

## The “Art of Technique” and the “Technique of Art”

“Advanced Recorder Technique” is intended for advanced alto recorder players who are seeking rigorous practise material for developing their instrumental and musical skills. It is a continuation of the two volumes of *Fun and Games with the Alto Recorder* (Schott Ed. 12703–12707). The elements of recorder technique covered in those volumes will continue to be developed here with particular emphasis on musical recorder playing. Modern playing techniques are not included; the focus is on learning techniques suitable for early- and high-baroque recorder music, bearing in mind that these, and above all the “technique of practising”, are also relevant for the realisation of modern recorder music.

The exercises included here correspond to the requirements of the recorder’s original literature and are intended mainly for the alto recorder. However, numerous recent editions of early baroque music arranged for soprano recorder, now an established part of the repertoire, have necessitated the serious treatment of this instrument too. A number of the exercises can therefore be played on the alto, but transposed for the soprano recorder.

In addition to inspiration, imagination and intuition, all forms of artistic expression depend upon the coming certain technical problems without which the translation of an idea into a visible, audible or tangible work of art would be impossible. Except in the techniques of the various art forms—such as dancing, ballet, painting, sculpture, music in singing, orulating and body language, acting, in other words the craftsmanship, so-called “art”, may be learned in a profession, to increase these intellectual and technical skills, it requires specific preparation for a long time and energy. Learning these skills is clearly worthwhile, while it is hard to do, but which should be a positive, joyful experience both artist and audience,

Regarding the recorder, and assuming a normal physical constitution, we can say that with knowledge and training the necessary practical skills can be developed to a certain level; this technique, however, means “craftsmanship”.

Recorder playing technique can be divided into four categories: finger and tongue technique—as breathing and sound production.

This volume deals with the first two categories, therefore makes specific demands that also reveal themselves not in the difficulty but in the process themselves, but rather in the task of working with the techniques—“practising”—not “practising” in order to come to a daily routine, but from the beginning using the techniques for expressive, musical playing. The book assumes not only technical control, but also practice but, for the musician, self-awareness, self-awareness, imagination, self-awareness—which should be present through exercises.

All the work does not habit as a primary skill, but the “faster” “higher” school of playing, but rather searches for the musical intent of the individual elements. We hope with “Advanced Recorder Technique” within the purely technical material the player will be able to discover and transform the musical parameters: sound; movement; tension/relaxation; stress; intent, and from that learn to deal creatively with the individual technical elements (e.g. arpeggios, trills etc.). Serious and continuous work developing creative technical skills as an essential part of the daily practise routine will, alongside regular music making, take about a year. All the exercises should then be part of the recorder player’s practise repertoire which can be memorised and recalled at any time.

Gudrun Heyens

## Glossary of Terms

### American English

Thirtysecond note  
Sixteenth note  
Eighth note  
Quarter note  
Half note  
Whole note  
Soprano recorder  
Alto recorder

### British English

Demisemiquaver  
Semiquaver  
Quaver  
Crotchet  
Minim  
Semibreve  
Descant recorder  
Treble recorder

# 1 Finger Movements

## Trilling Exercise

The musical score for the Trilling Exercise consists of seven staves of music in treble clef, 2/4 time. The first staff shows trills on G4, F4, and E4, with slurs and fingerings (T and S) indicated. The second staff continues the trills on D4, C4, and B3. The third staff continues on A3, G3, and F3. The fourth staff continues on E3, D3, and C3. The fifth staff continues on B2, A2, and G2. The sixth staff continues on F2, E2, and D2. The seventh staff continues on C2, B1, and A1. The score includes various trill patterns, some marked with an asterisk (\*) and some with double asterisks (\*\*). A large diagonal watermark 'PREVIEW LOW RESOLUTION' is overlaid on the score.

♩ = 1/2 note  
♩ = 1/4 note

© 2008 Alfred Music International, Mainz

\*1) Fingers should lie very lightly on the recorder when trilling in the low register so that the finger which is making the trill can glide easily back and forth over the hole. This movement is controlled via a small movement of the wrist.

\*\*1) Trills which do not speak when slurred may be practised using the tongue.

## Trilling

Trilling aids the warming-up process in general and the warming-up of your fingers in particular. However, the priority here is the analysis of individual finger movements between notes. The purpose of the exercise is not to play through the sequence of trills from start to finish but rather to select individual bars.

Do not use alternative fingerings as is common for the performance of trills (see the Fingering Chart) but focus carefully on training the precise co-ordination of several simultaneous finger movements.

- Begin neither with the very lowest nor the highest register; it is easier to start with the middle regis-

ter. Progress from there to the more complex finger combinations. Make a note of any particular problems and begin your next day's practice with these.

- Breathe in slowly and watch the hand movement slowly, only gradually increasing the tempo.
- Where the tempo is fast enough to make finger movements the movement of the particular finger begin again.
- Play from memory and observe your hand so that you can observe your hand and "get a feel" for your fingers.

Space for notes and your own exercises



**Tip:** For all exercises in which notes occur that can be played by covering the end-hole of the foot joint (F sharp, A<sup>3</sup>, E):

Find a good sitting position which does not restrict your breathing but which allows you to bring your instrument close to your knee or upper thigh. Raise

your foot on to the tips of your toes so that the bell-end of the recorder can be covered by your upper leg. This allows minimal and controlled movement of your upper body enabling the notes to be played without endangering your teeth.

Finger- and tongue-techniques are inextricably linked to one another. Training virtuosic finger work requires real awareness of tongue movement because for each note in a series (e.g. a scale) there must be a tongue stroke, with one exception: legato playing.

For this reason the following remarks concerning articulation have been deliberately given precedence over chapter 3, "Scales, Arpeggios, Chromatic Scales", which focuses on finger technique. Detailed instructions regarding tonguing for use with the scale exercises can be found in that chapter.

Articulation (the way in which syllables and words are spoken) gives our speech colour and expression and makes it more or less "interesting". A speaker with clear and distinct pronunciation, who varies the rise and fall of his voice, will be listened to much more attentively than one who expresses himself monotonously, without varying either pitch or volume or who mumbles indistinctly. Exactly the same is true for recorder playing: knowledge of musical phrasing and their distinct and lyrical presentation through use of articulation, dynamic, agogic stress and movement make the playing colourful, expressive, appealing and moving (i.e. emotional).

In order for articulation to be able to distinguish clearly between the content of the musical phrases, sophisticated tonguing techniques are required. The control over a recorder articulation runs from the short and short to long.

### Legato

The legato is the easiest form of articulation to define. It is a series of notes (those notes under a single slur) which are played without any change in the tongue. The individual notes are connected by a lingering change in the breath, which produces an unbroken stream.

### Staccato

Staccato is an articulation which shows individual notes. The extent of the shortening depends on the character of the music. Staccato notes can be played either with soft or hard tonguing. They can also be finished either with a tongue stroke, which has the effect of making them sound tense and exact, or without using the tongue, which makes them sound light and airy. The range of possible articulations is enormous. A light, "leggiero" staccato which is "relaxed" can be obtained by finishing notes with a fast movement of the tip of the tongue. Breath control also plays a role here as each note can be formed with an extra small impulse of the diaphragm. The air pressure can also

be kept constant with abdominal tension so that the tongue strokes produce an apparently unbroken stream of staccato notes.

### Non-legato

All of the above also apply to non-legato playing. Notes can begin either with the tongue stroke and end before the start of the next note. This should be clear enough. However, there are several possibilities for non-legato playing:

1. The note is finished with a tongue stroke: *doot doot doot doot*  
without finishing with a tongue stroke: *doo doo*

The difference between the notes is variable. In the first case, the tongue stroke is used only for the attack of the note. As an exercise try to say the following words so that the sides of the tongue lie against the roof of the mouth, as when you say "yes". For the second case, the tongue remains in the "yes" position and only the tip of the tongue moves.

Showing only the tip of the tongue is also very important for portato playing. In order to be able to realise the extreme firmness of this articulation, which is very similar to the legato, the exercises e.g. the scales, should first be played legato (slurred). In the process of this concentrate on "feeling" the function of your hand which creates the notes. If it is too weak a break in the sound is unavoidable because the tongue stroke, which normally provides the impulse for the note, is missing. The flow of breath must be able to be varied: stronger, weaker, faster or slower depending on pitch and register. The tip of the tongue sets little markers in an unbroken stream of breath.

Air:   
Tongue: 

Initially it may be difficult to feel the two "tracks" of this action. It might be helpful to transform the "doo" articulation syllable into the gentler "loo" tonguing or even to create a mixture of the two.

Rule: Legato serves as a basic sound model and blowing exercise for portato articulation.

**Legato** = joined, slurred

**Non-legato** = not joined, separate

**Staccato** = short, often with a hard attack

**Portato** = notes are "carried" from one to the other (portare *It.* = to carry)

## Notes Regarding the Exercises

### Major Scales

In order to have as much practise material as possible begin all major scales with the lowest note of the scale available on the instrument. This will not necessarily be the tonic note. Play each scale up in octaves and, again in octaves, back down. In this way it is possible for fingers and tongue to work for longer with each scale, despite the limited range of the recorder.

### Major Arpeggios

Only the tonic arpeggio of each scale will be practised. Again, begin with the lowest available note of the arpeggio even though this may produce an inversion. Go back to the second note of the arpeggio and begin again, working up to the highest note available.

### Chromatic Scale

Chromatic scales should be practised up and down over the range of an octave. Begin with the tonic note of the scale.

### Minor Scales

The minor scales are practised in triplets and within the range of an octave. They must be played three times before the next scale. Use the same principle for both harmonic and melodic minor scales.

### Minor Arpeggios

The same principle as above applies.

### Chromatic

The chromatic scale should be practised with the tonic note of the minor scale.

### Practise This

Do not understand the principles of the major (Fmaj/Dmin) "technique block" described above and then organise your practise material accordingly. Learn the patterns from memory. Once internalised it can be transferred to all keys. Advantage: your practise material is always available. Consider Fmaj/Dmin as a unit, particularly with regard to your concentration span. Begin with F major (including the chromatic scale) in a slow tempo, ensuring a steady beat and playing without stopping to take a breath. Pause before beginning the minor scale which should also be

played in its entirety without a break. Do not over-react if you make a mistake or if you have to stop. Becoming irritable if something goes wrong does not help. Instead, remain calm and try to play the next scale correctly. The amount of time you need will depend upon how long it takes you. If necessary, place in breath marks at the end of the passage by anything other than places marked.

- Establish your own tempo. Do not become and make a note of it. It should be possible to check your progress.
- Do not forget to think and play faster than you can think. For example, reach the high notes in the scale, then play the major scale, inwardly counting the time of the next passage before you play it. In other words, do not just play, but think. Listen to your sound. It is not your ear that it. Your ear should not simultaneously hear with the correct pitch. You must hear the sound of the sound.

### Tips for Fingerwork

Fingers should always move quickly up and down, then immediately relax. The movement need not be great, when necessary the fingers remain relaxed above their keys.

As a control someone holds a ruler 3 cm (1 1/2 inches) above your fingers whilst you play. The more deliberate and precise the finger movements, the nearer the ruler. More accurate the co-ordination with your fingers.

### Tips for Tonguing

Play a light, springy "ti ti ti", (short "i" as in "bit") Concentrate only on the beginning of the note; do not tongue the end of the note. The note remains open, not rigid and static as in staccato ("tit, tit, tit"). Reminder: the difference between a note which is finished with a tongue-stroke and one which sounds open lies simply in the exact point in time at which the upwards movement of the tongue takes place. If this happens precisely at the end of the note it will sound "cut off". However, if the tongue movement occurs at the last possible moment before the beginning of the next note – and it must be very fast – then the note will not sound as though it has been finished with the tongue. You could say that the tongue stroke occurs not at the end of the first note but at the beginning of the second. Imitate with your tongue the sound a table tennis ball makes when dropped and left to bounce for several seconds.