



# Unit 7

## Recorder Basics

**Now it's time for the soprano recorder! Learn how to breathe, hold the recorder, and play notes between low C and high D for simple melodies, such as "Hot Cross Buns" and "Au Claire de la Lune."**

**Authors**

Kirstin Anderson  
Richard Mannoia

**Contributing Editors**

James Blachly  
Sue Landis  
Audrey Sherer  
Marte Siebenhar  
Nina Stern

**Design**

David Silva

**Illustration**

Sophie Hogarth

**Associate**

**Managing Editor**  
Lora Dunn

**Audio Production**

Leszek Wojcik

© 2009 The Carnegie Hall Corporation. All rights reserved.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

"A Simple Melody," music and lyrics by Nick Scarim, © 2000 Nick Scarim, © 2008 Carnegie Hall. Performed by Sue Landis and Michael Mizrahi.

"Tideo," traditional American song. Performed by Sue Landis and Shane Schag.

"De Colores," traditional Mexican song. Performed by Sue Landis and Shane Schag.

"Ode to Joy" by Ludwig van Beethoven. Adapted by John Whitney. Performed by Sue Landis and Shane Schag.

"Au Claire de la lune" by Claude Debussy. Arranged by Richard Mannoia. Performed by Sue Landis.

"Hot Cross Buns," traditional American song. Performed by Sue Landis.

All songs © © 2009 Carnegie Hall, except where noted.

LinkUP! is made possible through the generous annual support of The Marie Baier Foundation, Wachovia, The Rose M. Badgeley Residuary Charitable Trust, The Seth Sprague Educational and Charitable Foundation, and The Barker Welfare Foundation.

# Unit 7: Recorder Basics

**Elvis:** I don't know about you, Violet, but I am ready to play the recorder.

**Violet:** Hey, did you know that there are many different types of recorders? There's a whole family of them!

**Composer:** Recorders are in the woodwind family, but because there are so many sizes of recorders, each one with its own range of notes and its own name, we can group them in a family of their own, the recorder family.



**Violet:** We are learning how to play one instrument from this family—the soprano recorder.

**Elvis:** Soprano recorder? Does that mean that it can play high pitches, just like the soprano voice can sing high pitches?

**Composer:** That's right, Elvis. A family, or consort, of recorders is like a chorus of instruments. Each type of recorder in the family plays notes within a certain range, and when you put them together like a chorus, they can cover a huge span of notes, from the highest to the lowest.



**soprano**  
high voice



**alto**  
middle-high voice



**tenor**  
middle-low voice



**bass**  
low voice

**Elvis:** Very cool! What kind of music can be played on recorders?

**Composer:** Lots of composers including J. S. Bach wrote pieces for recorder during the Baroque music period, which began over 300 years ago. Let's listen to an example of Baroque music.



**listen to** Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 by Bach

(Examples of this recommended work are available for download from your favorite online music retailer.)

**Elvis:** That's a neat sound. Have recorders been used in any other kind of music?



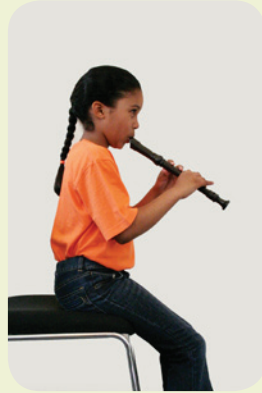
**Composer:** Sure, they've been used in popular, folk, new age, and world music, just to name a few. Jazz artist Keith Jarrett, singers Billy Joel and Bruce Springsteen, and the band The Beatles, have all used the recorder in their music.

**Violet:** Cool, I love Billy Joel. And now we get to play the recorder, too! How do we start?

**Composer:** First, good musicians need to be experts at following directions. Let me show you two positions:



**rest position**



**playing position**

**Composer:** Next, it's important to sit up tall and toward the edge of your seat when you're playing the recorder so you can take good, full breaths.

**Violet:** Like when we sing!

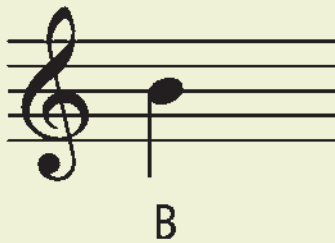
**Composer:** Right! Now that you're sitting up tall, pretend you're blowing out some birthday candles on a cake. Would you blow a lot of fast air out of your mouth?

**Violet:** Of course! I want all those candles to go out.

**Composer:** Right. But when you play the recorder, you're not blowing out birthday candles. If you use that much air when you play your recorder, it will squeak! Instead, pretend that you are blowing gently on a single candle flame so that it flickers back and forth, but doesn't go out. Try it! Another way to check your air is to put your hand a few inches in front of your lips as you blow—for the recorder, you want to feel **slow, gentle** air, **not** a ton of **fast** air like that birthday breath.

**Elvis:** Now my breath comes out slowly and steadily.

**Composer:** Great! Now let's see how our breathing works on the recorder. We'll start by playing the note B. But first, **make sure your left hand is on top** each time you play. Your fingers should be curved and relaxed.



Are you using the right **speed** of air to play the recorder? To check, blow very gently on your palm, like you're trying to melt a snowflake. Then pucker your lips to feel the air come out in a steady stream.



When you need to separate notes, you can pretend you're whispering the sound "doo." Your tongue will gently touch the roof of your mouth. Now, try playing B a few times. Good! Now listen to what I play and repeat.



listen to **Track 35**



# Ciino's checklist

For Easy Recorder Playing



**1. Is your left hand on top?**



**2. Which finger holes need to be covered for the note you want to play?**

**3. Are those finger holes completely sealed?  
Remember to press firmly!**



**4. Are your teeth covered lightly with your lips?**

**5. Is your air stream cool, gentle, and steady?**



**6. Are you separating notes by having your tongue gently touch the roof of your mouth or the tip of the recorder?**

Please note that the photos above show the fingering for low D.



**Composer:** Excellent job! Now, let's read some rhythms on the note B. We're going to play the rhythm on the recorder. So now we have a **Four-Step Process** for playing the recorder, which looks like this:



**1. Clap** and **say** the rhythm.



**2. Speak** the names of the notes.



**3. Sing** the names of the notes.



**4. Play** the notes, with the correct rhythm, on the recorder.

Now let's use the Four-Step Process to read the following rhythms. Remember to check off each step with your pencil as you go through the examples.



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



listen to **Track 36**



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



listen to **Track 37**



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



listen to **Track 38**



Are you remembering to sit up tall when you play the recorder? It makes a big difference!

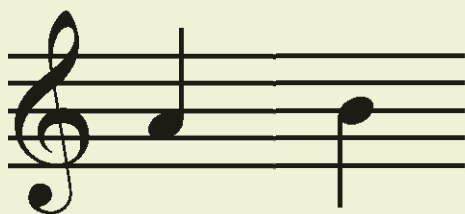


**Composer:** Great job! Let's learn another note. This one is A.



A

It's lower than B on the staff, so it has a lower pitch.



A

B

Now repeat what I play on the pitch A.



listen to **Track 39**

**Composer:** Great! You're ready to play the pieces on the next two pages. Don't forget the ...

**Elvis:** I know—the Four-Step Process!

Remember to use my **Checklist for Easy Recorder Playing**. You can use it every time you learn a new note!





\_\_\_\_\_



listen to **Track 40**



\_\_\_\_\_



listen to **Track 41**




\_\_\_\_\_




listen to **Track 42**

**Composer:** Now, let's play some rhythms using both A and B.




 listen to **Track 43**



 listen to **Track 44**



 listen to **Track 45**

# listening challenge

Now that you can play pitches A and B on your recorder, let's see how well you can hear the difference between them.



1. Pick a partner.
2. Have your partner close his or her eyes.
3. Play a four-beat pattern on your recorder using notes A and B.
4. See if your partner can repeat the pattern you played.
5. If your partner gets it right, switch and see if you can do it!

Try practicing first as a class with your teacher.

**Composer:** Are you ready for a new pitch?

**Violet:** Yes! What's next?

**Composer:** The next one is G.







listen to **Track 49**

## recorder reference



B



A



G

**Composer:** Great job! Let's try one more challenge. Remember learning about eighth notes?

**Elvis:** Sure, an eighth note gets half a beat. So two eighth notes equal a quarter note.

**Composer:** That's right! Let's play some eighth notes. But before that, let's write in the counts and then clap the rhythms.





\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



listen to **Track 50**

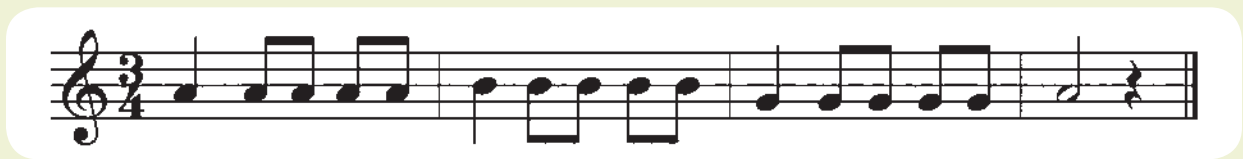


\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



listen to **Track 51**

**Composer:** Now you're ready to play your first real songs. The first is called "Hot Cross Buns" and we'll be using the song to practice the three notes we know so far on the recorder.



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

Hot cross buns Hot cross buns one a pen-ny two a pen-ny Hot cross buns

Hot cross buns Hot cross buns one a pen - two a pen-ny Hot cross buns



listen to **Track 52**

**Violet:** It's fun to play a real song! Is there another song you can teach us?

**Composer:** Sure! Let's learn a French song called "Au Claire de la lune," or what I call "Moonlight," for short.



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

Au Claire de la lune

Au Claire de la lune



listen to **Track 53**

# reflective writing

Playing an instrument takes concentration because you need to think about so many things at once! Write down three things that you must think about when you play the recorder.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Composer:** You guys are getting really good at playing the recorder. How about trying this?



listen to **Track 54**

**Elvis:** Hey, I've heard this before! It's the recorder part for "A Simple Melody" by Nick Scarim.

**Composer:** You're right! And now you've learned how to play the first part of it on your recorder. Now, let's learn the next part and use the Four-Step Process to play it.



listen to **Track 55**

You've got it! Now, let's put all four phrases together to form the entire piece. A **phrase** is a musical idea with a specific contour, or shape, and duration.



# A Simple Melody

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of three systems, each with two staves. The first system is labeled 'A' and contains two staves of music. The second system is labeled 'B' and also contains two staves. The third system is labeled 'A' and contains two staves. The melody is simple, using quarter and eighth notes. The first system (A) starts with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter rest. The second system (B) starts with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter rest. The third system (A) starts with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter rest. The final staff of the third system ends with a double bar line.



listen to **Track 56**

**Composer:** Great job! You're on your way to being important players in the LinkUP! orchestra.



## How do we know we're ready for new notes?

Good musicians always check their work and try to do their very best. After the class plays a song, fill out this chart:

How did I do?	How did we do?
What can I do better?	What can we do better?

### Some things you can think about:

OK    Needs Work

- |                          |                          |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Did I get the rhythms right?                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are my fingers moving to the correct notes? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | How is my air flow? Am I squeaking?         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | How is my posture?                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is my left hand on top?                     |



## When the whole class is playing

OK Needs Work

Are we all following directions when the teacher says “rest,” “ready,” and “playing position”?

Do we all start and stop together?

Are we playing with a soft and smooth sound?

**Elvis:** Can you teach us some more notes?

**Composer:** Sure! Our next two notes are high C and D. Take a look at these pictures. Can you see the difference between the two?



high C



high D

**Violet:** Oh yeah ... the C and D look almost the same, but for D, you take your thumb taken off. But wait! Won't my recorder fall if I'm not using my left thumb?

**Composer:** Good question. The recorder will be balanced in your mouth, and, don't forget, with your right thumb.

**Elvis:** But where does the right thumb go?

**Composer:** Another good question! Count each hole on the front of your recorder, starting at the top. Between the fourth and fifth holes down, there is a space. Place your right thumb on the back of the recorder, behind that space. You'll be all set to learn some low notes!

Now try these new versions of "Hot Cross Buns" and "Moonlight." The rhythms and patterns are the same, but the notes sound much different. They sound like another mood altogether.



Hot cross buns Hot cross buns one a pen-ny two a pen-ny Hot cross buns

Hot cross buns Hot cross buns one a pen-ny two a pen-ny Hot cross buns



listen to **Track 57**

**Elvis:** Can we try an experiment and play the two "Hot Cross Buns" versions at the same time?

**Composer:** Wow, Elvis, you're thinking like a composer! Yes, we can! When we put those two parts together, we will create harmony, the beautiful blending of two notes at the same time.



\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

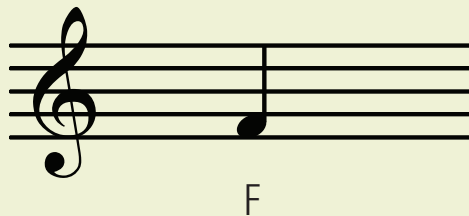
\_\_\_\_\_



listen to **Track 58**

**Violet:** Okay, can we learn a note lower than G now?

**Composer:** Sure. One note lower than G is F, which looks like this:



**Elvis:** So can you make us versions of “Hot Cross Buns” and “Moonlight” using F?

**Composer:** My pleasure! Remember—same rhythms and patterns, just starting on different notes.



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

Hot cross buns Hot cross buns one a pen-ny two a pen-ny Hot cross buns

Hot cross buns Hot cross buns one a pen-ny two a pen-ny Hot cross buns



listen to **Track 59**



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

Hot cross buns Hot cross buns one a pen-ny two a pen-ny Hot cross buns

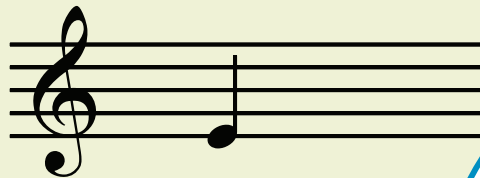
Hot cross buns Hot cross buns one a pen-ny two a pen-ny Hot cross buns



listen to **Track 60**

**Violet:** I love these lower notes! They're so smooth and soft. How low can I play on the recorder?

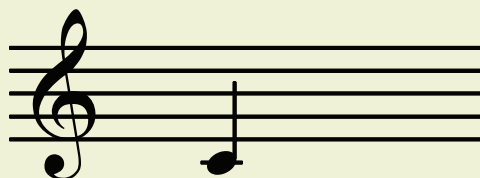
**Composer:** Here are the final and lowest notes of the recorder: low E, low D, and low C. These will take some extra practice to get your fingers covering all the holes completely and barely blowing any air at all.



low E



low D



low C

Remember, your right thumb should be behind the space between the fourth and fifth holes down from the top. Ask your teacher to put a sticker there to help you find this spot!



And here the lowest versions of "Hot Cross Buns" and "Moonlight," using E, low D, and low C.



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

Hot cross buns Hot cross buns one a pen-ny two a pen-ny Hot cross buns

Hot cross buns Hot cross buns one a pen-ny two a pen-ny Hot cross buns



listen to **Track 61**



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



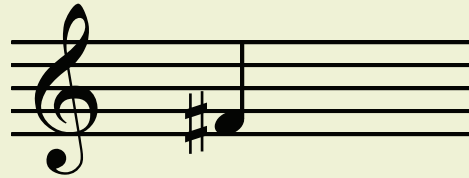
listen to **Track 62**



**Composer:** Our very final note on the recorder is F#. When we see the symbol # after a note, it means “sharp,” so we call the note “F sharp.” Look at the example below:



Here's how it looks on the staff.



F sharp

Notice how the # symbol comes before the note when it's on the staff.



Try these versions of “Hot Cross Buns” and “Au Claire de la Lune” that use F#.



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



listen to **Track 63**



listen to **Track 64**

**Composer:** If you've really mastered these low notes, you can play part two of "A Simple Melody." Here's the first section:




listen to **Track 65**

And the second section:



listen to **Track 66**



Here's how it looks all together:  listen to **Track 67**



The image displays eight staves of musical notation, arranged in two groups of four. Each staff is in the treble clef, 4/4 time signature, and key of G major (one sharp). The first four staves show a single melodic line with various rhythmic patterns, including quarter notes, eighth notes, and quarter rests. The last four staves show a second melodic line, which is a different variation of the first line, also using quarter notes, eighth notes, and quarter rests. The notation is clear and easy to read, suitable for a music textbook.

**Elvis:** And parts one and two of “A Simple Melody” can be played together to make ... **harmony!** Good job and keep practicing!