



Working within different musical conceptions and different musical situations may be the best way to summarize saxophonist Andrew Dahlke's still young and burgeoning career. As a classical artist critic Marc Shulgold praised Dahlke's performance of Darius Milhaud's saxophone solos in *The Creation Of The World* with the Colorado Symphony as "terrific." As an academic teacher Dahlke is an Assistant Professor at the University of Northern Colorado and plays baritone saxophone in one of the United States' premier saxophone groups, the Capitol Saxophone Quartet. As a jazz musician critic Michael G. Nastos said Dahlke's playing is, "based on the free bop notions of Archie Shepp and Sam Rivers." He went on to describe Dahlke's playing as "emphasizing overblowing and harmonically overloaded smear tones bordering on snarly." Additionally Dahlke has garnered critical praise when he brought musicians from the Korean National University to the United States to perform with his students at the University of Northern Colorado.

A native of the Detroit, Michigan metro area Dahlke studied at both Indiana University and the University of Michigan as an undergrad before earning his Masters Degree from the University of Michigan. His doctorate is in Saxophone Performance from the University of North Texas. Previous teaching positions include Texas Christian University, the University of North Texas, serving as Director of Jazz Improvisation at the University of Michigan's Youth Programs,

#### **ANDREW DAHLKE'S EQUIPMENT**

- Soprano (classical) - Selmer Mark VI, Selmer S-80 C\* mouthpiece, Vandoren Masters Ligature, Vandoren Blue Box #4 reeds
- Soprano (jazz) - Selmer Mark VI, Vintage Selmer Soloist D mouthpiece, Old unnamed ligature (silver), Vandoren Blue Box #4 reeds
- Alto (classical) - Selmer Mark VI, Selmer S-90 190 mouthpiece, Vandoren Masters ligature, Vandoren Blue Box #3 1/2 reeds
- Alto (jazz) - Selmer Mark VI, Older Meyer 6 mouthpiece, Old Unnamed French ligature (gold), Vandoren Blue Box #3 1/2 reeds
- Tenor (classical) - Selmer Mark VI, Selmer S-90 180 mouthpiece, Vandoren Masters ligature, Vandoren Blue Box 3 1/2 reeds
- Tenor (jazz) - Selmer Mark VI, Otto Link Late Florida/Early Babbitt 9 mouthpiece, Otto Link ligature, Vandoren ZZ 3 reeds at altitude, Vandoren Blue Box 3 1/2 reeds at sea level
- Baritone (classical) - Yamaha 62, Vandoren V5 B35 mouthpiece, BG rubber ligature, Vandoren Blue Box 3 1/2 reeds
- Baritone (jazz) - Yamaha 62, Otto Link 7\* mouthpiece (new), Rovner Eddie Daniels ligature, Vandoren ZZ #3 reeds at altitude, Vandoren Blue Box 3 1/2 reeds at sea level
- Clarinet - Buffet R-13 late 60's early 70's vintage, Chedeville Mouthpiece, Vandoren Blue Box 3 1/2 reeds
- Flute - Dolmer Body and Head Joint

# Andrew Dahlke

by Thomas Erdmann

Director of Instrumental Music at the University Liggett School in Michigan and Director of the K-5 Music Program for the entire Dearborn Heights School District No. 7, also in Michigan. As a jazz artist he has worked in New York at venues such as the Knitting Factory, the Kitchen, Downtime and the Cornelia Street Café. He has performed with jazz luminaries like pianists Craig Taborn and Ethan Iverson, bassist Reid Anderson and drummer Clarence Penn.

Classical honors include making his debut performing Ingolf Dahl's *Saxophone Concerto* with the Seoul Wind Ensemble in 2003 and was a featured wind soloist and clinician for the Jeju Korea International Winds Festival in 2005. He has also performed William Bolcom's *Concerto Suite for Alto Saxophone and Winds* with conductor Virginia Allen of the Julliard and Curtis Schools and is a Conn-Selmer artist. With such a wide background you know this interview would be just as wide-ranging.

*In total you play all the saxophones, including flute, clarinet, and piano. What instrument did you start on and how did you come to play it?*

I started on sax in the sixth grade band. Growing up in the Detroit area, there was a nice music scene to tap into. My father took me to concerts, including jazz, and the saxophone immediately stood out and when I had the opportunity to play it I jumped.

*You studied privately with Larry Teal when you were still in high school. What did he bring to your playing?*

A lot. My first private teacher really emphasized technique, but we also did a lot of duets so I learned musicality in that manner. Larry brought a whole 'nother level to my playing. Larry and I worked on intonation, which was something I hadn't really worked on before, as well as sound and embouchure. At that point in my life I remember my father asking Larry if he thought I had a shot at a career in music, and I remember Larry saying, "Nine out of ten kids I'd say no to, but with Andy I'd say I think he could do it." That really inspired me and I realized that was something special.

*When did you know you wanted to make music your career?*

It was, I believe, a foregone conclusion. When I was young I was very serious about music. I practiced more than most anyone else. Even in middle school I practiced hard, and in high school I practiced like crazy. I was attending Interlochen when I won a competitive scholarship to attend the University of Michigan. I don't think I ever thought about anything else but music.

*What was it like for you at Interlochen?*

It was unbelievable. I have the fondest memories, as a student, of being there. Just to be in an environment where there is a real work ethic and celebration of music that you don't find in too many places. Maybe Aspen is another; I was just there this summer as a performer and I spent time there as a student as well. Kids from all around the world were at Interlochen and they were into music just as much as I was, and we were all working hard. The quality of the music making is unique there.

*How did your college career transpire?*

I started at Michigan as a freshman. At that time Michigan didn't have much of a jazz program and I was really heading

in that direction, as my focus, at that time. Indiana had the reputation in jazz that I was looking for. I was able to go there and work with David Baker and a little with Eugene Rousseau. I did, however, work almost exclusively on jazz the year I was there, which was my sophomore year.

Then after a year I found myself missing Ann Arbor, the University of Michigan and Detroit. I had actually worked into the Detroit music scene during my high school years and continued that during my freshman year at college, so I missed the playing. I also switched gears into a more liberal arts major track in order to get a broader education and Michigan had that. They also had started a jazz minor. Michigan also offered me a better financial situation, so after a year at Indiana I felt I could get more out of a Michigan education, and I went back.

*What was it like to study with David Baker?*

One thing I really like about him is that his jazz program really focuses on improvisation. You'll go into his big band rehearsal and for most of the rehearsal he'll sit in front of the band and people will just solo. He really encourages that. That is not necessarily the format at other places where the group is treated more like an ensemble and less emphasis is placed on improvisation. He brought to life the beauty of improvisation. That was the way I was brought up in Detroit; playing in trios, quartets, and quintets where the emphasis was on improvisation. I felt really at home with David. He was a wonderful pedagogue and had developed a number of ways to develop the bebop and fundamental language. It was really great for me to be exposed to that at that time. He still is a great teacher.

*At Michigan you studied with Donald Sinta. What was it like to study with him?*

He's an incredible person who doesn't get the attention that some of the other well known classical guys get. One thing that sticks with me today is how much on top of his game he always was. He was a voracious practicer and attained just the highest level possible. It's very easy to get so busy as a college teacher, and an adult with a family, to all of a sudden allow your practice time to slip. That never happened to Donald, he truly outplayed us. He'd be up in the morning practicing very early. Every time he performed it was just amazing and he maintained that high level at all times.

*At Michigan you worked with pianist Craig Taborn, who himself was just a student at that time and has since made quite a splash in the New York jazz scene. He has even recorded your composition 'Scar' on his DIW release. What was it like to work with him when you were both young?*

I had come up in the Detroit scene and in Ann Arbor where there was a very straight ahead component as far as the tradition goes. I was really aware of the traditional guys including the bebop artists like Bird. I pretty much had your typical Cannonball, bebop guys and Michael Brecker background. Then I met Craig, and his CD collection was unreal. He was so diverse and broad in his listening. It wasn't just the traditional mainstream, it was also world music, more creative artists, 20<sup>th</sup> century free composers and the more contemporary artists. Listening with him really opened me up into a world I knew little about. You can see that in the kind of career he's made for himself. It's funny because the artists we used to listen to he now works with; people like Tim Berne, David Binney, and Chris Potter. As a musician Craig was an incredible talent and

musician, and all of those influences came out in his playing. That changed the way I viewed myself and definitely broadened my listening.

*After you graduated from Michigan you moved to New York to work as a jazz musician and composer. How did you break into the New York music scene?*

When I got there I did a little bit of everything. Like a lot of musicians I did gigs to pay the bills, so I played weddings and club dates, got into the Latin scene playing up in the Bronx with a Latin jazz band and went to some of the jam sessions. I fell into certain circles of musicians. Ultimately the path I took was writing and promoting myself. In hindsight I think I might have done it a little different. At the time I was very encouraged by people in the jazz scene who said I was taking the right path; promoting myself in the manner I was. I had some success and made a record with Craig, the bassist Reid Anderson who is now with the Bad Plus, and Gerald Cleaver who is a real happening drummer. We shopped that around and it really raised some interest. I had set up a distribution deal which, unfortunately, fell through.

I did have success in putting groups together and playing in the clubs around town. A significant thing for me was that I had day gigs as a buyer in record stores and so I was able to get into any of the clubs I wanted to. Because of this I was exposed to everybody and everything.

There are issues as a young person in your early 20s in New York that were challenging. After a while I felt I was spinning my wheels. After five years I decided to get back into classical playing because I hadn't been doing any of that. I went back to it because I wanted to branch out a little, so I went back to school and got a teaching degree. I taught K-5 music for one year and then taught 4-12 for a few years, which was great. Then I realized, for me, the thing to do was to try to teach at the college level. I figured out that I like working with the youngest and the oldest students. That's where I gravitate. It's such a clean slate, working with young students. You can have such a positive effect on young kids. I also realized that as a teacher at the college level I could still pursue and stay on the career path as a performer and at the same time have a support system as a teacher, which I enjoy more and more. I love developing pedagogy.

*While in New York you played with McCoy Tyner. What was the experience like?*

I had a group in Ann Arbor that actually opened for him where we played a set and then his group played a set or two. That group also included Craig. I met McCoy at this gig there and he was really positive about my playing and my compositions. Shortly after that I moved to New York at a time when McCoy had a steady gig at Sweet Basil. Naturally I'm trying to make it in New York so I went to one of his gigs and hung around afterwards. He remembered me and we talked. He said, "Tomorrow night is John Coltrane's birthday, how'd you like to come down and sit in with the band?" That was pretty cool. I showed up the next night along with a few others such as Walter Blanding. I got up with McCoy, Aaron Scott on bass and Avery Sharp on drums. I played *Mr. P.C.* with them and all I remember is that it was like driving a Rolls Royce. I felt I could have done and played anything. It was so free and relaxed and there was no tension, but the music had power and drive. I was pretty nervous. I got great feedback from everyone. It was one

of those experiences like Interlochen.

In life there are so many different standards for music making but that was one of those experiences I always shoot for now; that kind of freedom. McCoy was very supportive and said I should try to get around and meet a lot of people, and have them get to know me.

*As someone who went to New York, worked into the scene and made it happen, what advice do you have for others who want to break into the city?*

It's really tough to move there by yourself. A lot of my friends who were there have stayed and moved on to some success, but it's really important to have some kind of support system when you go. That can be roommates whom you're really friendly with, or for many people it's going to school and getting into one of the programs there so you have a basis to work from. It's funny, I have this conversation all the time with students who want to know the same thing. Networking is very important. You need to find like-minded peers as quickly as possible.

One of the things I like about New York is that there are so many musicians you can get together with and have sessions. It seems like it's less about, "I'm not going to play because it doesn't pay," and instead it's about getting together with others and developing music. You want to fall into a crowd of musicians and peers. It can be a scary place so it's important to not get locked into staying in your apartment and not getting out. You have to get out and keep showing up and being persistent. You need to go to people's gigs, take lessons, go to sessions and meet people. You must keep at it. The history of some of the great players is that they'll go, play for a while, leave, and come back. They keep trying to network and make things happen.

You don't have to move there right away. Craig, for instance, began working with James Carter but didn't move there. Through working with James Craig he met a lot of people and finally felt like he knew enough people to where he got to the point where he could move to the city and make his way. These days if you can meet people, whether they are in or outside of the city, that's important. It's also expensive, so if you can save money you can have a start without having to work a day job like I had to, that'll also help. I feel like working a day job in New York is not like working a day job in Elon, North Carolina. You have to remember you're competing against people who are raising six kids and only making \$10 an hour. The city is also draining. It's a challenge but it can be the right move. When you look at the list of players who are in New York you know why you want to go there.

*One of the jobs you held after earning your Masters Degree was as Director of Youth Programs at the University of Michigan. You've also written an article for the Jazz Education Journal and given a number of clinics regarding the teaching of improvisation. Obviously you would have a lot to say to help high school students who wish to explore and develop improvisation, but do you have any quick advice you can share?*

You know that teaching position at Michigan was a great opportunity because just in being associated with the University we attracted some really talented young kids. You know I could go on for two hours on this subject, but briefly my advice is to seek out places where you can learn improvisation. You can play in a stage band or a jazz band in high school, but you won't get help with improvisation. So the key is, how can you develop this idea of improvising and the creativity needed? Most

students, like myself, are taught to read first so they're coming from an eye to ear musicianship. That must be addressed first, and that's a crisis for a lot of kids; trying to improvise after being trained that way.

The thing is to seek out mentors, which is very important for young musicians. In every community there are mentors that work in programs, such as in Ann Arbor where there is the Community High School. They have an incredible jazz program that is founded on improvisation and combos. A lot of the kids that have come out of that program have gone on to New York. Finding places where these kinds of programs are available is important. Denver, for example, has an incredible jazz education network. There is the Colorado Conservatory of Jazz Arts in Denver which is another one of those community music programs. Theirs was founded by a really great drummer, Paul Romaine. He has many of Denver's finest musicians, including those on the national scene, teaching there. It's an independent school with combos and improv classes. A lot of kids who are interested in this gravitate to his program.

Because many schools aren't doing improvised music any more there are private schools opening up all over. Houston has the High School for the Performing Arts, and Dallas has a school of performing arts as well. Tim Reis, to me, was a great help as a teacher. He introduced me to music I had never heard before and we went over the fundamentals of improvising. He also brought the magic of improvisation, not just the scale and the chord, to me. He was creative and was able to convey those ideas.

*In 2000 you were accepted by the University of North Texas as a Teaching Fellow and later hired as an Adjunct Professor. What was your experience like there because you were both a teacher and a student working on your Doctorate at the same time?*

It was very intense. That is a very intensive place for doctoral students. In hindsight I'm very grateful for that, but at the time I might have been a little stretched out. I auditioned for my doctorate, there as well as at Eastman, the University of Michigan, and the New England Conservatory. UNT ended up being the clear choice. I was accepted at those other places and was offered some nice packages to pay for the education, but at North Texas I was offered the opportunity to teach, and that was really important to me because I wanted experience teaching in a college. I was told at the time that no one was ever accepted and given a teaching assignment in the saxophone area cold. Normally they wanted you to be there for a year while they checked you out and then they might, after a year, offer you something, but I got one immediately. That was wonderful because I had 10 students on my first day of class.

Jim Riggs and Eric Nestler both teach there. They both teach the top of the 100 saxophonists who are enrolled. Riggs generally works with the more jazz minded kids. I had the level right below what Riggs had, which was still pretty high at UNT. Many of my students went on to study with Riggs after a year or two with me. It raised questions, though, to me as to what the experience is a student gets when they study with a Teaching Assistant (TA) as opposed to a Professor, because in being a grad student you are so overwhelmed with course work and playing in ensembles, as well as trying to get by and pay the bills. Yet I still feel my students there had a good experience. That experience helps me as I now teach at Northern Colorado, because I have a TA. I now have a lot of ideas on how I can make the lesson experience effective for those students study-

ing with the TA. So from the teaching standpoint North Texas was great.

Most importantly for me, because I'm playing both classical and jazz in a manner I feel is authentic and at a high level in each genre, I needed to find a school where I could do that no matter my degree program. While I studied with Riggs, and he was demanding on the classical side, I still had the opportunity to work and play in the lab bands there and do a lot of things in the jazz area. Since Riggs is that type of player the atmosphere was very positive for someone trying to do both. I don't think that is the case in most schools. Students are usually pigeon-holed into one area or the other. I guess because I was in that environment and I foster that environment now I don't realize it so much, but as some of my students are doing a masters or going on to other graduate schools for Master's and Doctoral degrees I'm finding out that not every place is that open or supportive of that kind of learning.

*When you were in Texas you studied flute with Mary Karen Clardy at UNT and clarinet with Andy Crisanti of the Fort Worth Symphony. What did they bring to your playing of those instruments?*

Andy was an unbelievable teacher, player, and person. He was from the old school, having studied with one of the grand old performers of the Boston Symphony. Studying with an orchestral musician, as opposed to just a saxophonist, was a different experience for me. I really recommend this because I took so much from playing and learning the clarinet repertoire and apply it to the saxophone. The musicality he brought after years of working with the greatest conductors and soloists was also invaluable. All of this has transferred over to the saxophone.

Pedagogically, playing the clarinet correctly, as a clarinetist would play the instrument, in certain areas was really helpful. For example, embouchure; the clarinet embouchure was, for me, a different oral cavity orientation in order to get the characteristic sound, and once I had learned it I was able to expand my own altissimo register playing on the saxophone. That was wonderful. There were also some things dealing with playing a cylindrical instrument, which the clarinet is, for the most part, which is very different from the saxophone being conical. Understanding the differences between the two was important. Andy taught me to use a more constant air stream and not to vary it, whereas on saxophone with the conical bore and the changes in air pressure you're constantly adjusting your air in order to achieve a balance because the tube is constantly expanding.

The flute is, however, my nemesis. I've studied with lots of good flute teachers, and I think I'm finally getting it. Mary Karen taught flute to Tim Ries, who is a good flute player. She's a well-known pedagogue and I thought it was a great opportunity to study with her. What I got from her, that I don't always realize, was just how the relaxation and position of the body is so critical to the sound you produce as well as to your projection. I know some of that has transferred and it's stuff I use with my saxophonists in teaching hand position, embouchure, posture, breathing, the tilting of the head, and all of these things can make such a difference in a person's expressive statement. Another thing she did was to play the piano in the lessons, and she was quite good. True I was playing more simple pieces, but she would accompany me so there was the spirit of music making that is sometimes a challenge as a studio teacher. It's too

easy to just teach the instrument and forget the end goal is to make music.

*As someone who does play a lot of different woodwind instruments, what advice do you have for saxophonists who are beginning to explore and learn the other woodwind instruments?*

Get lessons with an expert on that instrument; period. At some point, if you really want to get good you're going to have to take that instrument and make it a priority for a period of time and move the saxophone to a lesser priority. One thing we do at Northern Colorado to help our students is that our band directors are real flexible. We have three major performing ensembles; wind ensemble, symphonic band and concert band. In the concert band we frequently have saxophone majors playing clarinet or flute. This is great. If you want to be serious you need to play the instrument in an ensemble.

You also must listen. Larry Teal was known for telling students to never listen to classical saxophonists. I really feel that way as well. Listen to pianists, violinists, clarinetists, etc.. I'm not sure the whole genre of classical saxophone playing has benefited itself. I believe part of the problem of acceptance of classical saxophone playing is the way it's been played in that genre over time. When I hear a lot of classical saxophonists I immediately recognize how that sound would never fit into a symphony orchestra now. I'm not sure why that is, it's just the way it developed. I think Adolphe Sax, from what I understand, envisioned the instrument in an orchestral manner. He was, however, thinking first of the bass sax, so that would be in a manner different than what we think today.

I still have aspirations, from the classical side, which involves bringing the saxophone more into acceptance. I think that has, quite frankly, a lot to do with how it's played. I feel like that's my mission and am working on some projects in that manner. I hope, within about two year's time, to have some commercially available CDs. I'm working on them right now. One of them is on the classical side, and without going into too much detail one of them uses Bach from a saxophonist's standpoint.

I'm listening to a lot of Glenn Gould right now; he's so expressive. He transcends what's on the page in a manner that is really special. I sat my studio class down two weeks ago and we listened to Glenn Gould play for 40 minutes. I turned the music up real loud, because the students don't know how hard he would play sometimes. I think it had an effect on them. I listened to an interview where he said he didn't think Bach would care who played his music. He even said, "I heard a saxophone quartet play Bach and it was wonderful. I think Bach cared more about how you play it rather than what you play it on."

*You brought up orchestral playing, and you do a lot of it. What advice do you have for saxophonists who find themselves in an orchestral situation?*

A lot of saxophonists are intimidated because we're not an orchestral instrument and because of this we feel pressure. You have to find a way to get over that. I truly believe the saxophone is an incredibly viable and expressive instrument that can fit into an orchestral format. To do this you need to go in with confidence and really think about who you're playing with, along with how you need to blend, how you need to come out, how much vibrato you should use and what kind of balance you're looking for. You must realize you have just as much right to be there as anyone else.

*You've worked extensively with students from South Korea. How did it begin and how does it continue to grow?*

It began with my wife, who is South Korean. I met her at North Texas. She is a musicologist and pianist who studied piano with an excellent teacher in Korea whose husband was the Director of the Seoul Wind Ensemble and Wind Director at the Seoul National Conservatory, which is one of the top conservatories there. She had a close relationship with them, and they were interested in collaborating with me. I was invited to submit some recordings and a resume. I got to go there and perform the Dahl *Concerto* on the group's 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary concert. I got to play in the Seoul Arts Center, which makes Lincoln Center look like a high school auditorium. It's a big artistic complex on the side of a mountain. That was the first experience.

At North Texas there are a number of South Korean musicians who are studying there and I'm trying to develop that same kind of situation here at Northern Colorado. There are a number of highly talented musicians from that country. They're a little behind as far as wind music is concerned, but what they have is at a very high level; you just don't see a lot of band and music programs in their high schools, so the kids have to begin their studies on the outside.

I've met some musicians at North Texas who work in South Korean orchestras. One of the musicians I met works with the big music festival they hold in Jeju, Korea and I was brought in to perform and teach, both there and in Seoul. I did the Bolcom *Concert Suite* and a Rossini transcription. As part of that music festival I conducted a music camp with Korean saxophonists for a week. I did have a translator but I've studied Korean and can speak it at a very basic level of proficiency.

Some of the jazz musicians I met at North Texas have moved back to Korea and they invited me in to play with them in some of the clubs in Seoul. Now I have connections there. At the moment I don't have any projects brewing but in the future there will be some connections at an even higher level in their musical network, both with their orchestras and in terms of more high profile jazz groups. The recording projects I mentioned earlier will help me pursue those connections.

*As a performer who goes back and forth between jazz and classical music, do you have any advice for others who wish to do that?*

It's a difficult thing. It's really all about doing both versus doing one at a very high level. It's not that I can't do and realize my highest potential in both, but I find myself structuring my time based on the gig coming up. The problem I find with the jazz area is best described by using the foreign language analogy. It's like speaking a foreign language and if you're not speaking it all the time it's difficult to maintain fluency. I've really found that to be true. I do, however, encourage younger musicians to keep their options open. Probably ninety percent of the college saxophone positions available today want someone who can play and teach jazz. I have a great classical student now who doesn't play jazz and he's having a hard time. He's a phenomenal player.

I recommend keeping your options open and getting into an environment where this is supported. I don't feel a saxophonist who plays classical but not jazz should feel inferior, but I think some do. To me the end result is making music, playing for an audience and having that be some kind of transcendental

experience. Whether or not you're improvising or coming from music on a page shouldn't matter. When I hear Glenn Gould I don't care if he's improvising or reading; what he brings to the plate is incredible, beautiful and says something. That's the real heart of the matter and I try to foster that in my students.

You have a lot of guys who are interested in jazz but not classical, not realizing the power inherent in classical music. Some performers may have more satisfaction improvising but kids should keep an open mind and to seek out those who do both. There are more and more people now-a-days who do both and are good at both. They will support you and you need to find them.

*After you completed your doctorate you took the saxophone position at the University of Northern Colorado. Because this magazine is read by a wide range of musicians and students, I was wondering what advice you have for those who are coming to the end of their Master's and Doctoral degrees and are about to get their first college teaching position?*

As a studio teacher one of the most important parts of your job is the kind of studio you have in terms of numbers, quality and diversity. Most likely you'll be in a program you'll need to build and you need to know how to recruit. In all humility I've had great success recruiting. I've had no problem getting a studio to capacity and then increasing the quality of student performance ability in the studio over time. It's important to understand how to do it. For example, when I moved to Colorado I sent out a letter to every band director in the state saying I was happy to be here and giving some information about my background. I also offered to go out and meet them and work with their students. I wanted to have them use me as a resource. It worked. I'll now find myself at a conference and people will come up and talk to me like they know me because I sent that letter.

Identifying the students you're interested in as early as possible is also important. You have to meet the directors, go to the state conferences, listen to the high school teachers' concerns, call the kids, write the kids and offer to give a free lesson to prospective students in order to see how the potential student works with me. This has led to some amazing things. It's not that difficult to grow a program, it just takes work.

You also have to be a friendly person. You'll be in a situation with colleagues and while it's very open, it's also very intimate and you may be with these people for the rest of your life so you have to maintain positive relationships with them regardless of what your philosophy or thoughts are on certain issues. At the end of the day you have to realize you're colleagues and on a faculty together and you need to stay together.

You also have to look at the students individually and realize you can't treat them all the same. Yes, there are certain standards and consistencies throughout your curriculum, but at the same time there has to be some flexibility in handling students. For me, teaching is not just the 50 or 60 minutes you're in with the student during their lesson. Having a kid open up to you and referring them to counseling and seeing them benefit from the counseling and then see how this positively affects their musicianship and comfort level with themselves is wonderful. Music is such a spiritual endeavor and there is so much tied in with it regarding your character.

As a teacher, I want to positively influence them; that's what I'm going for. There is so much teaching that happens outside of the lesson. You have to go to the concerts and talk to

them when they're hanging outside your door. You may have a conversation that changes their life. That's the best part of teaching. §

© May 2008 by Dorn Publications (Saxophone Journal). Permission is granted by Dorn Publications to use this published interview, as a viewable and printable PDF on Andrew Dahlke's website. For any other use permission must be obtained from Dorn Publications.  
Saxophone Journal website:  
<http://www.dornpub.com/saxophonejournal.html>.