

I Love Recorder

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TEACHERS' NOTES

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Introduction

Welcome to the wonderful world of **I Love Recorder!**

I Love Recorder! is a recorder tutor with a difference: it is the first tutor to encompass the concept of *Simultaneous Learning*. This concept ensures each musical ingredient is really understood and continually *makes connections* through the various sections in each stage: introductory activities, pieces, aural, listening and *Your Turn*. This causes really thorough learning to take place, and teaches in such a way that pupils' mistakes and misunderstandings are few and far between.

Many first tutor books present material (which is often too complex or too fast moving) in such a way as to inhibit real understanding. Therefore the pacing of **I Love Recorder!** is deliberately slow. The emphasis is on understanding through three very important Rs:

RECOGNITION, REPETITION and RE-ENFORCEMENT

As teachers, we are all guilty, from time to time, of making assumptions; assuming, for example, that our pupils fully understand a concept when in fact they don't at all! **I Love Recorder!** helps pupils to understand each new idea thoroughly, as it is re-enforced through the different activities of each stage.

The rhythmic progression of the book is carefully paced to allow pupils a real understanding of pulse and note-values (something that many students find difficult). Thorough understanding means that rather than giving up, pupils are much more likely to continue to play the recorder beyond the initial stages, and therefore develop a lifelong love of music-making.

STAGE 1

There is so much to focus on at this stage! Where do we start...?

- The first challenge is in knowing the left hand from the right! Making the letter 'L' with the thumb and first finger of the left hand may have to be repeated quite a few times!
- Explain about using the fleshy pads of the fingers to cover the holes. I am often surprised how many of my smaller students have trouble covering the holes. I always ask them to examine their finger and thumb for the imprint of the tone hole after they have played their first B.
- Ensure that pupils don't put too much of the recorder in their mouths when playing.

Setting a pulse

- Pulse is a fundamental building block of music, so it is worth spending some time on this. Try asking pupils to find their own pulse and then tap it out aloud (I, and other pupils, often find it amusing that many claim to have no pulse and are therefore clinically dead at this point of the lesson!).
- Ask them which instrument in a pop group sets the pulse of the music. Suggest that the next time they are listening to their favourite pop tune, they tap out the pulse and count 1-2-3-4 along with it. (How many pop tunes do you know that haven't got 4 beats in a bar?! Jethro Tull's *Living in the Past* has 5, since you ask...!)
- It may be necessary to introduce some form of *crowd control* If you are in charge of a hoard of small, bellowing and enthusiastic recorder players, you may like to clap the following rhythm:



The idea is that when pupils hear this rhythm, they immediately put down their weapons and clap the rhythm back. (In fact it could well become a very useful call-to-attention at any time during lessons.)

- Note the titles of the pieces in Stage1:

B Chilled

B Groovy

B Calm

This has become a bit of a mantra for my recorder teaching! Get into the habit of asking pupils what the piece made them feel, or how they might describe the mood.

Always get pupils to count, clap the pulse of each piece and hear the notes in their heads before playing the pieces.

- The *Aural* component of this stage is self-explanatory. You may like to pause the CD between each example. Add more exercises of your own or get the pupils to make up rhythms for *you* to clap back.
- The *Listening* is a piece from Playford's 'The Dancing Master'. You could explain that it was a really groovy tune of its time!
- *Your Turn*: Perhaps make a display of the recorder drawings on a wall if possible.

STAGE 2

- I cannot stress enough the importance of articulation (tonguing), on any wind instrument. It is, to put it in simple terms, our means of communication.
- Here's a fun activity: ask pupils to talk to each other without using their tongues. (Yes it does sound like the proverbial Drunken Sailor, but it does prove the point!)
- Watch out for anyone who articulates by tonguing on the top of the recorder mouthpiece. This makes a popping sound and will inhibit fluent articulation as pupils develop.
- Try using the image of a bullseye in the mouth, above the back of the front teeth. The tongue should be aiming for this point.
- Count and Play can always become Clap and Play. In group work, you can have one half clapping as the others play and then swap over.
- Questions you might like to ask your students:
Who was William Tell?
What is a Hornpipe?

Remember to get pupils to hear each piece in their heads (internalise) before playing it.

- Again, the *Aural* component is straightforward here. To extend the idea, you could get your students to have conversations with each other using their recorder. If stuck for inspiration you might think of Sweep (of *Sooty and Sweep* fame) who was the master of non-verbal communication!
- The *Listening* is an arrangement of 'The Liberty Bell' by Sousa. Explain that this piece was originally written for a large orchestra, not a descant recorder!

STAGE 3

- Breathing, although such a basic, simple and necessary activity, can take considerable explanation. Explain that the air is the energy that drives the recorder. (I try not to let my students sound like the musical equivalent of a whoopee cushion i.e. don't let all the air explode into the recorder in one go. Of course they all have to try this one out, so have your earplugs at the ready!).
- Blowing a piece of tissue paper is also a good game to encourage a steady flow of air.
- Try to get your pupils to listen carefully to the quality of their sound right from the very start. Encourage them to become their own quality control manager. When playing long notes, make sure that the sound has the same intensity all the way through.
- The Counting exercises always highlight a particular rhythm from one of the pieces – always make these connections. When looking at the pieces for the first time, see whether pupils can spot where the counting exercise rhythm appears.
- Activity 3: Make sure the semibreve really does last the full four beats.
- You can start approaching the idea of musical style in this stage; would you play *Lazy lullaby* in the same way as you would play *The intrepid recorder player goes ghost-hunting*? How would they be different?
- *The intrepid recorder player goes ghost-hunting*: if you are feeling brave, you could ask your pupils to flutter tongue the long note – if they can roll their Rs, then they can flutter tongue! (We've left most of the sound effects out in the accompanied version, so that pupils can create their own. Perhaps you might even 'stage' a performance with sound-effects, actions and a narrator – in this case use the piano part which can be found on the enhanced CD.)
- The *Aural* is again straightforward. Ask the students to recall the pieces that they have played so far and discuss the various tempi.
- The *Listening* is 'Greensleeves to a Ground' by that famous composer, Anon.
- *Your turn*: Another display?

STAGE 4

- Activity 2: Repeated notes. If you are unlucky this can sound like a pneumatic drill going off at four in the morning! Do try to get your pupils to try and play the notes evenly and rhythmically. The idea behind this activity is to prevent students taking a breath on every single note.
- So why is a treble clef so called? In old music, occasionally there would be a third part added to the usual tenor and alto voices and this third part – the highest – was called the treble. The treble is thus the clef for high notes.

- You could refer to B as 'Belly Button B' as it lives on the middle line.
- Always keep a running check on posture.
- *Aural*: You could also get pupils to sing high and low notes or give more examples on a keyboard if you wish. Pause the CD between examples.
- The *Listening* is from **Zoo Time** for two recorders by Paul Harris (published by Queen's Temple Publications).

STAGE 5

- At last, we play another note! Can pupils keep the finger on for B when they add the A finger? Refer back to the 'fleshy pads' of the fingers, and issue a reminder not to let any air escape.
- Ask your pupils to keep their fingers close to the holes when they play from B to A. Less is more as far as finger movement is concerned. Experiment with how little the fingers need to move from one note to the other. Each note is a different finger shape.
- In Activities 2 and 3, get pupils to hear these in their heads before playing them. They could tap the pulse while hearing the notes internally. Always try to get pupils to hear exercises and pieces in their heads before they play them. You'll be amazed what a difference to their musicianship this can make.
- *A Piece of Cake* needs careful counting through the long notes. Try to get pupils to see this piece in two-bar phrases, i.e. each two-bar phrase is played as a unit like a phrase or sentence in spoken language.
- *Raptor Rag*: explain that a rag is a style of jazz piano music, characterized by its syncopated or 'ragged' rhythm (not something the raptor would wipe his nose on!) This piece is also in two-bar phrases.
- In *Lazy pony*, practise bars 11 – 13 carefully before playing the piece.
- *Aural*: Try 'spotting the mistake' using other pieces, to extend the activity if you wish.
- The *Listening* is another piece by good old Anon!

STAGE 6

- Activity 1 is about *Personality* – one of the very important **4 Ps** (see Paul Harris' book *Teaching Beginners* published by Faber Music). The others are **P**osture, **P**ulse and **P**honology (sound) and work on each of these elements should feature in every effective lesson.
- The recorder is a subtle instrument in its nuances. One of the hardest things to do is to make significant dynamic contrasts, which is why (with the exception of this exercise) we do not attempt dynamics in Book 1.
- You could ask your pupils to draw pictures for Semibreve Submarine and Minim Motorboat rests.
- Activity 2: make sure pupils play *through* the minim for the full two beats. A

- minim must not sound like a crotchet!
- Activity 3: again, look for minimal (pun not intended) finger movement.

Remember to get pupils to hear the rhythms and notes of each activity and piece in their heads before playing.

- *The bong bong blues*: make sure those minims are played for fully two beats each (hence the title!).
- *Aural*: ask your pupils about the pieces they have already played: which were happy, which were sad? And don't forget to replay pieces from former stages so that pupils can build up a repertoire.
- The *Listening* is the Giga from the last movement of the Recorder Sonata in F major by Handel.

STAGE 7

- Watch for leaking fingers, especially those students with weenie fingers, when playing G.
- Activity 2: Words to rhythms always help – try 'Jingle Bells' or 'Mash for Tea'.
- Activity 3: Say and Play – finger the notes and say them out loud before playing them. Time how many seconds it takes them to say the notes out loud and then to play them. Does their score improve?
- Watch for evenness of movement on the wider intervals. Do the fingers move exactly together between G and B?
- *Winter trees*: ask pupils how many Gs there are in the piece. Say the notes, then play them. You may have to explain what 'Bleakly' means.
- *Tiny tango*: What is a Tango? Where does it come from? Pupils could clap the tango rhythm (left hand on the piano) along with the accompaniment.
- *Clara's lullaby*: Look for the repeating note and rhythm patterns when you do 'say and play'. How many times does the opening bar repeat?
- *Aural*: Some students may find this easier to do than others. Practise singing the note at the start of each example. Pause the CD after the first 'can you play a G?' to give time for pupils to play. And again pause after each example. Make up some more similar exercises. Get pupils to make up examples for other pupils to answer.
- *Listening*: This is part of the 3rd movement from Telemann's Sonatina in A minor.
- *Your Turn*: Prepare this carefully. Perhaps suggest a four-bar piece with the same shapes that Clara has used. Ask questions: should you begin and end on the same note like Clara (etc)? Make sure they give their pieces a title. Perhaps the next lesson could be based around performing and listening to pupils' compositions.

STAGE 8

- To play C, ask students to first play A and then lift the 1st finger. You can have fun making 'seagull' noises playing from C-A.
- Activity 2: words to fit the rhythm: 'Big Biscuit'.
- Activity 3: Hear these exercises in the head first then do some silent finger practice as some pupils (especially in exercise 2) might have problems swapping the fingers over from B-C. Again, encourage less finger movement.
- *B in the C*: Count the rests very carefully at the beginning. What can pupils notice about the patterns in this piece? Perhaps make up a short antiphonal piece (splitting the group/class in half) where each group 'bats' the pattern to the other like a game of tennis.
- *Pavane*: What is a Pavane? How will that affect the way that you play the piece?
- *Aural*: Make up more similar exercises. As usual, pause between examples. Get pupils to make up exercises for *you* to repeat!
- *Listening*: This is 'The Marvel of Peru' from *Autumn* from the Seasons by James Oswald. Oswald was a Scottish Baroque composer and Dancing Master. (The 'Marvel of Peru' is apparently a flower.)

STAGE 9

- Activity 1: I always refer to staccato as 'pop the note'. Use the *bullseye* idea for tonguing, but this time hit the very centre of the bullseye with the tongue to produce a crisp staccato.
- Activity 3: Again use silent practice and say and play.
- *Crackerjack*: Crackerjack is a very bouncy small pony belonging to my pupil Zoe. Play one, then two-bar call-and-response games using patterns from the piece before playing it. Can pupils spot the connection between the piece and the title?

Don't forget to ask pupils to hear the piece in their heads before playing – here's a good way to set the activity up: play a B, A and G; give the pulse and then tell pupils to hear the piece in their heads including the two introductory rest bars.

- *Tomato staccato*: Aim for even fingerwork on the larger intervals. More call-and-response games would be useful and fun.
- *Clown dance*: Some pupils have a tendency to play the minims the same length as the crotchets. To avoid this, remind them of Bong Bong in the *Bong bong blues* or get them to stamp their feet in time with the minims.
- *Aural*: Smooth and staccato, again you could go back over earlier pieces in the

book and decide which was which.

- *Listening*: This is the Elephant from *Carnival of the Animals* by Saint-Saens.
- *Your Turn*: This is the first time that pupils are invited to improvise. Improvising is fun and I've never met a young pupil who didn't enjoy it. It doesn't matter how long or short their improvisation is – it could be just three notes. But make sure it is played with a sense of pulse.

STAGE 10

- More often than not, D is for dire rather than delightful! If you can, try not to let your students blow this note too hard, as it can be extremely sharp. (If you have one of those tuning machines, you can demonstrate how easy it is for D to go off the radar.)
- Check **P**osture and hand position very carefully. Make sure that the left hand thumb doesn't come too far off the recorder and that the right hand thumb is in the correct position.
- Legato Tonguing: This is a vital skill for recorder players. Legato tonguing, when done properly, should sound like a bell tolling - the sound is continuous rich and warm. You can use either 'Doo' or 'Dhaa' to start the note. Going back to the *bullseye* idea, the tongue covers more of it when legato tonguing, and strokes the note rather than hits it.
- *Now the day is over*: There are four introductory beats here as the recorder part starts at the beginning (no piano introduction). Deciding on what articulation would be appropriate for a piece is a skill all recorder players have to develop. Play this piece to your students in different ways and get them to decide on which one is the most appropriate.
- *Happy-go-lucky*: say and play, clapping the rests whilst saying the notes out loud.
- *Aural*: This is a great exercise for pulse and concentration!
- *Listening*: This is a courante from Preatorious' *Terpsichore* of 1615. The *Terpsichore* was a collection of popular dances of the day (a bit like NOW 1615!). A courante was a lively dance and Terpsichore was the muse of dancing. She had eight sisters who were all muses of various idioms like comedy, poetry etc.

STAGE 11

- Activity 1: Check the right-hand position when playing E; some smaller pupils can find it quite a stretch. It is a good idea to legato tongue the E on first playing.
- Activity 2: If the students have difficulty grasping this rhythm, think: Rest – BEEP – BEEP – Rest.
- Activity 3: It is vital to keep the fingers close to the recorder when playing from

E-G.

- *Get down in four*: Watch the big interval leap from E-B. Use legato tonguing throughout. What is the character of the piece? Spot the repeating patterns, perhaps introducing the word 'Ostinato'. It begins with four introductory beats.
- *Recorder rag*: Say and play, clapping the rests whilst saying the notes aloud. Spot the Es. Count bars 18 and 19 carefully and make sure pupils play all the way through the notes – no short ones! Perhaps split the class in half with one half clapping the notes and the other half making a 'psss' sound for the rests ('psss' = a crotchet).
- *Aural*: A useful exercise for musical memory.
- *Listening*: This is another Renaissance dance, a Bourree (a lively French dance) by Caroubel. More Boogie on Down 1600's style!

STAGE 12

- Activity 1: Experiment with different articulations e.g. 'Doo-oo' or 'Dha-ah' to produce the perfect slur! One way to introduce slurs is to sing two separate notes and then sing a slur using the sounds mentioned above.
- Activity 2: Clap this exercise through before playing.
- Activity 3: Check for finger control in this exercise. Slurring obviously requires a greater synchronisation of finger movement.
- *Phoebe in her petticoat*: Spot the slurs. Practise each slurred pair on their own first. Think of this short piece as a question (bars 1 – 4) and an answer (bars 5 – 8). Who was Phoebe? Any ideas?
- *My blue recorder*: originally entitled 'Pickles pulls it orf', it was written with an Enid Blyton Famous 5 mystery story in mind. It needs to have an air of 'jolly japes' about it Make the staccato notes really spiky as if you are walking about on tiptoe – practise bars 9 and 17 and then bar 18 before playing the piece.
- *Aural*: Spot the difference – you could get your students to clap the short phrases back before they explain the differences. Pause between examples for discussion!
- *Listening*: This is The Swan from the famous *Carnival of the Animals* by Saint-Saens.

STAGE 13

- Activity 1: Small fingers might find low D a little difficult to start with. This is partly because the 3rd finger is a generally weak finger and also because it has to cover two holes. Flatten the 3rd finger over the holes rather than try to curve it. As with E, don't thwack the low D too hard with the tongue. Treat it gently!

- Activity 2: Some students might have difficulties keeping the other fingers in position over the holes when they first play from E to low D.
- *Andrew's aria*: Do an 'ingredients-spotting' exercise before you play this piece: How many low Ds do you have to play? Play some.
What is the highest note? Play it.
Which is the longest note? Play it.
How many different sorts of rests can you see?
How many slurs are there? Play some.
What does 'Mournful' mean and how will this affect the way you play the piece?
What is an Aria?
And who is Andrew? (He's a very large Great Dane!)
- *Japanese lanterns*: This is a slightly longer piece than we have played before. Play through the notes in the Pentatonic Scale before you start on this piece. (It's just below in the *Your Turn* section). As before, play spot the ingredients first:
In which bars can you find the Pentatonic Scale ascending, and descending?
How many times are the 1st and 2nd bars repeated in the piece?
What kind of tonguing do you think sounds the most effective to use?
Look carefully at the rests in bar 13. Clap then play.
How many slurs can you find?
Is this a happy or a sad piece?
- *Aural*: Naming the notes – you could always expand on this to include a wider range of notes. Get your pupils to play the notes back as well. Pause the CD before the answers are given!
- *Listening*: this piece is an improvisation using 'bird-like' ideas.

STAGE 14

- Activity 1: Check the right-hand position before making the perilous journey to F sharp!
- Activity 2: The up-beat. Encourage your pupils to give the crotchet more energy by perhaps by playing it staccato. Explain that the long note is the more important and stronger. Clap the rhythm through before playing it.
- Activity 3: Again reinforce the idea that the fingers need to be close to the holes. When playing F sharp – E – F sharp keeping the 2nd finger still could present a challenge.
- *Tallis' canon*: Explain what a canon is. The breath marks should encourage the idea of thinking in phrases (i.e. musical sentences). There are three introductory beats. If you are feeling particularly brave, you could attempt to play this as a round. Alternatively, you could sing the hymn....
- *Ollie the collie*: (Should this have been composed by Bach?). Count and clap this a few times to make sure of the counting before playing. Play call-and-response using staccato and different rhythm patterns (eg bar 5, bar 11 and bar

16.) Make sure that the staccato notes are really crisp at the start of the bar (eg bars, 5,6 and 7) to emphasise the syncopated rhythm.

- *The hamsters' hoedown*: This final offering is an extended one in comparison to the others. It's a bit of a 'staccato fest' so keep the crotchets crisp and bright. Some may find bars 11 and 32 a bit tricky so they may need some slow practice. What is a Hoedown?
- *Listening*: This piece is a round by Anon.
- *Aural*: The piece is *We'll C It Through* which might appear as an offering in Book 2!

Well that's all for Book 1 folks! Hope you've enjoyed it. See you in Book 2!

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