note subdivision, eventually getting to one beat to every two bars. That's how I really know I'm playing in time if I can hit that downbeat with the metronome two bars later.

*Those are some great exercises. Thank you for sharing them. You make exceptional musical statements on the quasi-cadenza near the beginning of the Fuzzy Bird Sonata. What advice do you have for others who are working on this piece in order to make such incredibly flowing phrases as you do on this highly involved and truly wicked quasi-cadenza?*

What I suggest is don't be too much in or on the page. I was talking to a close pianist friend of mine, about this piece and she knew someone close to the composer of the [Fuzzy Bird Sonata](#), and he talked to her about what the piece was actually about. The composer was sitting with a friend in a bar or restaurant and they came up with the idea of the piece right there. The friend of Yoshimatsu also mentioned the composer wanted the piece to be free. In the last two movements, especially, there is a lot of room to be free because the almost improvisatory piano line allows for this.

When I was playing this piece I was more open to this idea because of my conversation with my pianist. In the beginning of the first movement of the *Fuzzy Bird* you have to be entirely synced up with the piano, so when I have those few moments of freedom from strict time, I really grasped that free interpretation concept, yet still staying within the confines of what Yoshimatsu wrote. I like to tell my students, "Take a risk. People would rather listen to you really going for it and missing a note, than playing within a small box and playing every single note correctly. It's more moving if you let yourself go."

*One of the modern extended techniques you've developed is a wonderfully musical slap tonguing tongue you exhibit on the Fuzzy Bird Sonata. What advice do you have for others when it comes to developing slap tonguing ability?*

That's a difficult one for lots of people. It took me a while to catch on to it. You have to know you're not going to get it on the first two tries, and it may take weeks to develop. The act of slap tonguing is to make a suction with your tongue against the reed, then when you let it go the slap noise is made. One exercise I use is the following, I practice taking the reed, not on the mouthpiece but just the reed itself, and putting it on the tongue and making the suction cup with your tongue so the tongue is suctioned to the reed. I have my students do this and look at the ground with their mouth open with the reed hanging on to the tongue. If the reed falls off that means they don't have the suction they need. If they can hold the reed to their tongue with only the suction while

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looking down it means they're doing it correctly and they are on their way to making the slap tongue sound.

Once they have that they can pull the reed on and off the suction which makes a little kissing sound, a tiny little slap, which I then have them transfer over to the reed on the mouthpiece. Usually they can start to get that little "kissing" sound on their horn.

The next step, which people have a lot of trouble with, is getting the loud slap which involves putting air behind the slap. Younger kids don't realize that pushing some air behind the slap is what gives it that loud quality, they get confused because when they start to do this they will play a note. You have to work with it for a while so that you're pushing the air but blocking off the sound so you don't get a note with the effect, unless you want a note.

**Your playing on Karel Husa's *Elegie et Rondeau*, which was written for Sigurd Rascher, is incredible. It is truly a virtuosic piece, both from a technical and musical standpoint. What advice do you have for others who are learning this piece in order to make it be as musical as possible?**

Specifically speaking of the *Elegie* part, there are some extreme dynamic contrasts that happen. Really exaggerating that aspect and learning how to play the opening, which is so quiet, is important. I practiced a lot to get that first note to seamlessly sneak in. The very last two notes of the piece are also very important. They're very low notes. I've listened to so many recordings where you hear people "honk" them out; it's as if they say, "Nobody can play these soft." I

really worked on what the composer wrote on the page, even though it does have my twist on the composition.

I know it sounds silly, to work so hard on just two notes, but it's amazing what a difference that can make to an audience or anyone who listens to the piece. When I perform that piece I like to think, "I'm going to play these last two notes and the first couple of notes at a point where people are leaning forward in their seats saying, 'Wait, is she still playing? I think I can hear some notes, but is she still playing?'" I want audience member to be on the edge of their seats. If you really focus on dynamics it really makes a difference on the Husa or any piece.

Even in the second part, the *Rondeau*, there are some extreme changes in dynamics; yes it is not as lyrical and is more rhythmically based, but you cannot get caught up in the, "I have to play this as fast as I can and I can't miss one note." If you think like that the whole time the piece will not come across musically. Audiences would rather hear you missing a note but really going for every dynamic and hear you own twist on or interpretation of the piece.

**When it comes to *warming up*, do you have a routine you do to get you ready to practice?**

Yes. I'm going to admit right here I have been super busy lately and I haven't been doing this routine lately, but I do have one and I always pick it back up in the summer when I have some time; I'm sure you know how it is when you only have an hour in a day and you have a deadline to learn music. For my warm up I start with a couple of scales. Then

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I do a chromatic exercise to get my fingers warmed up. When I was an undergrad I never thought about anything like this. I would think, “It’s a saxophone, I can just put a reed on and it plays a note. I don’t need to warm up.” I’ve come to realize how important it is to my technique to warmup.

I will speed up the chromatic exercise over a few months and then slow it back down, and redo the process. What I do is play from my lowest note, the b-flat, chromatically up four notes, Bb to D, four times, then I go up chromatically nine notes once, Bb to F-sharp. Then I repeat this up a half step, and I go all the way up the horn covering the entire range.

It takes quite a bit of time because I usually have a metronome beating and I make sure I don’t speed up or slow down, because if I do I will repeat certain sections to until I have it right. When I have the time, I like to spend an hour to 90 minutes doing this, along with scales. When I play scales I play each quite slow, then do it in a swung rhythm, then change up the rhythms. This exercise helps with evenness. I try to focus on evenness of fingers and making sure I have the best sound at all times; consciously thinking about my sound while I’m doing it.

*When it comes to practicing, are there **certain areas of technique** you want your students to work on each and every day?*

I really stress, and I know my students don’t like it, but I stress the importance of scales, which I’m sure every teacher does. I try to engrain in their minds just how important scales really are. Younger students don’t want to do them and always ask why they have to play them. During every lesson I randomly ask my students to play scales, making sure they are keeping the scales up. In every lesson I also have students’ sightread duets with me. When doing these I don’t let them stop. I tell them to catch up to me, so they can learn the importance of finding your place in the music if you get lost. I always point out once we’ve gone through the duet, the sections in the music that are parts of specific scales and the parts that are scalar patterns in a specific key. It starts to click with students that if they had learned their B major scale in thirds they would have been able to play that section with ease without even thinking about it.

I also get their technique going by having them play scales using the front keys, and the side keys, so they learn to get around on both parts of the horn. If they’re having trouble with their sound I’ll have them play long tones. I instruct students to do long tones, but I know how boring that can be for students so I stress the scales. I tell them, “If you’re going to do something, do the scales and while you are playing them focus on your sound too.”

*I’ve been asking this question a lot lately because I’m seeing so many saxophonists want to **play the soprano at younger and younger ages**. It is an instrument fraught with difficulties. At what point in a saxophonist’s development do you believe they are ready to take on the particular challenges of the soprano?*

I think it depends, of course, on the student, but before you should be allowed to move to the soprano the student needs to have mastered their sound and articulation on the alto. If the student hasn’t done that it might not be a disaster, but it’s going to be very hard for them. But you’re right, the

soprano is a very difficult instrument. Sometimes people think going to soprano is as easy as going to the tenor or bari, which isn’t that easy, but the soprano has its own challenges. The intonation is a lot different than the alto, and it’s a lot harder to play the instrument. I didn’t start playing soprano until I was a sophomore during my undergraduate years. I’m glad I waited that long because I was able to develop my sound and how my embouchure was set on the alto. These factors made it easier for me to switch to the soprano. You really need a strong, set embouchure to play the soprano. That is a big part of why people have a lot of trouble switching; it’s such a small mouthpiece and their embouchure will get tired fast. I suggest that players have a teacher help them with the switch because, in my opinion, learning the soprano is like learning an almost completely different instrument.

*You’ve had tremendous success in **performing at competitions**, and this is still something you regularly engage in. What is your mindset in the weeks before a competition to help you focus and practice at your best for these events?*

I always make sure I’m extremely prepared. Something that helps is I try to play pieces I know backwards and forwards. I will play pieces I’ve played for a while. I make sure I’m playing every day the couple of weeks before the competition. Sometimes you give yourself a day off, but right before competitions I make sure I’m on the horn every day and that I’m trying to run the whole program, with rests included in unaccompanied practice. Usually there is a time limit, but I make sure I can run the entire program at once.

That is something we might forget about because we practice certain sections or only practice one piece, forgetting we need to develop the stamina to make it through everything. I usually try to set up a pre-performance playing where I invite a few friends to watch me play everything because that helps get my adrenaline going. This helps me simulate the competition. I try to make my life a little less stressful during the time before a competition as well, which is really hard to do, but getting enough sleep and eating correctly is important. The proper sleep times and eating correctly sometimes doesn’t happen while in school, so I make sure that happens weeks before competing. I also try to pump myself up in a positive way.

We musicians, in the world we live and work in, can get really down on ourselves. We might say, “Why does that sound so bad, what is wrong with me?” This negativity I try to replace with positivity during times of competition and times of stress. I consciously say to myself, “You are awesome, you’re a great player, this is going to be awesome, and you know the music.” I consciously make sure I’m thinking these things in my brain while preparing and performing for competitions. It’s amazing what thinking positively and having some confidence in yourself can do.

*When you're about to walk on stage for a competition, what is your mindset at that moment?*

In general, I try to stay positive. When I was younger I would think about the sections I might mess up right before I went on stage, this was not helpful. Now, I try to stay positive and think about how fun and awesome it is to be able to play music for people. I love to play and I really try to focus on the music. As I'm walking on stage and setting up I'm singing through the opening bars in my head to make sure I've got the right tempo.

On the top of most of the music I perform the word musical is written in all caps. This is a way I remind myself why I'm doing this. I'm not doing it to win something, even though this is what the event is for, but what I'm really doing is playing so people can hear my interpretation. I really want to play the best I can in the most musical manner I can. I try to get in that mindset. I don't think, "It's a competition and I have to play all of these notes right." I'm thinking, "I'm doing this because I love this and I want to play in a way that the audience feels what I feel when I'm playing." I try to keep that in mind, and that helps to keep me calm and play at my best level.

*Do you have any specific advice for high school students in order to make a good impression at a college music department entrance audition?*

I've sat in on auditions at both Central Michigan and UNCG, and first of all, the incoming auditionees should

always dress well. I don't think high schoolers realize how big of an impression that can make. If guys wear suits or at least a tie, and girls are wearing nice dress clothes of an appropriate length they will make a much better impression. You need to look as professional as you can. When you walk in the door immediately shake hands with the professor and introduce yourself. Just those two things can make a big difference in how you are perceived.

Once you start playing the faculty usually knows what they think of your playing within the first 30 seconds. After that it's mostly about your personality. Are you nice, will you get along with the studio, will you get along with the teacher, etc. When you're young and in high school you're just nervous trying to play perfectly, but your presentation of your personality is really important.

I suggest making sure you look nice, talk confidently, and look like you know what you're doing. Also make sure you know your scales and have checked the audition requirements carefully so you know everything the professor will want to hear you play. It happens where students will come in to an audition and not have read the audition requirements, not realizing they will have to play scales or specific pieces. It really helps, also, if you get in contact via email with the professor who teaches the saxophone at that school in order to introduce yourself and maybe get a short lesson while you're on campus. Those things can be really

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helpful.

*I am so disappointed by how auditionees dress. When I talk to high school kids at competitions and clinics I always talk about  **Dressing appropriately**. It really does make a difference. Look the part. All of the things you said.*

Yes. It makes a big difference in how you're perceived.

*With all of the new music you've premiered and continue to premiere, **do you like to work with the composer** while they're composing the music or do you prefer to stay out of the mix and wait until the music hits your stand?*

I like a mixture of both. The last composition I was very involved in, *Journal Entries of an Introvert*, was composed by one of my friends from my master's degree, Evan Boegehold. I gave him free reign because I trusted him, I know his music well, and I like it. I told him, "Whatever you want to write is great." I let him do his thing. He would send me parts of the piece and ask questions regarding what I thought, and I would give my opinion. Usually I just have composers do their thing and have them send me parts as they're working on it, or I'll tell them to just ask me any questions they might have as they're working on it. I know the people who I ask, so I'm more trustworthy with the composers than some other people might be.

*College is usually the first time saxophonists have the opportunity to play in a saxophone quartet. You play in the Ataraxia saxophone quartet. Why do you feel **experience in saxophone quartets** is so important to developing saxophonists?*

I feel very strongly about this. The Ataraxia quartet has been around for about a year now and we are planning on staying together for the next year or two because we'll all be in the same place for a while. In my undergrad I was in a quartet called the Alias Quartet, and with this group was where I received my main quartet experience and learned a lot about chamber music. It was a great experience and we did competitions for three years, placing in and winning some of them. I think everyone should have that experience because that is where I give credit to learning how to play in tune because you have to listen so closely to blend with three other players.

Because of being in that group I can play in tune in larger ensembles. In quartets you learn what you need to listen for. In some pieces you go chord by chord sometimes learning where the third should fit in relation to the root and so many other things. You also learn how to lead a group.

I was the soprano player in my first quartet and you have to learn how to take charge and run rehearsals. I came to learn you can't go into rehearsal as the leader and just think about what you want to play at the spur of the moment. You have to plan things out. I was able to do this as a sophomore. When I was at Central Michigan I coached some quartets and helped them learn to do these things. I found my love for chamber music by being in the Alias Quartet, I am thankful for the opportunity I had to play in this group.

*When it comes to tuning in a saxophone quartet, what is your recommendation with regard to which instrument should give **the pitch that everyone tunes to**?*

I think the bari sax should always give the pitch. In a lot of quartets I've played in we have the bari play a low F-sharp with everyone else playing their own low F-sharp which means we're actually tuning in fifths. It's easy to hear pitch differences this way. I like it set up where the bari plays first, then the tenor comes in. The alto then comes in, but only when the bari and tenor are completely in tune by listening for the beats to go away, and once all the beats are gone with the lower three instruments then the soprano comes in.

If you do it this way, especially with younger players, it's going to take a very long time to get everyone in tune, especially if you are adamant about making sure people don't come in before the other instruments are in tune yet. Young students get really frustrated with this, but if they are persistent they will see how the time it takes to get in tune will shorten. Doing this tuning process and going up the chromatic scale and holding each note until it is in tune is another great tuning exercise for quartets.

*What advice do you have for high school students who are **thinking of making music a career**?*

If you aren't already taking lessons, you should. If you are thinking about going to a specific school you would like to attend contact the professor there and start getting lessons with that professor. I did that, taking lessons with the professor at the school where I ended up getting my undergraduate degree, from my junior year in high school forward. Lessons with professional musicians are extremely helpful. Your band director may be great, but if they don't play the saxophone they won't be able to be as helpful as someone who plays the saxophone professionally. Also, even though you're busy in high school, practice the saxophone for at least an hour a day. This practice time will be so helpful when audition time comes around. Lastly, practice your scales. §

## Selected Emily Loboda Performance Videos

[Fuzzy Bird Sonata, I. Run, Bird - Takashi Yoshimatsu](#)  
(Emily Loboda alto saxophone)

[Fuzzy Bird Sonata, III. Fly, Bird - Takashi Yoshimatsu](#)

[Prelude, cadence et finale - Alfred Desenclos](#)  
performed by Emily Loboda

[Elegie et Rondeau - Karel Husa](#)  
(Emily Loboda alto saxophone)

[Sonata in C# for Alto Saxophone, III. Fileuse - Fernande Decruck](#)

[Sonata in C# for Alto Saxophone, IV. Nocturne et Rondel - Fernande Decruck](#)