


Analysis of Saxophone Playing Technique and Interpretation in The Song Boha Nama Ujungna by William Nababan

Adi Kantona Sibagariang

Program Studi Musik, Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia

Article Details	ABSTRACT
<p>Article History</p> <p>Received February 28th, 2025 Revised April 9th, 2025 Accepted May 12nd, 2025</p>	<p>William Nababan is one of the Indonesian saxophone players involved in the music world, especially as a saxophone player who started his career in 2016. Of the many songs played by William Nababan, Boha nama ujung na is a song that has been performed by William Nababan and is the object of this research. The research aims to describe how the playing technique and interpretation are contained in this song. The data sources used in this research include interviews with sources, observation, and documentation. The research results show <i>trill</i> techniques, <i>vibra</i>, <i>growl</i>, outer lip techniques, diaphragm breathing, and upper end tongue. For the results of the interpretation analysis in this song, several interpretations are contained, namely, there are dynamics, such as <i>crescendo</i>, <i>decrescendo</i>, <i>mezzo forte</i>, <i>forte</i>, <i>piano</i>, <i>mezzo piano</i> dynamics. The <i>trill</i>, <i>vibra</i>, and <i>growl</i> techniques also produce their interpretations.</p>
<p>Keywords</p> <p>William Nababan Boha Name Tip Na Playing Technique Interpretation</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>The article is an open-access article under the licence CC BY-SA.</i></p> <div style="text-align: right; margin-top: 10px;">  </div>
<p>Corresponding Author</p> <p>Adi Kantona Sibagariang Program Studi Musik, Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni, Universitas Negeri Surabaya Gedung T14 lantai 2, FBS Unesa, Kampus Unesa Lidah Wetan Email: adi.19053@mhs.unesa.ac.id</p>	

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Jamalus, music is an artistic expression that produces sounds in the form of songs or compositions that express the thoughts and feelings of the creator through basic elements of music such as rhythm, melody, harmony, and song structure, as well as overall expression that forms a unity (Azizah, 2023). Adolphe sax is a Belgian artist who invented the saxophone in 1844 (Siboro, 2024), the saxophone is an inflatable musical instrument made of brass shaped like a cigarette cangklok, although made of brass, the saxophone is categorised as a woodwind instrument because the sound is produced from an inflatable mouth made of wood or called a reed. The saxophone was initially intended for orchestral music and military bands. The saxophone is an air aerophone type musical instrument. This means a musical instrument with a sound source based on vibrating air. This instrument is classified as a woodwind instrument even though the basic material is metal.

Then, in the 1930s, the popularity of this instrument increased. Many jazz musicians looked at this tool to perfect their playing style. In the saxophone technique, each individual is unconsciously able to create unique sound variations, even though they play the same song or notation. As early as 1920-1930, the popularity of this instrument increased, with one of the most prominent musicians being Charlie Parker, who experimented with various tones and techniques of playing the saxophone (Arifin, 2025). This has led to the development of the instrument until today and made the saxophone one of the leading musical instruments, one of which is in Indonesia. Aspects of saxophone playing techniques include breathing and fingering techniques (Sitohang, 2023). Technique refers to the patterns used in a piece of music based on how the

instrument is played, including repetitions and variations that result in a significant musical composition or harmony.

Along with the development of the times, the number of saxophone players, including William Nababan, is increasing. William Nababan is an Indonesian saxophonist born in 1991 (Nababan, 2014). William Nababan is also a Bachelor of Music graduate from Medan State University in 2014. William Nababan began his musical career in Jakarta 2015 at the Java Jazz festival. William Nababan has played many songs, including Hey Jude, Easy on Me, Here is your perfect, Boha nama ujung na, and many more. Muba Rohakki is the latest single from William Nababan. Until now, William Nababan has been active in the Indonesian music industry. William Nababan is also a session player for one of the Indonesian singing artists, Rizky Febian, until now. The song boha nama ujung na is a pop genre song created by William Naibaho and sung by Dorman Manik in 2017.

Dorman Manik is an Indonesian singer of Batak descent. Dorman Manik has many songs that he has released, where most of the songs he performs are Batak songs. One is the song boha nama ujungna, which is included in the Hodo Sasude album. On 26 June 2020, William Nababan re-played the song Boha Nama Ujungna with a saxophone. William Nababan played this song in his way, and it was unique. Therefore, researchers are interested in examining how William Nababan performs the interpretation and technique of performing this song on the saxophone. From the explanation above, this research aims to describe how the technique and interpretation of the saxophone performed by William Nababan in the song Boha Nama Ujung Na.

Several previous studies are relevant, namely as follows: First, Fadil Praska Maulana in the journal *Repertoar Journal* Vol. 1 No. 1 in 2020 with the title "Interpretation and analysis of saxophone playing techniques in Eugene Bozza's *Aria* song". Discusses the interpretation and Analysis of saxophone playing techniques in the song *Aria* by Eugene Bozza (Praska et al., 2020). The similarity with this research is that both review the interpretation and technique of saxophone playing, while the difference is the song material studied. The next one is Desman Ferinata Ambarita in his thesis, which he presented with the title "Technique of playing saxophone in the song *Together Again* by Dave Koz" at Medan State University in 2014, discussing the technique of playing saxophone in the song *Together Again* by Dave Koz (Ambarita, 2014). The equation of this thesis and this research is that both discuss saxophone playing techniques in a song, while the difference is the material studied.

Furthermore, Denny Roy Putra Sitanggang is in his thesis entitled "Analysis of the form and technique of playing saxophone in Kenny G's *The Moment* instrumental music" at Medan State University in 2017. Discusses the Analysis of the form and technique of playing saxophone in Kenny G's *The Moment* instrumental music (Sitanggang, 2017). This research focuses on one issue: the Analysis of the form and technique of saxophone playing on Kenny G's *The Moment* instrumental music. There are similarities and differences between this thesis and this research. Specifically, the similarities are that both discuss how the saxophone playing technique is used in a song. At the same time, the difference is the song material and the Analysis of the song form being studied.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. Qualitative descriptive research describes phenomena using words rather than numerical data, concerning paradigms, strategies, and applying qualitative models (Pane, 2022). Qualitative research aims to explore and describe complex and dynamic phenomena, which cannot be measured by numbers (Koyan, 2014). Data collected in qualitative research is usually in the form of words, texts, stories, or images, not numbers or statistical data (Fadli, 2021).

In the qualitative research process, researchers select a relevant topic and determine the qualitative approach to be used, data are collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, document analysis, or other techniques appropriate to the research question, the results of qualitative research are usually presented in the form of in-depth narrative reports, with direct quotes from participants as evidence to support the findings (Kusumastuti, 2019). In this observation technique, researchers observed the score or sheet music of the song Boha Nama Ujung Na. Researchers also conducted direct interviews with William Nababan to explore more accurate information supporting data processing. In addition, researchers also conducted documentation to dig up more information in collecting data, such as checking the video of the song boha nama ujungna from *you tube*, literature study is also inseparable from the data collection of this study, literature study is the process of collecting, evaluating, and analysing information derived from various written sources relevant to the topic or research problem (Prasetyo, 2012).

In analysing data, researchers use data reduction techniques. Data reduction is a process in research where the raw data that has been collected is processed and simplified into a form that is easier to manage and analyse (Syahid, 2021). The primary purpose of data reduction is to focus data on elements most relevant to research

questions or hypotheses, so that researchers can identify patterns, themes, or significant relationships more easily (Aisafitri, 2021). The next step is data presentation, a series of steps in processing research results using analytical methods, following the desired objectives. Then, the last step in presenting the data in this study is concluding (Purnamasari, 2021). Concluding is done to find the core of the data that has been thoroughly examined or to obtain the final results of the data analysis that has been carried out. This conclusion drawing must link the research findings with the research objectives set by the researcher beforehand, which aims to provide results or answers to the research objectives.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Technique for playing the song boha nama ujung na

Trill technique

A *trill* begins by emitting two notes, the first and the second. The fingers take turns hitting the notes made in sequence (Hidayatullah, 2024). *Trill* is a technique that is classified as a fingering technique when playing the saxophone. After the researcher interviewed the informant, the informant said the *trill* technique was found in this song. Here are some uses of *trills* found in this song.



Figure 1.
Trill technique on beat 15



Figure 2
Trill technique on beat 39

Source: Personal documentation.

Vibra technique

The *vibra* technique is one of the techniques used by William Nababan when playing this song. The *vibration* technique is a technique that gives vibrations to the tone while playing a song (Mita, 2021). The *vibration* in this song is found in beat 11, located at note C. Below is the *vibra* technique in the song boha nama ujung na.



Figure 3
Vibra technique on beat 11
Source: Personal documentation.

Growl technique

The *growl* technique is also one of the techniques used by William Nababan when playing the song Boha Nama Ujung Na. The *growl* technique is a technique of giving a heavy or hoarse voice when playing a song (Aisya Hanum, 2024)



Figure 4.
Growl technique on beat 18.



Figure 5
Growl technique on beat 51

Source: Personal documentation

Lip technique

During the interview process, the researcher and Wiliam Nababan also explained that using the outer lips is more effective than the inner lips. The reason is that the mouthpiece often shifts when using the inner lips. The inner lips are slippery because they inner lips still have saliva



The position of the outer lips

Source: Personal documentation.

William Nababan prefers the outer lip technique to the inner lip technique because the inner lip technique is prone to wobbling on the *mouthpiece*, and the inner lip is still susceptible to saliva. Comfort when playing saxophone will also support performance. To train good lip technique, it must also be accompanied by routine *long tone* training (Prabasumirat, 2025).

Breathing Technique

When discussing breathing techniques during the interview process between researchers and William Nababan, William Nababan said that in playing the saxophone, William Nababan uses abdominal/diaphragmatic breathing techniques, including in playing the song "boha nama ujungna". The abdominal/diaphragmatic breathing technique is more effective when playing the saxophone. A good abdominal breathing technique is when, while inhaling, the position of the abdomen will slightly enlarge/expand, and the abdomen will slowly shrink back to its original position when blowing the saxophone or when releasing air from the abdomen.

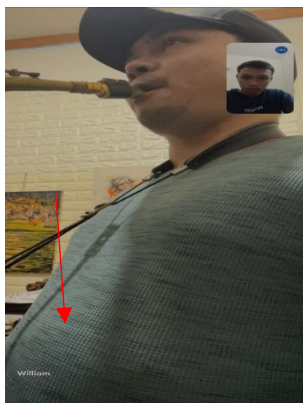


Figure 7.
Abdominal position when
inhaling air.

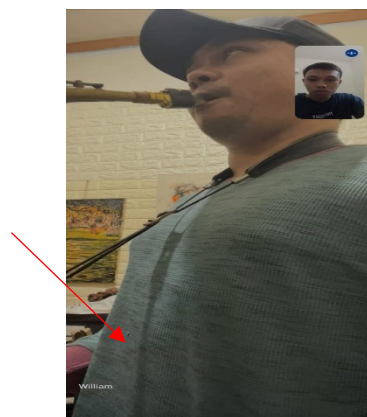


Figure 8.
Abdominal position when
Expelling air

Source: Personal documentation

The picture above shows the difference in the position of the abdomen when inhaling air and when exhaling air while blowing the saxophone. From this, researchers can draw that the breathing technique used by William Nababan when playing the song "boha nama ujung na" is the abdominal breathing technique. From the explanation above, researchers also see that when performing abdominal breathing techniques, you must

pay attention to the correct technique, otherwise there will be risks as explained by William Nababan above. Using the wrong technique can cause lung pain, affecting performance and quality when playing saxophone (Silalahi, 2023).

Tongue technique

: The part of the tongue used is the tongue's upper end. There are several tonguing techniques in the saxophone, such as *single tonguing*. *Single tonguing* is a basic technique in playing saxophone, where the tongue is used to vibrate each tone.

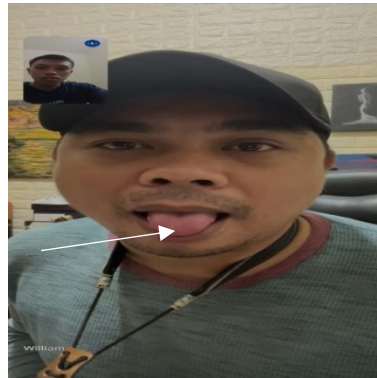


Figure 9. Upper tongue position.
Source: Personal documentation

From the explanation above, researchers can analyse that there are not many tongue techniques used by William Nababan when playing this song, only using the *single tonguing* technique which is the basic technique used in playing saxophone, this will be an easy thing for those who want to play this song, because there are no tongue techniques that are so difficult in this song.

Interpretation of the song boha nama ujung na

Tempo

The tempo in this song is 70 and this is classified as a slow song, or called *adagio* (Ferdiyanto, 2017) This is following the theory described by researchers in chapter 2, where *Adagio* is one type of song tempo that is at a speed of 66-76 BPM (*beats per minute*). Furthermore, this song is at a speed of 70, and it can be said that it is relatively slow because it is at a speed of 70 BPM (*beats per minute*). There is no tempo change in this song, either in the middle of the song or until the end.



Figure 10

Tempo in the song boha nama ujung na

Source: Personal documentation

Time signature

Time signature is a symbol that indicates the number of beats in each measure and determines the value of each beat (Maskur, 2020). The song *Boha Nama Ujung Na*, played by William Nababan, has a 4/4 time signature. In this song, there is no change in time signature at the beginning, middle, or end of the song; there is also no *repeat sign* or repetition of time signature. This song has a total of 63 beats.



Figure 11

Time signature in the song boha nama ujungna
Source: Personal documentation

Dynamics

Dynamics is the degree of strength or weakness of the sound when playing music, which is indicated through various symbols or signs (Banoe, 2033). Several dynamics are used in the song Boha Nama Ujung Na, played by William Nababan. Among them are *piano*, *mezzo piano*, *Mezzo forte*, and *forte*. There are also several changes in dynamics in this song, namely, *crescendo* and *decrescendo*. Here are some of the dynamics used in this song.



Figure 12

Decrescendo and *mezzo piano* dynamics in measures 1-4
Source: Personal documentation.

After starting to play the song, it can be seen that in beat two there is a *decrescendo* dynamic, meaning that the player is told to change the sound of the instrument to a slow/soft sound, because the meaning of *decrescendo* is a slow/soft sound, as described by the researcher in the second chapter. Furthermore, in beat three there is a *mezzo piano* dynamic marked with the *mp* sign, which means changing the sound colour to half soft. After arriving at the beginning of beat four, another decrescendo dynamic makes the sound change back to slow/soft. At the end of beat four, another mezzo piano dynamic marked with an *mp* sign means changing the instrument's sound back to half soft.



Figure 13

Crescendo dynamics and
mezzo forte in measure 5



Figure 14

Piano dynamics in measure eight

Source: Personal documentation

At beat five, there is a *crescendo* dynamic, which means changing the instrument's sound to be slowly louder, and continues again to the *mezzo forte* dynamic marked *mf*, meaning changing the instrument's sound to be quite loud. However, at beat eight there is a *piano* dynamic with the sign *p*, which means changing the sound to soft. From the change in dynamics at beats 5 and 8, from *crescendo*, *mezzo forte*, to *piano*, this is a change in sound from the beginning slowly loud to moderately loud and ends to a soft sound, researchers describe that this aims to convey the intensity of emotions that have begun to be shown in this song, but again reduce the intensity to the *piano* dynamics that seem to provide emotional calmness with a soft sound.



Figure 15

Crescendo and
mezzo forte in measures 14-15



Figure 16

Mezzo forte and *forte* dynamics
in measures 21-24

Source: Personal documentation

At beat 14, there is a *crescendo* dynamic, which means the sound is slowly louder, and at beat 15, there is a *mezzo forte* dynamic marked *mf*, which changes the sound of the instrument to be quite loud. This *mezzo forte* dynamic is also found at beat 21. However, at beat 24, the instrument's sound is said to be louder because there is a change in dynamics to *forte*, which means louder than *mezzo forte* dynamics.

Here we analyse that, from beat 14 to beat 24, the sound changes from slowly loud (*crescendo*) to moderately loud (*mf*) and to loud (*f*). This aims to convey a sense of assertiveness and emotional courage that can create a more aggressive intensity when listening to it.



Figure 17
Piano dynamics in measure 28



Figure 18
, *Mezzo forte* dynamics in measure 31



Figure 19
Forte dynamics on beat 38



, Figure 20
Forte dynamics on beat 46

Source: Personal documentation

Here we can analyse that these changes in dynamics convey a substantial emotional change, marked by the *piano* dynamics in measure 28 which means soft. However, the sound changes to quite loud or *mezzo forte* in measure 38 and the sound of the instrument changes again to loud or *forte* in measures 38 and 46, this sound is louder than the previous dynamics. These changes in dynamics seem to convey a sound that is initially calm but turns into a sense of anger or tension.



Figure 21
dynamics at measure 56



, Figure 22
, *Mezzo forte* dynamics in measure 58



Figure 23
Crescendo and *forte* dynamics in measures 62-63

Source: Personal documentation

Researchers can analyse that the *piano* dynamics contained in measure 56 aim to reduce the atmosphere of the previous dynamics, which previously experienced tension marked by *forte* dynamics in the previous dynamics, and can be reduced by the *piano* dynamics at measure 56, which provides a calm atmosphere with a soft sound. However, after arriving at beat 58, there is a change in sound to be quite loud, which is given with the sign *mf* or called *mezzo forte*, and at beat 62, the atmosphere increases as if expressing anger or disappointment, with the dynamics of *crescendo* and *forte*, or the sound becomes loud.

Using all the dynamics in the song above, researchers can analyse that the dynamics contained in this song can create a particular atmosphere and feeling, depending on the dynamics used, such as feelings of

sadness, joy, anger, an atmosphere full of tension, etc. These dynamics also help provide variety in this song so that it does not feel monotonous, providing a lively colour or atmosphere.

Style

In playing the song *boha nama ujung na*, William Nababan conveyed that it is inseparable in adding style to this song, and playing this song aims to give a more interesting impression to the listeners. The style William Nababan uses is *Ad Libitum* or a style played with one's own will when playing a song. Some of the *Ad Libitum* styles used by William Nababan in this song are like improvisation.



Figure 24
Image of improvisation on beat 29



Figure 25
, Improvisation drawing on beat 35

Source: Personal documentation

The improvisation at measure 29 is located at note G-D-B-A-G-D-D-E, while the improvisation at measure 35 is located at note B-A-G-A-D-B-G-A-G-A. From the *ad libitum* above, researchers can elaborate that the *ad libitum* in this song is in the middle of the song, this *ad libitum* is giving musicians to improvise according to their imagination in certain parts of a song, aiming to show the musician's creativity for his importation to the listeners of the song, and showing the uniqueness of the musician's style to his listeners.

Trill



Figure 26
Trill location on beat 13



Image 27
Trill position on beat 39

Source: Personal documentation

From the Location of the *trill* above, researchers can see that this *trill* aims to increase expression in a song, and provide decoration on a tone that can make the tone sound more interesting. Like the *trill* located at beat 13 and beat 37, as described by the researcher in chapter 2, it requires a fast finger combination to open and close the saxophone valve when performing *trills* to produce repeated articulation of notes and maximum *trills*.

William Nababan said that when playing *trills*, we must also pay attention to the running tempo so that we do not lose tempo when playing the tone after the *trill* tone. The *trill* notes located at beat 13 and beat 37 are at the G note, so the notes closed and opened on the saxophone valve are the G-A-G-A notes quickly according to the beat until they can *trill* well.

Vibra



Figure 28
Location of *vibra* on beat 11
Source: Personal documentation

Researchers can describe the *vibra* technique above as aiming to provide additional colour to the sound, increase expression and beauty in a song, and make the song more alive when heard. How to play the *vibra* technique on the saxophone is to wiggle the lower lip quickly to produce a wavy articulation of tonal sounds and good vibrato. When wiggling the lips when playing *vibra*, do not forget to apply lower tooth pressure to the lips so that when playing *vibra*, it produces maximum sound.

Growl



Figure 29

Growl location on beat 18



Figure 30

, Location of growl on beat 51

Source: Personal documentation

From the *growl* above, the researcher sees that the purpose of this *growl* is to add emotional intensity and strength to the tone that can create a feeling of anger or tension. This *growl* becomes a differentiator between a smooth voice and a rough voice in a song and can also enrich the beauty of the melody through the sound of giving a hoarse voice that makes the *growl* interesting and complex. *Growl* is a heavy or hoarse voice when playing a song. The *growl* in this song is located at measure 18 and measure 49. The *growl* at measure 18 is at note C, and the *growl* at measure 49 is at note B. In playing the *growl* technique or *growl* sound on the saxophone, the *growl* is produced from the pressure of the throat, producing a hoarse articulation of tonal sounds.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Concluding aims to find the initiation of the data that has been thoroughly examined to obtain the results of data processing validity (Siregar Herlina, 2018). Based on the explanation that has been described by the researcher above, the researcher sees that William Nababan is a musician with a pop music genre, this can be seen from William Nababan who is a member of the *brass section* of one of the artists, Rizky Febian, who is one of the pop genre singers admired by young people today. In 2015, William Nababan, who started his musical career at the Java Jazz Festival, became more involved in pop music, the most popular genre among young people today. One proof that William Nababan is a pop genre musician is the release of his latest single with Gok Malau entitled Si ingoton Nauli, which was launched on 7 July 2023.

This research does not end here, but it can be continued for anyone who wants to know about the career of musician William Nababan. One of them is to explore how William Nababan's playing techniques are used when performing with Rizky Febian. William Nababan always appears in the *brass section* when Rizky Febian performs or at concerts.


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BIOGRAPHY



Adi Kantona Sibagariang  <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-0750-3253>, a UNESA student pursuing a bachelor's degree at Surabaya State University, is taking the Music Study Programme with a wind major. He conducted research as one of the requirements for obtaining a bachelor's degree, with the title, Analysis of saxophone playing techniques and interpretations in the song boha nama ujung na by William Nababan. This is his first research, and he hopes to conduct sustainable research on the world of music that can benefit the nation's children. He can be contacted via email: adi.19053@mhs.unesa.ac.id