

VIII. Performance Considerations

A clear product of the New Virtuosity movement, *Energy Drink I* requires, as with the works of Denisov, Noda, and Lauba, among others, the performer to prepare a specific set of extended techniques⁵⁰ needed to address the specific demands of the piece. Where in some more traditional works the interpreter is given the option of simplifying the technique for the sake of playability⁵¹, in *Energy Drink I* such substitutions or simplifications are not an option, as the processes of expansion and contraction, the very essence of the composition, would be obliterated by such liberties. This final section addresses each of these techniques, providing references and suggestions as appropriate, and also examines interpretive possibilities that are firmly grounded in the musical score. Appendix C provides a selected list of resources and reference materials, many of which are specifically referred to in this section, for the study of those techniques encountered in *Energy Drink I*.

Quarter Tones

The composer makes extensive and integral use of quarter tones throughout the work, particularly on Pages 4-5, the “Snakey” section. The first motive of the piece is a quarter-tone tetrachord, while the final five lines of the work (Page 9, Lines 6-10) make extensive use of this technique. The composer does not provide specific fingerings, but Jean-Marie Londeix’s outstanding reference, *Hello! Mr. Sax*, gives an excellent table of

⁵⁰ Or techniques at one time considered an “extension” of “normal” performance technique.

⁵¹ For example, a score in which the composer provides a “normal-register” option for altissimo-register passages.

fingerings that this performer has found to quite work well on Selmer Mark VII and Selmer Series III alto saxophones⁵². Slight adaptations may be indicated for other makes or models of instruments, particularly older saxophones, but Londeix's fingerings provide a valuable starting point.

At least as important as a workable set of quarter-tone fingerings is the essential element of training the ear. It is vital that the performer accurately hear these intervals so that necessary embouchure and air-stream adjustments can be made to precisely tune them. A beneficial technique for developing this skill is to practice small segments of the quarter-tone chromatic scale with a tuner, taking care that each quarter-tone is as close as possible to +/- fifty cents (hundredths of a semitone). At first, the natural inclination may be to make the interval too large, as the ear has become acclimated to the 12-tone chromatic scale. Soon the ear begins to accurately hear these intervals as well, at which time more involved studies may be undertaken, including learning to play and hear major and minor scales and arpeggios that are a quarter-tone above or below the familiar twelve chromatic steps, effectively yielding twelve additional keys.

Slap Tongue

Described by the composer, in the notes prefacing the piece, as a “dry, woody effect,” the tongue slap is a percussive, but pitched, effect that has been used in a great many works for saxophone, including the cadenza of Jacques Ibert's *Concertino da Camera* of 1934. At medium and loud dynamic levels, the sound is typically produced by using a large area of the tongue on a large amount of the reed's surface. When the

⁵² Jean-Marie Londeix, *Hello! Mr. Sax* (Paris: Leduc, 1989), 24-30.

tongue is removed quickly, a pocket in the center of the tongue is used to create a suction which draws the reed away from its resting position. When the suction breaks, the reed “slaps” against the mouthpiece, creating the distinctive percussive sound, akin to clicking one’s tongue on the roof of the mouth/upper palate. In the typical case where a specific pitch is desired, the embouchure must retain its seal around the mouthpiece and a small puff of air is blown in coordination with the slap, which vibrates the reed at the fingered pitch frequency.

In *Energy Drink I*, the desired effect is indicated as “quasi-slap,” and it is uniformly employed at very soft dynamic levels of *pp* and *ppp*. This dynamic extreme may necessitate adjustments in the usual technique, which is characteristically used at somewhat louder dynamics of *mp* and above. In addition, the repetition of sixteenths at a tempo of quarter = ca. 112-116 makes the usual technique somewhat cumbersome. The author has found that using a broad, flat tongue on the reed, but without the suction, retains the dry, woody effect, but allows for a softer dynamic and greater speed. The phonetic equivalent is, roughly, “huT-huT-huT-huT,” in which the upper case T indicates an emphasis on the closing off of each articulated pitch.

Beginning on Page 1, Line 1, this effect is very often combined with a widening band of harmonics in one of the signature effects of the work. In these cases, the articulation remains as described above, but the arch at the rear of the tongue rises (voicing), increasing the speed of the air as the size of the oral cavity decreases. This has the acoustical effect of emphasizing increasingly higher partials in the sound. Unlike altissimo technique, however, the object is not to isolate a single pitch of increasing tessitura, but rather to retain the low B \flat while adding progressively higher and higher

harmonics to the sound. Rascher's *Top-Tones for the Saxophone*⁵³ and *Voicing: An Approach to the Saxophone's Third Register* by Sinta and Dabney⁵⁴ are two excellent resources for overtone study. The performer may find it most efficient to practice the overtones and quasi-slap tongue separately, then combine the two techniques as indicated in the score.

Altissimo Register

The two sources mentioned above with respect to overtone study, Rascher and Sinta/Dabney, are also very good sources for altissimo-register study tactics that will assist the performer in meeting the demands of this piece. In addition, a particularly good source for a large number of specific fingerings useful to the performer is *Saxophone High Tones* by Eugene Rousseau, now in its expanded second edition⁵⁵.

This author has found that the following set of fingerings facilitates the great majority of passages found in *Energy Drink I*, and has the considerable benefit of allowing for the movement of only one finger between each pitch in chromatic passages from altissimo G# to D#. All use the octave key. They are as follows⁵⁶:

⁵³ Sigurd Rascher, *Top Tones for the Saxophone: Four-Octave Range* (New York: Carl Fischer, Inc., 1977).

⁵⁴ Donald Sinta and Denise Dabney, *Voicing: An Approach to the Saxophone's Third Register* (Laurel, Md.: Sintafest Music Co., 1994).

⁵⁵ Eugene Rousseau, *Saxophone High Tones* (St. Louis: MMB Music, Inc., 2002).

⁵⁶ These fingerings follow the following conventions of abbreviation, as used by J.M. Londeix in *Hello! Mr. Sax*: X=front F key, P=bis Bb, palm keys from D through F# labeled C1-C5 in ascending chromatic order, Ta=side Bb, Tc=side C. In addition, 0 indicates an open key for keys 1-6, which are understood to refer to B, A, G, F, E, and D, respectively.

G ⁵⁷ :	100/400	Ta C5
G#:	123/400	Ta Tc
A:	023/400	Ta Tc
A#:	003/400	Ta Tc
B:	003/400	Ta Tc C1
C:	003/400	Ta Tc C1 C2
C#:	003/400	Ta Tc C1 C2 C3
D:	003/400	Ta Tc C1 C2 C3 C4
D#:	003/400	Ta Tc C1 C2 C3 C4 C5

These fingerings will prove especially worthwhile for the B-C trill on Page 2, Line 7, and in the final two lines of Page 7. In passages ascending above altissimo C, and therefore requiring the use of C3 (high E key), the performer will find it necessary to finger 4, Ta, and Tc with the second finger of the right hand, rather than the first. This technique will free the first finger to depress C3.

In addition, certain passages may call for other options. A few of these are as follows:

Page 2, Line 8: For the sequence D-F-E-G, front F (X20/000) and E (X23/000) may be used instead of palm fingerings, followed by X00/400 Ta for G.

Page 2, Line 9⁵⁸: D#-F#-F-Ab-G may be facilitated by the used of front F# (X20/000 C5), front F, then X00/000 Ta for Ab and X00/400 Ta for G.

Multiphonics

The multiphonic fingerings provided by the composer in his Notes work well, and reflect those found in Daniel Kientzy's landmark work, *Les sons multiples aux*

⁵⁷ Known by many saxophonists as the "crunch" fingering for G due to the close proximity of 4, side Bb, and high F# keys.

⁵⁸ This pattern also appears verbatim on Page 3, Line 3.

*saxophones*⁵⁹. The performer must take care to learn the correct position for the oral tract, the “voicing,” for each of the multiphonics. As with quarter-tone fingerings and altissimo-register fingerings, multiphonic fingerings must be understood to be merely a starting point for facilitating the production of the correct set of pitches. In the case of multiphonics, the ear must be trained to correctly hear the target multiple sound. Playing each component pitch separately will aid the performer in eventually playing them simultaneously. Page 5 presents a particular challenge, as playing the multiphonics consecutively requires immediate and precise voicing adjustment to correctly play each multiphonic. In addition, each multiphonic responds differently at different dynamics, so the decrescendi accompanying the consecutive multiphonics in this section provide an additional variable to be addressed by the performer.

Reverse Attack

Limited to the “Snakey” section, and used on just five occasions, each time in the low strata, the composer specifies how this is to be realized in the Notes. “The release should be stopped with the tongue and sound very aggressive, sharp and accented. Like a ‘reverse attack.’”⁶⁰ Londeix refers to this as *attaque inversée* in the section of *Hello! Mr. Sax* that addresses what he refers to as the polymorphical transients of a musical tone.⁶¹ Engebretson intensifies the effect by combining it with a crescendo on each occasion, enhancing the illusion of a natural dynamic decay heard in reverse.

⁵⁹ Daniel Kientzy, *Les sons multiples aux saxophones* (Paris: Editions Salabert, 1982).

⁶⁰ Mark Engebretson, Notes for Energy Drink I (Vienna: Apoll-Edition, 2000).

⁶¹ Londeix, 96.

Wedge Accent

Used throughout the work, but especially on pages 3, 4, 5, 8, and 9, the wedge accent is found either on individual pitches, as in Page 3, Lines 7-9, or at the end of a slur, as in Page 8, Lines 7-9. In both cases, the wedge accent should be hard and short, and aggressively stopped with the tongue. It shares with the reverse attack the abrupt closing off of sound by a hard return of the tongue to the reed, but is differentiated from it by the lack of a crescendo and by its short duration.

Double Accent

The composer has utilized this unusual marking throughout the piece, particularly in the middle strata, to contribute to the hard rhythmic drive. The interpreter needs to clearly portray the difference between this and the single accent, which is used primarily in sostenuto lines and in the “Snakey” section. The double accent must especially be exaggerated at those points where, while the sixteenth note remains constant, the groupings change, resulting in a constantly shifting, and generally compressing (accelerating) beat.

Growl

The composer details the application of this technique in the Notes:

To be produced by vibrating the vocal chords (singing) while playing. The pitch to be sung is not given: the choice is left to the performer. The growl may be produced with a stable sung pitch, or the performer may put the sung pitch in motion, for example by making a vocal glissando while holding a sustained pitch. The effect continues until the end of the bracket, at which point it is cancelled.⁶²

⁶² Mark Engebretson, Notes for Energy Drink I (Vienna: Apoll-Edition, 2000).

The decision as to whether or not to move the sung pitch should be dictated by the context in which the growl is found. For example, the sustained growl accompanying the F-F#-G glissandi can contribute to the mounting intensity by also ascending in a sung glissando. On the other hand, more isolated pitches, as in Page 4, Line 1 (high C), Page 5, Line 3 (high Eb), and Page 8, Line 1 (high D#), might appropriately be accompanied by a static growl. Two spots that lend themselves particularly well to an ascending vocal growl are found on Page 8, Line 6 (growl accompanying glissando from high F# to G), and Page 9, Line 10 (long growl accompanying glissandi between sustained altissimo A, Bb, and B). In both cases, the gesture concludes a large section of the work, and in the latter case, it concludes the entire work. The final gesture also has a “long, slow gliss,” indicated by an upward-pointing arrow. By using the aforementioned set of altissimo fingerings, it is relatively easy to carry the glissando from altissimo B to the D# a major third above it. Combining this ascent into the highest register of the piece with a dramatic ascending growl provides a dramatic concluding gesture.

Interpretive Considerations

As noted at the outset of the preceding analysis, the first broad purpose of analysis, from the performer’s perspective, is to enrich their understanding of the work. It is through this careful consideration of structure and syntax that the performer is able to interpret the composition with the highest possible degree of authority and credibility. Given this author’s assertion that the other broad purpose of analysis is to aid the listener in their hearing of the piece, the performer thus had the added responsibility of communicating the musical text in a way that most accurately depicts the composer’s

intentions. Recognizing that few listeners are likely to read analyses such as this one in anticipation of hearing a work, the onus is squarely on the performer to bring the music to life with a complete understanding of the rich complexities that informed its creation.

Engebretson prefaces the score to *Energy Drink I* with a set of explanatory notes.

These notes open with the following admonition:

Energy Drink is a loud, fast and aggressive piece. The accents should be played very hard throughout. The given tempo is to be played while maintaining the aggressive rhythmic character. Do not sacrifice the accents and articulations for speed.⁶³

Thus, volume, speed, and character are important considerations when preparing *Energy Drink I* for performance. Also, the stratification must be understood and portrayed.

From the opening line, the extreme dynamic contrasts need to be immediate, as they contribute to the listener's hearing of the three strata. The dynamic separation, if presented as clearly as indicated by the composer, allows the listener to immediately hear the individual strata even if the more subtle details of process may take longer to perceive. Thus the performer is providing listeners at every level of sophistication with the opportunity to truly hear important features of the work.

A consideration that arises throughout the piece, and is aptly represented by the licks on Pages 2 and 3, is the question of how to play the hard (double) accents, “maintaining the aggressive rhythmic character,” without sacrificing the forward momentum so vital to energizing the performance and setting the music into motion at all times. The performer must take care that *each* group of notes beginning with the double accent drives forward. The tendency is to play the accents too “up and down,” pulling air

⁶³ Mark Engebretson, “Notes for Energy Drink I” from *Energy Drink I*, (Vienna: Apoll-Edition), 2000.

away from each accent in a one-beat diminuendo, which is counter-productive to forward motion. Instead the accents must create a line of accents as part of a large-scale crescendo.

An effective technique for practicing this mode of interpretation is to first play only the double accents, training the ear to hear where each is leading in the larger line, and then fill in the other pitches. The result of this approach might be best understood as a quick decay from each double accent, but then a subtle crescendo through the rest of the accented group that leads to the next double accent. The composite effect of this approach is the realization not only of the large-scale crescendo, implied by the rising melodic line, but also more local, smaller-scale crescendi that link each accented group in a forward-moving and upward-moving “melody” of dynamic accents. Agogic accents (of length rather than dynamic) should be used sparingly, as the composer has specifically indicated that the sixteenth note is to stay constant throughout, and has achieved the desired accent pattern through dynamic accents. One possible exception might be during the “Snakey” section, in which the desired lyricism and intensity of energy might be well served by subtle stretches that bring out notes of particular interest.