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Saxophone Journal

Peter Schmid

**New Music
New Instruments**

Masterclass
Play-along CD

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New Music New Instruments

Masterclass CD By Peter Schmid



Peter Schmid With Bb Tubax

INSTRUMENTS USED IN
MASTERCLASS AT RIGHT
-left to right-
Eb Tubax, Bass Clarinet,
Soprano Sax, Taragot,
Contrabass Clarinet,
Soprillo, Bass Flute,
Bassax



Featuring The New Eppelsheim Saxophones

I was excited to read, some years ago, an article by Paul Cohen in *Saxophone Journal* about the new Eppelsheim soprillo saxophone (a piccolo saxophone in Bb) and tubax (a redesigned contrabass saxophone in Eb). I immediately contacted Benedikt Eppelsheim. Happily, I was told that one of the very first tubax instruments had been sold to someone in Switzerland only a few kilometers from my home. I located the individual and was able to play the instrument which had been obtained by two Swiss saxophonists, Markus Weiss and Rico Gubler. From the first moment I was fascinated by this fantastic instrument. In the meantime, I

met Benedikt Eppelsheim several times in Munich, Germany and I am very impressed by the superb design and craftsmanship of his newly developed instruments.

All the Eppelsheim saxophones are quite easy to play and have a great sound with excellent intonation. It is obvious that Mr. Eppelsheim is on the way to become an important innovator in the history of the saxophone.

I was able to make good use of the tubax and soprillo on my solo CD *Windscares* (2002), alongside various clarinets and the taragot. I sent this CD to *Saxophone Journal* and really appreciated getting the offer to do this masterclass

Two Tubax
 (left) Thomas K. J. Mejer, C tubax
 (right) Peter Schmid, Bb tubax



CD for *Saxophone Journal* with these unusual instruments.

This masterclass CD is meant to present new and rarely heard wind instruments in different settings and combinations with special emphasis on Eppelsheim saxophones.

I recommend listening to this masterclass CD and afterwards reading my comments. If you have any questions, comments, or criticism, please contact me by e-mail at paschmid@gmx.ch.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

For years I've been working on compositions and improvisations for wind ensembles, and solo works for multi-layered instruments. What fascinates me are the unusual instrument combinations and extension techniques on different wind instruments (like slaps, pops, microtones, multiphonics, sound production without mouthpiece, etc.)

My way of working often resembles a painter's canvas where I choose colors in the form of sounds while working with lines, contours, and contrasts. Often the compositions are sketchy, only taking on provisional form in the process of improvisatory playing yet the next time around the same sketch can lead to a very different result. Improvisation is central. Sound concepts, and compositional structures, serve as catalysts for the improvisational process, steering down untravelled roads and providing new musical experiences.

The tune *Windloops* include brief motifs of differing lengths repeated unchanged while layered over each other. A macroscopically homogenous sound texture arises whose microstructures are constantly changing. *Windloop I to III* are compositions that can be heard on my CD *Windscares*.

In *Bassic Windloop* a funky bass line played on tubax and bassax in 11/4 is the foundation on which I lay three bass clarinet voices, which appear in loops of different lengths, constantly shifting against each other and the bass line.

Ornithologies

Each voice plays only one predetermined (or spontaneously improvised) motif, which varies but should not be transformed or fundamentally changed. In this way a concert of "birdcalls" is created, which could and should react to each other only to a limited extent.

Slapsticks

The woodwind player serves as percussionist with tones like waterdrops, dance of the insects, glass bead play, sparkling garlands of sound, or exploding champagne corks.

Taragotics

The sound of the taragot has fascinated me since the first time I heard this instrument in a recording by the Rumanian virtuoso Dimitru Farkas with the Swiss organist Marc Cellier. But it was a long time before I finally found a good taragot. Now I'm working on a series of compositions for the instrument titled "Taragotics."

Taragotic III

Taragotic III is based on a theme in 9/8 (3-2-2-2), which is only played at the end. On this CD the taragot is accompanied by an bassax as well as a choir of bass clarinets.

TuBbax(s)ology

These are three short improvisations on the lowest saxophone (Bb tubax or subcontrabass saxophone).

TuBbaxcanon

This is a canon in 7/4 with four Bb tubax instruments in a symbolic meeting of the elephants.

Slow Motion

Slow Motion is a free multi-layer improvisation exploring the low sonorities of the TuBbax.

Dialogues

Over the past few years duos have become a favorite performing medium of mine because they allow a very direct and personal communication between two independent musicians. The dialogue between two instruments, recorded consecutively in a studio, requires another way of playing for the first instrument. You need a preconceived state of mind to allow space for the second voice. These "Dialogues" duos are like talking to yourself in a more or less set theme, but with a conversational partner who has a different opinion.

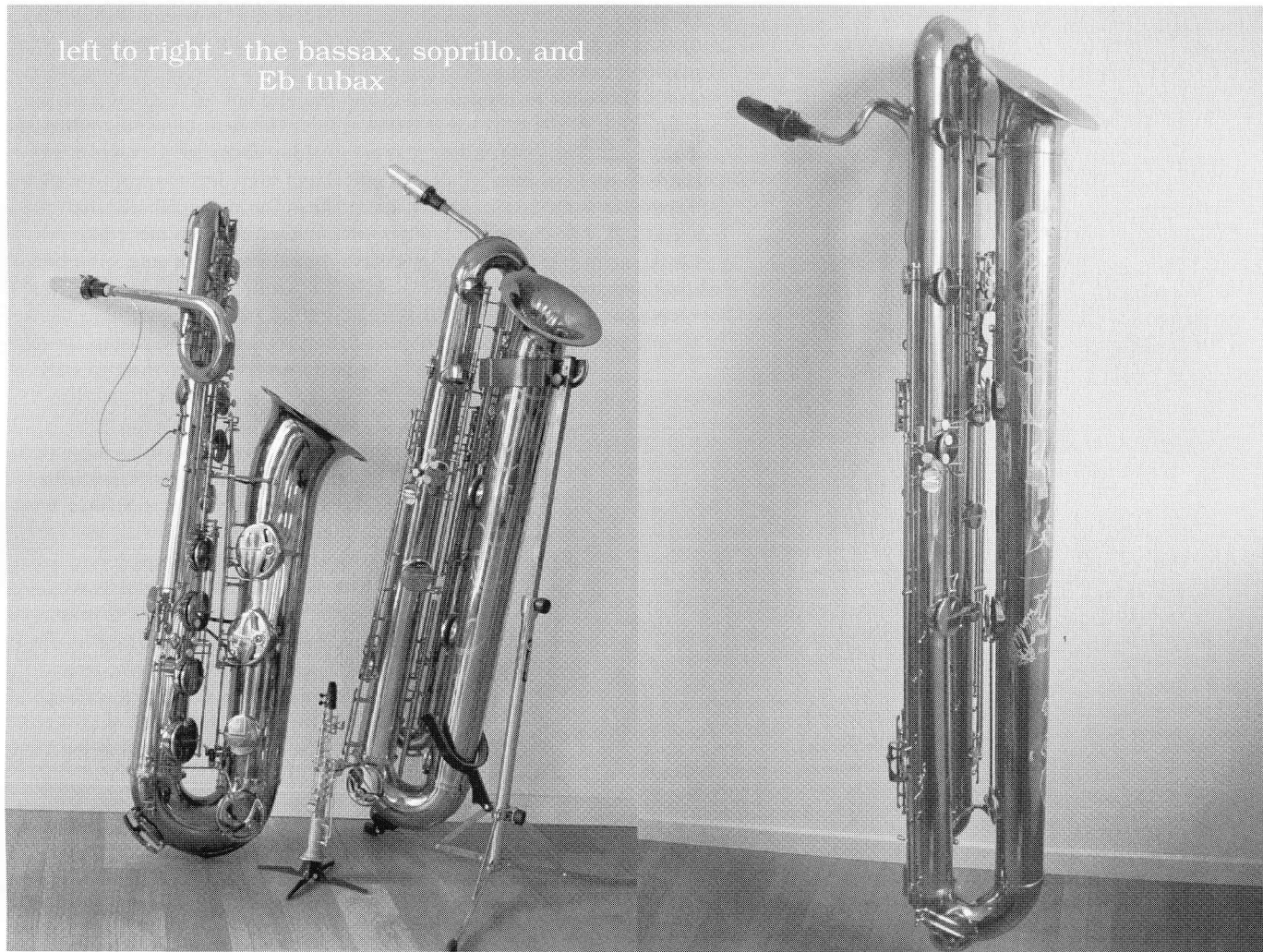
Dialogue I

Dialogue I is for bassax and taragot using multiphonics for both instruments as the only "language."

Dialogue II

Dialogue II is a free discussion between soprano saxophone and soprillo

left to right - the bassax, soprillo, and
Eb tubax



Dialogue III

Dialogue III for Eb tubax and bassax could be titled “elegant elephants.”

In the spring of 2003 I was able to play a few Swiss concerts with the Los Angeles, California based multi-instrumentalist Vinny Golia, and we made recordings for a duo CD titled *Birdology*. Vinny Golia also has a preference for deep wind instruments (and almost all the others), and plays Tubax in Eb as well.

In *Dodo and Other Extinct Species* the contrabass clarinet (played by me) and tubax (played by Vinny Golia) meet each other in spontaneous dialogue. We agreed immediately before the recordings to use three short and self-contained improvisations. Immediately afterwards we decided to add four voices in a higher register to the middle part (with Eb clarinets and piccolo).

Two Tubax (Peter A. Schmid on tubax in Eb and contrabass clarinet, and Thomas K. J. Mejer on tubax in C) devotes itself to sound exploration of the deepest wind instruments. Alongside improvisations we work on sound pictures in which we limit ourselves to individual sounds, harmonic or rhythmic aspects (as for example in *No MPs* or *Overtone Dance*). In addition, we are building a repertoire of original compositions for this medium and we plan to commission works from others.

(S)Watch Watching sees a point of departure using two intertwined and repeating voices. The basic unit for the tubax in Eb is eight $\frac{5}{8}$ bars, for the tubax in C it's five $\frac{8}{4}$ bars. In this way constantly changing layers are created through deliberate alteration of the basic structure. The two voices constantly meet yet wander from their respective paths and adapt themselves to the passing melodic rhythms of the other. A musical picture is created with two largely independent ticking watches, which nevertheless temporarily synchronize again and again. You could also imagine two ropes knotted together at various points.

Nautilus is a fascinating tune where the first crook of the contrabass clarinet and tubax in C are filled with water. Depending on how hard one blows, the water is put in motion and begins to bubble. Changing the frequency of the tone can be influenced by opening and closing the valve. By blowing harder the water is more and more displaced and almost normal tones are created, some of which are easily distinguished from the usual sound of tubax or contrabass clarinet.

No MPs uses four voices all of which are played on a tubax without a mouthpiece. Two voices exclusively use “plops” (tongue rams against the open end of the neck). The other two voices use trumpet sounds created by buzzing the lips against the open end of the neck.

Overtone Dance is an improvised duet in the altissimo

The soprillo saxophone



- **Bassax** with Zinner mouthpiece #8 (and #2 Vandoren reeds). The bassax is a newly designed bass saxophone with a larger bore constructed by Benedikt Eppelsheim. Due to this larger bore it needs more air to produce the tone but the sound is great and the intonation perfect. In my opinion this is the best bass saxophone ever built. The instrument played on this CD is the prototype but the bassax is now available for purchase and there is a waiting list.
- **Soprillo** with original mouthpiece (and Vandoren Eb clarinet reeds #2). Another completely new instrument from Benedikt Eppelsheim which is a piccolo saxophone in Bb, an octave higher than soprano saxophone.
- **Taragot** ("Stowasser," built around 1900 in Budapest) with an adapted (due to the dimensions of the original mouthpiece)

Vandoren B45 clarinet mouthpiece.

• **Soprano saxophone** is a Selmer Mark 6 with a Selmer mouthpiece (*Super Session I*).

• **Bass clarinet** is a Selmer bass clarinet (to low C) with a Vandoren B45 mouthpiece.

• **Contrabass clarinet** is a Leblanc contrabass clarinet ("paperclip" to low C) with a Clark W. Fobes mouthpiece

• **Bass flute** is an Armstrong (Robert Dick Model).

• **Reeds** on all instruments used in this masterclass CD are synthetic reeds by Fibracell or Legère (medium-soft to medium or #2 to 2.5). Legère now offers the first synthetic reed for contrabass clarinet (that can be used for bass saxophone too) that is a real and good sounding



alternative to cane reeds.

ABOUT THE MUSICIANS

Peter A. Schmid (born 1959) has been musically active for over 25 years in various groups blurring the boundaries between jazz, improvised music, and modern classical music. In his solo and ensemble work, his original compositions and concepts are used, with plenty of room for structured or free improvisation. A melting and fusing of composed and improvised elements is a central concern in his music.

PAS (Peter A. Schmid) is completely fascinated by the very deep wind instruments. Besides bass clarinet, baritone saxophone, and bass flute, he also plays contralto and contrabass clarinet and tubaxes in Eb and Bb.

Over the past ten years duos have increasingly become a favorite form of musical expression for PAS. Since 2003 he's been playing regular duo concerts in Uster, Switzerland, where he lives with his family. These performances have featured musicians with whom he's played duets for years as well as "new" musicians who have met him for spontaneous improvised concerts, including Vinny Golia, Evan Parker, Pierre Favre, Lukas Niggli, Nils Wogrom, Barry Guy, and Mathias Ziegler, among others.

Peter A. Schmid also plays regularly with his quintet September Winds (featuring Evan Parker) and his quartet Schmilz, which puts bass clarinet front and center (with Michel Pilz on bass clarinet). For more information see www.paschart.ch

register of the tubaxes overlaid with two still higher voices.

November Line utilizes an atonal rubato line beginning simply in unison, then splinters and is rhythmically altered, compressed, and accelerated.

INSTRUMENTS ON THIS MASTERCLASS CD

• **Tubax in Eb, C and Bb** (contrabass, C contrabass and subcontrabass saxophones) with baritone mouthpiece by Eugene Rousseau (JDX 8), Clark W. Fobes (Nova) or Selmer (G).

The tubax (constructed by Benedikt Eppelsheim) is a newly designed contrabass saxophone with a smaller bore than the traditional contrabass saxophones. The original tubax was in Eb. In the meantime Eppelsheim has built one instrument on special order for Thomas K. J. Mejer in C and a few subcontrabass saxophones in Bb (one octave below the bass saxophone).

Vinny Golia is an internationally noted multi-instrumentalist, composer and bandleader who formed his own record label "Ninewinds" (www.ninewinds.com) in 1977. He has performed and recorded with Anthony Braxton, John Carter, Bertram Turetzky, Barre Phillips, and Rova Saxophone Quartet among many others.

Thomas K.J. Mejer is a Swiss composer and saxophonist, who has for years intensively tackled the contrabass saxophone. In 1996 he recorded the CD *Compositions for Contrabass Saxophone*. In addition, he's played for over a decade in the group "Kontratrio" (contrabass saxophone, tuba and contrabass flute). www.datacomm.ch/mejer

CONCLUSION

For further information about the Eppelsheim saxophones see www.eppelsheim.com

I want to extend many thanks to Jay C. Easton (a great expert in low saxophones) for his careful revision of the manuscript. His contribution was very helpful to me.

PETER A. SCHMID'S RECENT RECORDINGS

- *September Duos* (Creative Works Records www.creativeworks.ch CWR 1036)
Evan Parker (tenor and soprano sax)
Peter A. Schmid (contrabass, bass, and Eb clarinet)

- *Schmilz* (CWR 1041)

Peter A. Schmid (contrabass, bass and Eb clarinet)
Michel Pilz (bass clarinet)
Herbert Kramis (bass)
Dominik Burger (drums)

- *Windsapes* (CWR 1040)

Peter A. Schmid (contrabass, bass and Eb clarinet, tubax, soprillo, taragot)

- *Evan Parker And September Winds:*

Alder Brook (LEO Records 379) & *Short Stories* (LEO Records 428)

Peter A. Schmid (contrabass and bass clarinet, tubax)

Evan Parker (tenor and soprano sax, tubax)

Hans Anliker (trombone)

Jürg Solothurnmann (alto and soprano saxophones)

Reto Senn (clarinets and taragot)

- *Birdology* (LEO Records 389)

Peter A. Schmid and Vinny Golia (reeds and flutes)

- *En Passant* (CWR 1042)

Peter A. Schmid and Ned Rothenberg reeds

For a complete discography see www.paschart.ch

All musical instrument photos in this masterclass are by Salomé Courvoisier Schmid and Peter A. Schmid.

MASTERCLASS CD TRACKS

1	..... <i>Bassic Windloop</i> (tubax, bassax, 3 bass clarinets)	..... 3:00
2	..... <i>Ornithology</i> (4 bass saxophones)	..... 1:28
3	..... <i>TuBbax(s)ology</i> (Bb tubax solo)	..... 3:47
4	..... <i>Basic Slapsticks</i> (bassax, bass flute, bass clarinet)	..... 1:46
5	..... <i>Dialogue I</i> (bass saxophone, taragot)	..... 1:38
6	..... <i>Dialogue II</i> (soprillo, soprano saxophone)	..... 1:39
7	..... <i>Dialogue III</i> (bass saxophone, Eb tubax)	..... 0:39
8	..... <i>Slapsticks VII</i> (three soprillo saxophones)	..... 0:47
9	..... <i>Ornithology II</i> (four soprillo saxophones)	..... 1:20
10	..... <i>Slow Motion</i> (three Bb tubax)	..... 2:36
11	..... <i>Taragotic III</i> (taragot, 3 bass clarinets, bassax)	..... 3:38
12	..... <i>TuBbaxcanon</i> (four Bb tubax)	..... 0:58
	• <i>Golia-Schmid Duo</i> (Vinny Golia plays Eb tubax, piccolo, and Eb clarinet. Peter Schmid plays contrabass clarinet and Eb clarinet)	>
13	..... <i>Dodo & Other Extinct Species</i>	..... 5:13
	• <i>Two Tubax</i> (Thomas K.J. Mejer plays C tubax, Peter Schmid plays Eb tubax and contrabass clarinet on Nautilus)	
14	..... <i>(S)watch watching</i>	..... 2:58
15	..... <i>Nautilus</i>	..... 4:05
16	..... <i>No MPs!</i>	..... 3:05
17	..... <i>Overtone Dance</i>	..... 2:23
18	..... <i>November Line</i>	..... 3:46

All compositions on this *Saxophone Journal* masterclass CD are by Peter A. Schmid (SUISA), except *Dodo & Other Extinct Species* which is jointly composed by Peter A. Schmid (SUISA) and Vinny Golia (BMI), published with permission of Alissa Publishing/PRS. This excerpted recording of *Dodo & Other Extinct Species* (track 13) is used courtesy Leo Records, 16 Woodland Ave., Kingskerswell, Newton Abbot, UK.



Bb tubax