

JAM ALONG:

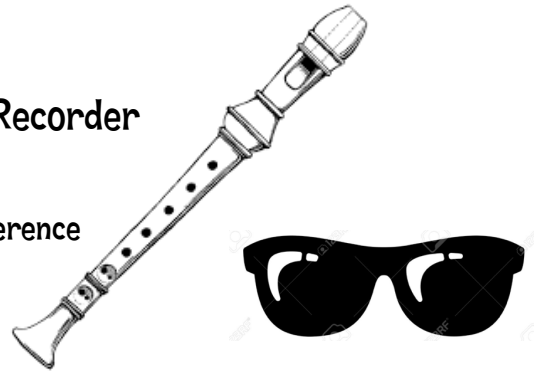
Using Popular Music to teach Beginning Recorder

a workshop for

the Washington Music Educators Association Conference

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Richard Lawton: Clinician



Music education theorist Lucy Green has identified a style of music learning that consists of purposive (highly focused) listening to and playing along with recorded music. The features of this vernacular music approach include self-guided exploration, a high level of engagement, attention to nuance, peer collaboration, and enthusiasm — highly desirable outcomes in any music classroom.

The vernacular music approach integrates seamlessly with the Orff Schulwerk process, where informal, aurally developed musicianship is highly valued, and self-guided exploration is typically the first step of instruction.

Vernacular Music Approach	Orff Schulwerk Approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Informal, self-guided learning• Working independently or in peer groups considered the norm• Performance begins immediately• Playing by ear paramount/literacy secondary• Understanding is assimilated in an ongoing way through an integration of listening, performing, and improvising• Skills are acquired by rote imitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Informal and exploratory• Working independently or in peer groups considered desirable• Performance begins immediately• Playing by ear paramount/literacy secondary• Understanding is assimilated in an ongoing way through an integration of listening, performing, and improvising• Skills developed, at least initially, by rote imitation

Warm ups:

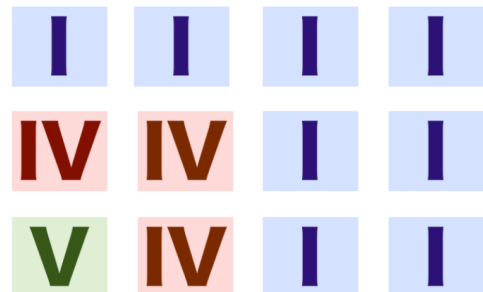
Introducing “A” — Let’s Stick Together

Track: “Let’s Stick Together,” Bryan Ferry, *Let’s Stick Together*, 1976*

Playing along with recordings provides students with a feel for the track’s groove and allows them to have a sense of making adult-sounding music. “Let’s Stick Together,” with its recurring horns part on “A,” is a perfect one note jam along tune.

Sequence:

Teach a partner dance (or have them create their own). The moves should relate to the 12-bar blues form to help students internalize it. Try elbow turns on the I Chord, back and forth/elbows locked on IV, up and down/elbows locked on V. Switch partners in measure 10-12.



* all tracks used in this session are available on iTunes

LET'S STICK TOGETHER (HORNS PART)

WILBERT HARRISON

The image shows three staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first staff starts with a whole note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter rest. The second staff starts with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. The third staff starts with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns and rests, ending with a double bar line.

Review the 12-bar horns part shown above.

Combine dancing and playing by splitting the class into two groups. More ambitious teachers can allow their “horn players” to ad lib some variations using the *la on A pentatonic*. Really ambitious teachers can try playing and dancing at the same time!

Pink Floyd Warm Up

Track: “Wish You Were Here,” Pink Floyd, *Wish You Were Here*, 1975

The goal of this activity is to get students to play with good tone and expression, using the first few notes of the *G pentatonic* (*G-A-B-E...*)

Sequence:

Play the track. When the guitar music begins, teacher improvises slow quarter-quarter-half phrases from the pitch palette, beginning with the most simple, for example *G-A-B*. The students echo each phrase, learning by listening or watching the teachers hands.

Teacher continues to add complexity by introducing additional notes or more complex rhythmic ideas. Do not move on until they can play back accurately.

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notes are G4, A4, B4, C5, and D5, with a final whole rest. Below the staff, the notes are labeled 'La Do Re Mi Sol La Do' in a green box.

La pentatonic scales are pentatonic scales that begin with the sixth solfege syllable, *la*. Beginning a scale on *la* means the first interval will be a minor third and that the other tones will overlay the blues scale perfectly.

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notes are G4, A4, B4, C5, and D5, with a final whole rest. Below the staff, the notes are labeled 'La Do Re Mi Sol La Do' in a blue box.

It also means that hard rock classics, often written in *E* and *A*, as well as *D*, lend themselves to improvisatory *la* pentatonic explorations on barred instruments and recorders.

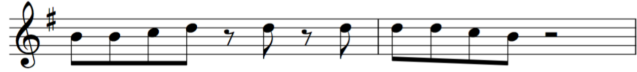
Integrated Accompaniment

Jackie Wilson Says

Track: “Jackie Wilson Says,” Van Morrison, *Saint Dominic’s Preview*, 1972

Moving while playing adds an additional element of challenge, while at the same time allowing students a chance to internalize a sense of swing that is so essential to playing in a pop music vernacular.

Sequence:



Teach students the introductory three-part lick as shown. This will form the choral response played throughout the song. Also review the same G pentatonic note palette, G-A-B-D-E plus C.



The second phrase “I’m in heaven...” can be sung or played on recorder (see below).



I'm in hea - ven, I'm in hea - ven, I'm in hea - ven when you smile!

Teach the dance:

- Jazz fingers turn to the left for 8
- Jazz fingers turn back to the right for 8
- Play chorus
- Karioke (grapevine) to left half speed for 8
- Shuffle and play to right for 8

Perform against the track. Use the jazz finger turn as a platform for individual improvisations. Invite free improv for the instrumental break at the end of the song.

Improvisation as Testimony

Blues improvisation calls for a “conversational approach” — the giving of individual testimony (call) and choral affirmation (response). With encouragement, even very young musicians can learn to adopt this approach and play more expressively and soulfully than what is typically achieved using Orff rhythm building bricks alone.

Voodoo Child

Track: "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)," Jimi Hendrix Experience, *Experience Hendrix: the Best of Jimi Hendrix*, 1997

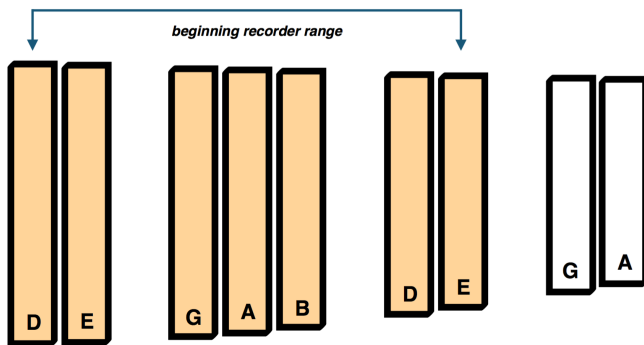
"Voodoo Child (Slight Return)" provides an opportunity for more extended improvisation, using *la on E pentatonic* (D-E-G-A-B-D-E) including notes in the upper register. It is also a good piece of material for integrating Orff barred instruments and electronica.

Sequence:

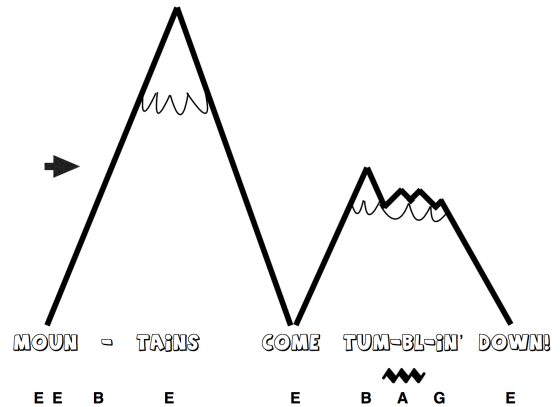
Begin with speech to teach rhythm. Say the word "moun - tains" with appropriate gestures and a sense of swing.

Add the words "moun - tains, come tumbling down," with appropriate gestures (the drawing shown here helps illustrate this).

Transfer this understanding to recorder. Focus at first on the low *E* and octave *E* at the beginning to help the students develop the right feel.



La on E Pentatonic - no C's or F's!



Now add the *B* (halfway up the mountain,) and the other low *E*'s. If this is all the students are able to play, it will be plenty.

Spend a bit more time on the tumbling down section. It involves a trill, but if the execution is a little sloppy, hey, so is Jimi's.

Discuss improv. Have barred instruments set up in *la on E*. Ask a few people to play a solo focusing on the range of the recorders. Bared instruments are great for this because kids can see the intervals. Have the improvises be the call and the choral answer be the rest.

Have them transfer this to the recorders, using a drum or *E* bass bar to track the duration of the improvisatory window. This will take patience, as the students will initially want to shred on random sounds. Be sure to praise the ones who improv with interesting rhythms and in the correct range.

Now put on a recording of “Voodoo Child” and jam along. (Hendrix kept his guitar tuned down half a step, so I use a recording I have bumped back up to *E* using the software *Logic Pro*.)

Consider allowing students who do an especially good job improvising the opportunity to play some electric recorder by performing their improves through a microphone with FX.

Building A Performance Piece from Vernacular Material

Adapting a jam along song used in the classroom to teach improvisation as a performance piece presents many challenges, but it is the natural extension of using this music as instructional material. And the kids love playing them!

Low Rider

Track: “Low Rider,” War, *Why Can't We Be Friends?*, 1973

Sequence:

As with *Jackie Wilson Says*, use movement to teach the improvisatory framework. Students form 2 concentric circles. The inner circles moves to the right in a groovy way for 16 beats while the outer circle rocks their hips. Switch. (“Low Rider” has a Latin groove, so developing movement vocabulary with the right “flavor” will be helpful.)

The movement for the song’s signature tag (see score on page 7) is as follows:

Students partner up with someone on the opposite circle and performs a “Keith Terry 7” (A clap followed by alternating chest pats, leg pats, and booty pats) + a “KT 3” (clap-pat-pat) + 2 alternating finger snaps.

Repeat.

With partner perform
KT 3 + clap + double
partner clap, KT 3 +
clap + double partner
clap, clap + double
partner clap

Doing this against the
recorded track will
infuse the BP with he
right amount of swing.

Transfer to recorders.

G pentatonic with C added

Musical notation for G pentatonic with C added scale. The scale is shown on a treble clef staff with notes Sol, La, Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La. Above the staff are fingerings for each note. A red 'X' is placed over the La note in the second measure.

G Mixolydian

Musical notation for G Mixolydian scale. The scale is shown on a treble clef staff with notes V, VI, VII, I, II, III, IV, V, VI. Above the staff are fingerings for each note. Green arrows point to the V, VII, I, III, and V notes. A green box labeled "Pitches to emphasize" is at the bottom right.

Students pairs alternate 16-beat improves followed by the 12-measure tag played in unison.

Note — The pitch set is the one we have been developing in this workshop — *G pentatonic plus C2*. We now add *F*, making improvisation in *G Mixolydian* possible (assuming *G* remains the tonal center). In modal improvisation, all the diatonic pitches are in play, but certain pitches have more of the modal flavor. Be sure and point out which pitches are the “spicy” ones.

On to the other instruments: I usually try to develop the parts aurally with the limited graphics shown here to act as a reminder.

Teach the two chord ukulele part, playing on the “ands” (*G7*) and the “yada yadas” (*F*).

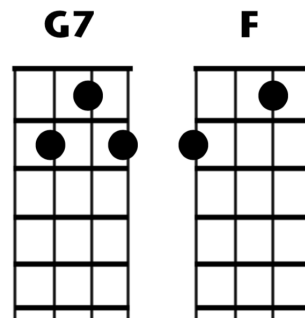
As for the xylophone part (in parentheses), teach in stages once the percussion and uke groove is set. Play along on just *F-G*, then add *B-C2-D2*, then add the rest.



Ukes:
Speak as:
 one AND two AND three AND four AND five
 AND six AND YADA YADA

Play the ANDs (G7) and the YADA YADA (F)

Percussion parts:
Tubano - BabaLOO - Loo is the DB
Guiro - yada yada — answering BabaLOO
Shakers - chaka chaka chaka chaka — play throughout



Use the recorded track to establish the right overall feel and tempo. But gradually dispense with the track and substitute the score as shown:

Low Rider

War/ar. Lawton

The first system of the musical score includes parts for SR (Saxophone), Shaker, Guiro, Tubano, BX (Bass), and Ukulele. The SR part is in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The Shaker, Guiro, and Tubano parts are in a 4/4 time signature with a 7/8 feel. The BX part is in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The Ukulele part is in tenor clef with a 4/4 time signature and includes fret numbers (0, 1, 2) and fingerings (1, 2) for the strings.

The second system of the musical score includes parts for SR, SH (Shaker), G (Guiro), TB (Tubano), BX (Bass), and Uke. The SR part is in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The SH part is in a 4/4 time signature with a 7/8 feel. The G part is in a 4/4 time signature with a 7/8 feel. The TB part is in a 4/4 time signature with a 7/8 feel. The BX part is in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The Uke part is in tenor clef with a 4/4 time signature and includes fret numbers (0, 1, 2) and fingerings (1, 2) for the strings.

Richard Lawton is the general music teacher at Roscomare Road Elementary School in Los Angeles and the recorder instructor in the Los Angeles County and South Florida Orff Courses. He is a past presenter at numerous state and national conferences and the 2018 California Music Educators Association/Peripole General Music Teacher of the Year.

Contact: richard@richardlawtonmusic.com

