

Walter van Hauwe

The Modern Recorder Player

Volume 1

ED 12150
ISMN 979-0-2201-1382-6

Volume 2
ED 12270
Volume 3
ED 12361

PREVIEW
Low Resolution

PREVIEW
Low Resolution

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means including photocopying without permission in writing from the publishers

Photographs by Maarten Brinkgreve
Drawings by Mirjam Boelaars

PREVIEW
Low Resolution

Contents

Introduction	4
Part I: How to Hold the Recorder	10
1. The Right Hand	11
2. The Left Hand	12
3. The Lips	17
4. The Fair Distribution of the Weight	18
Part II: How to Move the Fingers	22
1. The Movement Itself	22
2. The Right Hand	23
3. The Left Hand	25
4. The "Half-holes"	26
5. The Left Thumb	29
6. Which Fingers to What	30
7. Table of Fingers	31
8. Exploring Combinations of Fingers	32
Part III: Breathing	38
1. Inhalation	39
2. Exhalation	47
3. How to Hold the Recorder	48
4. Breathing Exercises	54
5. The Tongue	54
6. The Tongue of the Tongue with Single <i>T</i> and <i>D</i>	55
7. The Tongue of the Tongue with <i>T</i> and <i>D</i>	56
8. Tonguing with More than Two Syllables	59
9. Potato-Potato-Potato	66
10. The Consonants <i>K</i> and <i>G</i>	70

To my wife, Tonneke

With special thanks to:

*Kees Boeke, for his advice,
Shimpei Matsuoka, for the idea,
Mirjam Boelaars, for the drawings,
Maarten Brinkgreve, for the photographs,
all my students, for their problems.*

PREVIEW
Low Resolution

Introduction

In the nineteenth century a number of musical instruments, such as the piano and the flute, were given further opportunities for development in sound and technical qualities, not the least through the collaboration between soloists and composers.

The recorder lacks a comparable tradition because it disappeared about 150 years after its disappearance around 1750. It was first brought back to England at the end of the 19th century. In 1901, at a concert in London, the recorder actually blocked up the thumb hole — assumed to be a mistake by mistake! — illustrates the long way the recorder still has to go before it can at least be taken seriously again.

Later, by the 1950s, the recorder had become an important instrument in music education, and had become a popular instrument in the home. It was also beginning to move towards professional status in Switzerland and Germany. The standard of professional performance of the instrument improved steadily, and at the same time the recorder was being used in a way that was carried out by 'early music' players.

In recent times, the recorder has been played by soloists, Hans Martin Linde (Switzerland) and Frans Brüggen (Holland), and a steady influence on the constantly improving standard of performance. As we have seen, other instruments have been playing a similar role over the centuries up to the present time, with the result that the recorder has always been playing music that makes almost no concessions to the physical limitations of these instruments. It is interesting that it should be at this moment in musical history that the recorder should appear to have started its development, as if nothing had changed over

the centuries. The recorder composer-soloists, Hans Martin Linde and Frans Brüggen, have made their own contribution to the recorder music, and famous composers such as Berio, Ligeti and Xenakis have written their well-known pieces for Frans Brüggen.

At the discovery of new techniques, probably not known in the sixteenth century, will influence the playing and interpreting of early music, is not yet clear, but I am sure that the effect of the new developments will be far in the future.

Inevitably, a few questions arise:

Is the recorder an old instrument in its renaissance, or can we speak of two types of recorders, a traditional and a modern? To what extent is it possible to play old music on a modern instrument, given that we also play modern music on a historical type of recorder? What is more relevant: the feelings and passions of the old composers, the often puritanical interpretation of our musicologists, or our conditioning as twentieth-century musicians? Obviously there can be no doubt about the necessity to discuss these issues, but in the meantime, I would like to suggest that we learn to play the recorder as well as possible, using both the knowledge derived from old literature and our own discoveries.

Basic Technique

We recorder players and teachers all know them: the colleagues with stiff fingers, hands like paws, acute tension in arms and neck, and their invisible lips pressed tightly inwards. That is the way they learned to play the recorder, or to be more accurate, that is the position they arrived at by themselves through lack of proper guidance.

All recorder methods were, and many still are, based on getting a certain result with a short explanation about the position of the hands, the thumb-hole, the opening of holes 6 and 7 half closed, some air, a tongue, and "hey presto", the desired sound will be produced. And that is what parents and grandpa are proud of, that the child they have paid for, they feel proud that after at the most a few weeks the children can return home with some tangible result. They start with the left hand, typically with the first finger and thumb (the thumb hole, treble); they don't go into the question of what the thumb hole is for, but they are helpful to the remaining fingers later on, for instance, when the thumb hole is half-opening the thumb hole. And the treble clef of the recorder is not a problem, starting usually with the a', (0123456789) they don't pay attention to the position of the right thumb. This is rather dangerous because if the thumb is not in the right place, the lowest note f' will not sound, but it may sound more or less a lucky accident when it does sound.

It is true that children who learn a few notes in a few weeks almost no time, and to be fair, why should they know better? The quality of the recorder is usually only a form of preparation for the next year. We often observe that, if the child wishes to continue, the recorder will either stay with the same teacher and method, or it will be given to a new teacher, making do with the more or less improved method, or (and this is really unlucky) address himself a certain amount of time to a professional teacher, who has to change everything, including the instrument, but the strongest of them.

The aim of this book is to give you a few volumes in the first place to tell you about the interpretation of an modern recorder. Instead, it will concentrate on the less obvious, the recorder playing, essentially the technique, and how it has evolved over the generations, about the proper training system for the professional player. I use the word 'professional' deliberately: it is not about teaching methods for violin players, even if meant for amateurs, but based on the expertise of professionals, and I see no reason why a recorder method should be based upon a similar idea.

The art of playing and performing is basically a composite of three kinds of skill:

- (a) the purely musical one: the personal "abstract" emotion
- (b) the technical one: the purely physical aspect
- (c) the so-called "musically-oriented" technique: how to transform a musical idea into the corresponding sound.

A performer, I think, will always try to communicate his very personal thoughts and feelings through his instrument or voice. For this, the first aspect, you need the knowledge of the third, which is impossible to achieve without the second. It is mainly about the second and third aspects of playing that I will write.

These writings are not intended only for pure amateurs: they are strongly addressed to their instructors, for whom it is important to know how to teach the recorder properly, so that children or amateurs who wish to develop their



abilities on the instrument more than "just for fun", don't have to start all over again later. And of course this material is intended also for anybody who can find something useful and helpful in it.

Beginning with the purely technical subjects, there are four basic sections:

1. How to hold the recorder — "balanced" playing
2. How to move the fingers — the relaxed "machine"
3. How to breathe — the sound
4. How to articulate — the "speaking"

Why this order?

Before the player can occupy his mind with the musical aspects, he first has to get all the basic 'equipment' under his belt. The four basic ingredients are shown in the four parts of this volume:

1. Knowing how to hold the instrument, it has to be held in a free and relaxed playing.
2. The fingers, in fact, have no voice of their own; the sound you produce, they are only the machinery, the "slaves".
3. Breathing is (a) a technical matter, the air you have to control, (b) a more artistic matter, the sound you want to produce.
4. The articulation, together with the technical aspects and special problems, is the "language" of speaking; the tongue literally makes your story comprehensible.

If you do not develop these four aspects, you are "speaking" from a very weak position. When your technical ability lags behind your musical progress, you will progress with certain technical demands, it can be very difficult. These are the reasons why this can kill off much of the player's enthusiasm. There is another reason for this specific order: with a slight technical background, the student can be too easily influenced by the teacher's words, instead of listening and creating his own.