

# WHOLE CLASS STUDENT RECORDER

## TEACHERS' NOTES – LEVEL 1

### Holding & Tonguing

The instructions for how to hold a recorder are in the spoken verse - recite it with the backing track. We recommend holding the recorder with the right hand at its base, as this helps younger children to feel a clear difference in the position of their hands, and also stops them accidentally covering up some of the lower notes. It makes no difference whether someone is left or right handed – the right hand should always go at the bottom.

Later on, from Level 3 onwards, as the right hand starts to be used for fingering, the instrument will be held in the proper position, with the right hand in the middle.

Repeat this exercise as often as necessary.

### Duration

This exercise introduces the idea that the duration of a musical note can be represented graphically. This is a precursor to proper music notation which will be encountered later in this level.

Play the video, encouraging active listening, and then go through it again using recorders with the back hole covered.

### Pitch

Through active listening, this activity develops the aural awareness of pitch. Introduce terms such as high, low and middle if these are not familiar to the class. The children move their hands in the direction of the pitch changes to show their understanding. Follow the prompts in both videos.

### First Notes

This exercise is for reviewing the holding position and tonguing, and introduces the first note. Descants start with B, while trebles play E. We recommend starting every lesson with this for the next few weeks.

## **Lines & Spaces**

We believe that students don't find reading music difficult if they are introduced to it from the outset, and that continually writing note names under the music does them no favours in the long run. This exercise is designed to help them learn the difference between lines and spaces on the stave.

The exercise can also be used to reinforce the concept of high and low pitch, by pointing out that higher notes appear at the top of the stave, while lower notes are at the bottom.

## **Getting Started**

This exercise is for introducing semibreves (4 beat notes) and semibreve rests.

When you enlarge the fingering diagram, you will see BSL (British Sign Language) finger spelling for the new note. This can give the teacher a quick and easy means of showing children which note to play, and the children can also use it with each other when they are composing or improvising in pairs.

We find it helpful, but if it doesn't suit your style of teaching, you can simply ignore the BSL symbols. They are only used until the end of Level 3, because when sharps and flats are introduced in Level 4, finger spelling becomes too complicated to be of benefit.

## **Listen & Copy - Rhythm**

This is an exercise in copying a rhythmic phrase. There is no notation because the emphasis here is on listening. The overall aim is for children to develop both aural and music reading skills.

Remind your students to start each note with their tongue.

## **Round & Round**

This exercise is for introducing minims (2 beat notes) and minim rests, plus the time signature of 4/4.

## **New Notes**

Descants will learn A, while trebles learn D. This exercise gives another opportunity for copying rhythms and developing aural awareness.

## **Samba**

This is a 2 note tune with semibreve and minim notes and rests.

## **Singing – Rhythm**

This is an exercise to teach the difference between beat and rhythm, and the way in which a rhythm can be laid on top of a beat or pulse. Half the class tap the beat on their thighs, while the other half clap the rhythm of the vocal phrases. Then swap ...

## **Feeling Good**

This is a 2 note tune with crotchet notes and rests. Sometimes a 2 beat rest is shown by 2 crotchet rests, and sometimes by a minim rest – these are interchangeable in this context.

There is only one tutti version of the tune, with the descants playing B and A, while the trebles just play D.

## **Music Elements – Tempo, Structure & Pitch**

This exercise begins with a revision of the concept of tempo and then helps students to understand the way in which music is divided into bars. Finally, it leads into an opportunity for very basic rhythmic improvisation, whilst also reinforcing the earlier lesson on the difference between high and low pitch. Follow the prompts in the video.

## **Performing – Saddle Up**

This piece includes dotted minims for the first time, as well as a time signature. There is an entire exercise devoted to time signatures in Level 2.

For this tune, the introduction is written into the notation.

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## TEACHERS' NOTES – LEVEL 2

### New Notes

From now on, the 'How to Hold' rhyme isn't used for learning new notes, and music notation, fingering diagrams and BSL finger spelling are used instead. The new notes here are G for descants and C for trebles.

Repeat marks appear in the notation here for the first time.

### Song - Mary Had a Little Lamb

This is an exercise in using the notes which have just been learned, but there are plenty of other things you can draw from this song. It is a good opportunity to point out some of the elements of music, such as pitch, duration and structure. Use hand movements, as in the exercise at the beginning of Level 1, to show the changes in pitch.

### Time Signatures

This exercise is also a good opportunity to talk about bars, bar lines, accents, the first beat of the bar and whole bar rests. Follow the prompts in the videos.

### All Alone

This tune has a time signature of  $\frac{3}{4}$  and uses just 3 notes with dotted minims.

### Improvisation

Improvisation is often viewed as something rather daunting, which only experienced musicians should attempt, but we believe that if children are introduced to it from the very start of their learning, they will take to it without difficulty and not be worried when they encounter it later in their musical careers. We want to produce fully rounded musicians who are equally comfortable playing with notation or without.

The chord structure is E minor for 2 bars, then D major for 2 bars, making repeating 4 bar phrases. Follow the prompts in the video.

## **The B A G Challenge**

This is the first time that repeat signs are encountered within a piece. Point out the jump in pitch which occurs in the final 2 notes.

## **The E D C Challenge**

This is the first time that repeat signs are encountered within a piece. Point out the jump in pitch which occurs in the final 2 notes.

## **New Notes**

Descants will learn C, while trebles learn F. The pause mark over the last bar shows that the final note is held on slightly longer.

## **Coming Alive**

This exercise allows the children to use the notes they have just learned, but also focuses on duration - they will need to watch out for the short notes and rests on the final section.

## **Jazz Waltz**

This exercise is for introducing ties. There are whole bar rests in the middle of the piece. In the tutti version, the trebles and descants sometimes play at different times.

## **Magic Moments**

This is the most challenging piece so far, with leaps of a 4th in the descant part and a 3rd in the treble part. Ties also feature in the 2nd half, making the tune syncopated, although we don't recommend using that term yet.

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## TEACHERS' NOTES – LEVEL 3

### New Notes

The descants learn E, while the trebles learn A. From here onwards, the children will be holding their recorders with their right hands in the middle, rather than at the bottom.

### Rowing Song

Before attempting to play it, the children should learn to sing the song, moving their hands up or down as the pitch rises or falls. They will also enjoy singing it while holding their recorders like oars, and rocking backwards and forwards as if they are rowing in time with the music.

For this tune we have only provided the note names, so that any children who are struggling with notation can play it more easily and have their confidence boosted.

### Musical Elements – Duration & Structure

Duration - listen to the backing track and then join in with the rhythmic notation names (provided for the first 2 lines only). Play the video again, using just voices, then voices and clapping.

Structure - this exercise can also be done as a round.

### Fresh Start

Listen to the backing track and sing the pitch names and say the rhythms, before attempting to play the tune. The trebles will find it difficult moving from A to D, and this may be worth practising in isolation. Each phrase is repeated, so half the class could play at a time.

## **On The Beach**

This is the first tune to use quavers (half beat notes). The structure is ternary form (3 sections, with the last section the same as the first) and there is a *rallentando* (slowing down) at the end, although this is not shown in the notation yet.

## **Gee Whiz**

This exercise is for introducing 1st and 2nd time bars, as well as ties with quavers. In the tutti version of the tune, the descants and trebles play independent rhythms in the last line.

## **New Notes**

Descants learn high D while trebles learn high G.

## **Sung Exercise**

This is a different type of exercise, in which the children start by saying the rhythm values (revising two, ta and te) and then sing the pitch. The tune can then be played. The quavers are fast and will provide a challenge – remember that you have the option of slowing the tempo via the gear wheel icon in the bottom right corner of the video.

## **Improvisation**

The boxes of notes are colour coded for descant and treble. As always, the class should listen to the track before starting to play, and consider what kind of feel it has – eg. slow/gentle. Each child should choose an appropriately coloured box and play the notes it contains in an order of their choosing.

## **Eastern Garden**

This tune is intended to be played as a round. Try out different entry points and get the children to vote on which ones work and which ones don't. The backing tracks are 32 bars long, but the recorder part drops out after 10 bars.

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## TEACHERS' NOTES – LEVEL 4

*From this point in the course onwards, we stop using the BSL finger signing for new notes. This is because we're now introducing sharp and flat notes, which would be more complicated to sign, so the benefit disappears.*

### **New Notes**

The descants learn low D, while trebles learn low G.

### **Song – London's Burning**

This well known round is a favourite recorder tune. It should be expected that children will eventually learn this by rote and play it as a round, without the backing track.

### **Hard Times**

Remind the children to cover the holes and blow gently in order to get the low notes. In the tutti version, the descant and trebles play in unison.

### **Improvisation**

This exercise is for introducing the concept of a pentatonic scale – in this case, C D E G A. The backing track is the descant version of Coming Alive, from Level 2.

### **Samba Extra**

This is a development of the tune used in Level 1. The first part features the tied note rhythm, the second part features the new low note, and the third part is a simpler one, with just 2 notes, for any beginners who may have joined the class since Level 1.



## On The Bright Side

We recommend starting with the 2<sup>nd</sup> part, as this only features 3 notes and is intended for any less experienced players.

### New Notes

Descants learn F#, while trebles learn B.

## Song – Twinkle Twinkle

As this song is so well known, there is no vocal guide and the backing track only includes the recorder part for the first verse. When the children can play the tune confidently, it can be played as a round. In this instance, we have provided notation as well as the note names above the words, so you can choose which way you would like to approach the song.

You could talk about the structure – the first and last lines have the same tune (ternary form). You might also see this described as A–B–A structure.

### Drift Away

Parts 1 and 3 use the new notes, while part 2 is for less experienced players.

### Over To You

Use this tune to show how this:



Can also be written as:



This exercise introduces *Fine* (Italian for 'end') and *Da Capo al Fine* (Italian for 'go back to the beginning and play to the end'). The structure is ternary form (A-B-A) again.

### In The Spotlight

The descants use the new note F#, and a dotted crotchet is used in both treble and descant parts.

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## TEACHERS' NOTES – LEVEL 5

### New Notes

Descants learn low C and F, while trebles learn F and Bb. These new, low notes are tricky to play and need very gentle blowing plus careful fingering, so the piece starts with a higher note and then steps down to the lower ones.

### Scales

This exercise can be used to introduce the concept of octaves if you have not mentioned it before. In addition to the exercises in the video, the jump from the lowest note to the octave above should be practised.

In the video, the scales are played through 3 times, with shorter duration notes each time.

### Song – Drunken Sailor

Less experienced pupils can play the beginning of each phrase, with the majority playing the whole tune. The difficult areas are the notes at the end of each line.

### Up & Down the Stairs

This is an exercise in playing the scales from the notation, but taking it in small steps at first. A key signature is used for the first time in the treble version. The tutti version is an opportunity for sight reading.

### Mo's Waltz

A key signature is used for the first time in the descant version, although there is no Bb in the part. There is no lead line on the repeat. The tutti track has no lead or harmony lines.

## **New Notes**

All the notes which have been taught so far are written out so that the new notes can be seen in context. This is an opportunity to talk about accidentals (sharps, flats and natural signs).

## **Scales**

The descants play D harmonic minor, while the trebles play G harmonic minor.

## **Song – Frère Jacques**

This well-known song is an opportunity to talk about structure and the use of repetition. The song plays through 3 times, with a few extra bars at the end so that it can be used as a round.

## **Meadows**

Remind the children about the key signature and accidentals. The piece plays twice.

## **Twelve Bars**

This piece will take time to master. It could be used as part of a wider project about blues or swing.

Tune - the quavers are played swung rather than straight. Point out the dotted notes and ties.

Bass line - this is a typical bass line, but adapted for the range of the instrument. Note the key signature and accidentals.

## **Brahms Lullaby**

This beautiful melody by Brahms changes key in the middle to allow both the descants and trebles a turn at playing the tune and the harmony. Watch out for the descants having 2 bars rest at the beginning of the second section where the trebles play on their own.

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## TEACHERS' NOTES – LEVEL 6

### New Notes

The descants will learn high E and F, while the trebles learn high A and Bb. The difficulty is that for all these notes the thumb has to 'pinch' the back hole of the recorder, covering only half of it. The exercise here involves playing octaves and moving the thumb and little finger correctly.

### Scales

If you have not mentioned slurring and tonguing yet, this would be a good time to do so. Scales at Grade 1 level should always be slurred and tongued.

In the video, the scales are played through 3 times, as in Level 5.

### My Bonny

This tune is best sung in the lower key (treble version). It reappears in Level 7 as a tutti arrangement in the key of C.

Talk about pitch, and the need to play the notes in the correct octave for the tune to work. Of course, simply writing the note names above the words can't adequately convey this, so compare the top video with the one underneath (featuring music notation) to make the point.

Compound time (3 divisions to each beat) can be mentioned now. There are more opportunities to talk about the differences between simple and compound time later in this level.

### Confidence

The backing track plays the melody line of recorders 1, 2 and 3 in sequence. Unusually, line 1 is the easiest and line 3 the hardest.

## **Mindfulness**

The introduction is included in the notation. The main tune features in treble part 1, with all other parts starting a bar later. Watch out for the accidentals and the dotted crotchets.

## **Arpeggios**

The illustration shows how the notes of an arpeggio are found within a scale. The videos are opportunities to practise them along with the scales which have been encountered earlier in the course.

## **Song – 3 Blind Mice**

As previously, the students will need to work out the correct octave to play the notes in. Notation is not provided here, so this becomes a listening exercise. However, full notation, in 3 different keys is available when the song is revisited at the end of the level.

The treble key is lower and therefore easier to sing. Compound time can be highlighted again.

## **Compound Time & Simple Time**

The tunes are almost identical in the simple time and compound time exercises, and listening to one and then the other may be helpful. In both cases there are 6 quavers in each bar, but they are grouped differently and have different time signatures. The exercises are designed to help children read, play and understand the differences. The first half is in the C major and the second half is in F major.

### 3 Blind Mice

**Version in F** - This is the key the descants played in the sung version earlier in this level, but will be new to trebles. This arrangement uses notation instead of note names, and allows descants and trebles to play in unison. It can be played together and as a round.

**Version in Bb** - This is the key the trebles played in earlier in this level, but will be new to the descants. This arrangement uses notation instead of note names. The descant part is more restricted because of the key. It could be used as a sight reading exercise.

**Version in D** - This key is provided so that string instruments can play as well, with open notes of D and A.

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## TEACHERS' NOTES – LEVEL 7

*All these tunes are arranged with the easiest notes in the 3<sup>rd</sup> part. Part 2 has more complex rhythms and range, and the 1<sup>st</sup> part is the most challenging.*

*The backing tracks are the same ones used earlier in the course, so they don't feature any of these new parts.*

### **Getting Started – Extra (Level 1 tune)**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> part consists of the original Level 1 tune, the 2<sup>nd</sup> part has a range of notes with a simple rhythm, and the 1<sup>st</sup> part has both a range of notes and a more complex rhythm.

### **Feeling Good – Extra (Level 1 tune)**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> parts have the same rhythm, but the 2<sup>nd</sup> part has a wider range of notes. The 1<sup>st</sup> part also has a wider range of notes and more complex rhythms.

### **Coming Alive – Extra (Level 2 tune)**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> parts have the same rhythm, but the 2<sup>nd</sup> plays lower notes. The 1<sup>st</sup> part has more complex rhythms, including tied notes.

### **Mary had a Little Lamb – Extra (Level 2 tune)**

This starts in G major with the tune in the 3<sup>rd</sup> descant part and, using the low notes, it is also in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> parts for the treble recorders. The key changes to C major half way through, so that the trebles play the tune in their 3<sup>rd</sup> part. Most of the time, the parts play the same rhythm, so this would be good for practising sight reading pitch.

### **Jazz Waltz – Extra (Level 2 tune)**

All 3 parts play the same rhythm, so this is another good opportunity for sight reading practice of pitch, without the need to focus on rhythm as well.

### **On the Beach – Extra (Level 3 tune)**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> part plays the original tune. The 3<sup>rd</sup> part uses just 2 notes (Level 1 standard) while the 1<sup>st</sup> part plays notes from Level 5. All parts play the same rhythm. Watch out for the rallentando (slowing down) in the last 2 bars.

### **My Bonny – Extra (Level 6 tune)**

This piece is in compound time. It is arranged in C major, which means that the trebles will be playing in a different key to the one they used in Level 6. The tune is slightly different to accommodate the range of the instrument.