



RECORDER POWER

For Teachers who work with Children and Beginners

Quick, what's the most played instrument in the world? The answer may surprise you: it's not the piano or even guitar, but the **Recorder!** Over the last half-century, the recorder has enjoyed an explosion of popularity. Hundreds of millions of professional, amateur, and school student players enjoy the recorder's lovely sound and huge repertoire. We now find the recorder in symphony orchestras and rock bands, jamming jazz and in world music groups from around the globe. Although it was less popular during the Classical and Romantic musical eras of the 19th century, in the 20th century the recorder regained its place as an important, mainstream instrument--and its popularity continues to grow!

This video is for all teachers of recorder. Whether you are a professional performer or a school teacher interested in bringing music into your class, this video is designed to be an informative and fun approach that shows how easy it can be to learn the recorder and how naturally it can be integrated into many learning situations.

The potential of this wonderful instrument is still being explored. It is my hope that, through this video, all teachers will discover new possibilities and will feel encouraged to imagine ever more wonderful ways of making music.

Pedagogical Sequence and Explanation

1. Discovering Sounds

The recorder's ergonomic design allows even a beginner to easily create hundreds of sounds the very first day; simply discovering sounds is a fun and effective way to begin making music.

It is important to let all students have time to explore sounds on their own. In almost every class I teach, I hear students create sounds that I have never heard before! In addition to letting students find their own sounds, the teacher can open possibilities by modeling sounds and rhythms, and then letting the students echo them. It is through this same process of **imitation** that each of us, very effectively, learns our Mother Tongue. Even if the teacher is not an experienced player, simply making sounds for the students to imitate is a helpful step towards developing a large vocabulary of expressive sounds. In a group setting, students can even invent and model sounds for each other.

2. Names and Dialogues

Thanks to its sophisticated design, the recorder allows us to recreate, with more sensitivity and flexibility than any other instrument, the wonderful nuances of articulation and inflection we use when we speak or sing.

A natural way of exploring this sensitivity is to simply use the breath and tongue techniques we use in language to “speak” with the recorder. Simply by letting students imitate words, beginning recorder players can use a greater variety of articulations than is possible on most other instruments. It is especially fun to let students try saying their names with the recorder. If we first speak and listen to the sounds of our names, we can then “speak” our names with the recorder.

I have heard that it is possible with some players to perceive, as it were, words in their music -- Sylvestro Ganassi (from his recorder method *Fontegara*), Venice, 1535.

Once students begin to hear that they really can speak with their recorders, it is an obvious step to have a musical conversation--**dialogues**. Since we already know how a conversation works, anyone can have wonderful (and perhaps quite long) musical experiences.

3. Story Telling

Using the recorder in story telling can be a freeing way to create pieces of music and develop technique. Especially in a classroom setting, story telling can complement and enhance other learning, plus connect multiple subjects and disciplines--Reading, Literature, History, Social Studies, Theater, Dance, etc. Also, since all playing can be done by ear, it is easy to incorporate all sizes of recorder (excellent technique practice) as well as other instruments or voices.

Some of the techniques/sounds that can be easily utilized include: wind sounds, bird sounds, spooky sounds, whistles, singing while playing, tapping the instruments, and countless others.

4. Hot Cross Buns

Hot Cross Buns is a familiar and easy introduction to using the fingers. It uses only three notes and only two moving fingers.

In the video you will notice that I recommend beginning by holding the Foot of the recorder in the right hand. Especially for beginners, this helps to reinforce using the right hand as the supporting hand and enables the fingers of the left hand to move freely. As we learn more notes, it will be quite natural to let the right hand find its proper position.

We begin learning *Hot Cross Buns* by first singing the melody. We then learn the notes through singing the note names. (Of course teachers can use letter names, **B-A-G**, and/or solfege syllables). In this way we are doing great ear training and beginning to learn music theory.

I include written music for each piece for the teacher's reference. Of course, it is easier for students to learn pieces by ear and by imitating the leader's fingerings.

Hot Cross Buns

traditional

B A G B A G G G G G A A A A B A G
Hot Cross Buns Hot Cross Buns One a penny Two a penny Hot Cross Buns
B A G
Thumb + hole 1 on front Thumb + holes 1 & 2 on front Thumb + holes 1, 2, & 3

At the end of the video you will see a class playing along with a recording of a **Renaissance Dance Furioso**. This is an ideal piece to follow *Hot Cross Buns* since it uses the same three notes. Also, since the recording lasts several minutes, students get lots of practice on **B-A-G** while enjoying playing along with a band.

Furioso

Italian Renaissance Dance

soprano
bass

5. Mary Had a Little Lamb

Most people know this song, which can be played with just B-A-G. As always, it is important to sing and play.

As soon as students can play the piece with three notes, we can expand our technique and play a slightly different version using a new note, **D**. Though not difficult, **D** encourages flexibility in the hand and is excellent finger practice.

Mary Had a Little Lamb

traditional

Musical notation for 'Mary Had a Little Lamb' in G clef, 4/4 time. The first version consists of a single line of music with lyrics: "Mary had a little lamb little lamb little lamb Mary had a little lamb its fleece was white as snow". The second version adds two more lines: "Mary had a little lamb little lamb little lamb Mary had a little lamb its fleece was white as snow". Below the second version, there is a diagram showing a single note on a staff with the letter 'D' above it, labeled 'only hole 2'.

6. Cuckoo (not in the video)

I include this song as very easy practice for learning the note **C**. It uses only two notes, **A** & **C**, and only one finger needs to move.

This piece is also fun to do with two alternating groups. One group is the cuckoo, and the other is the group that says, "Who are you?," "Do you sing?," and "Sing then." We can even alternate with either group singing or playing.

Cuckoo

Musical notation for 'Cuckoo' in G clef, 4/4 time. The lyrics are: "Cuc - koo Cuc - koo Who are you? I'm a bird. Do you sing? Yes I do. Sing then! Cuc - koo Cuc - koo". Below the staff, there is a diagram showing a single note on a staff with the letter 'C' above it, labeled 'Thumb plus only hole 2'.

7. Call-Response/Work-Song

Using Call and Response is a great improvisation structure for small or large ensembles. This piece can be used with any group that learns the new note **C**.

Call - Response

-- Leader -- -- Chorus -- -- Leader -- -- Chorus -- -- Chorus --
 Other possibilities: -- Leader -- -- Leader -- -- Leader -- -- Chorus -- -- Chorus --
 -- Leader -- -- Leader -- -- Leader -- -- Chorus -- -- Chorus --
 -- Leader -- -- Leader -- -- Leader -- -- Chorus -- -- Chorus --
 -- Leader -- -- Leader -- -- Leader -- -- Chorus -- -- Chorus --

Pentatonic Scale

A C D E G

This type of improvisation is also an ideal vehicle for beginning to use the right hand, learning the note E, learning high notes, and learning Pentatonic Scales.

We can also play any of these notes high or low, as in this extended Pentatonic Scale.

Pentatonic Scale

E G A C D E G A

High E



Like low E but with
the thumb hole slightly opened

High G



High A



8. Swing Low Sweet Chariot (not in the video)

This famous piece uses only the notes of the Pentatonic Scale.

Swing Low Sweet Chariot

spiritual

Swing low sweet chariot comin' for to carry me home, Swing.

low sweet chariot comin' for to carry me home

9. All Together Now

I have been amazed to discover how many people of all ages get excited about playing something from a **Beatles** movie--instant motivation! In *All Together Now*, we can sing the words, sing the note names, and play the melody. As with *Furioso*, playing along with a recording is motivating and lets students play (practice!) for several minutes.

We can play along with the entire piece by rote using only the notes **B-C-D** (quite different technically from **B-A-G**). Use whatever rhythms are most comfortable for the students. More advanced students can even add the notes **High E-F#-G** (which stimulates most students to want to learn these notes).

--John Tyson



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About the performer on this video:

Internationally renowned recorder soloist and teacher **John Tyson** is a winner of the Bodky International Competition and the Noah Greenberg Award and is a former student of Frans Brüggen. He has appeared as soloist in Italy, France, Germany, Spain, England, Scotland, Chile, Canada, Japan, Taiwan, and Australia and throughout the U.S., as well as with major ensembles in Europe and the U.S. John has recorded for Erato, Harmonia Mundi, Sine Qua Non, Titanic, and Ventadorn Records, and with Boston's Handel & Haydn Society under Christopher Hogwood. His solo CD *Something Old, Something New* features Baroque and contemporary music for recorder and strings. He is director of the improvisational Renaissance music and dance ensemble RENAISSONICS and is music director for the Historical Dance Foundation of New York. John is on the faculty of the New England Conservatory of Music, Boston University, and Corso Internazionale di Musica Antica in Urbino, Italy. He has been artist-in-residence at Northeastern University and has taught at the Elma Lewis School of the National Center of Afro-American Artists.

“Splendid....a musical feast” *The New York Times*

“An outstanding artist” *El Mercurio*, Chile

“The charismatic John Tyson with his magic is a publicity locomotive for the Recorder....full of energy, colorful, joyous playing and great virtuosity.” *Die Rheinpfalz*

Since 1939, the American Recorder Society has been a leader in the worldwide recorder movement. The resurgence of interest in early music is very much a result of the ARS taking a prominent role in supporting it. The strength of the ARS continues to play a key role in the vibrancy of recorder and early music activities today.

ARS members receive many benefits including:

- **New** members join for 1/2 price!
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By supporting the American Recorder Society, you also support:

- **Publication of music** written by recorder players for recorder players
- **Scholarships** for deserving recorderists to attend recorder and early music workshops, to improve their skills and to share that knowledge through teaching and performing
- **Grants** for recorder educators to teach the next generation of recorder players
- High-quality recorder **performances** at early music festivals

We hope you have enjoyed the video **Recorder Power** and have found this handout useful. For more information about the services offered by the ARS to its members, or to give feedback about this video, please contact the headquarters office:

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The Mission of the American Recorder Society is to promote the recorder and its music by:

- Developing resources and standards to help people of all ages and ability levels to play and study the recorder
- Presenting the instrument to new constituencies
- Encouraging increased career opportunities for professional recorder performers and teachers
- Enabling and supporting recorder playing as a shared social experience

Additional Resources

Please visit our website to access resources for all levels of recorder: ARS publications, instructional videos, free sheet music, tips & techniques, fingering charts, instrument makers, music sellers, workshops, and grants/scholarships that are available from ARS.

www.americanrecorder.org

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