

PREFACE

This new method for descant recorder by Ludovica Scoppola is a well-balanced and valid proposal which stands out as an important resource for students and teachers in view of a renewed interest in the teaching of the recorder.

Essentially, in this work:

- the musical material is extremely sound and stimulating, relevant to musically competent learning and structured according to a linearity which is not monolithic, with an excellent choice of early and classical repertoire and also with a considerable number of pieces from the Italian folk tradition;
- the sequence of the fingering is linked to the practice of Baroque fingering and is well divided into a sequence which is easily mastered both physically and logically;
- the central importance of the instrumental aspect of the recorder is well supported, not only by the chosen repertoire, but also by some very practical scales and exercises;
- the introduction of new rhythmic patterns is very well graded;
- it is a method which is both flexible and very reliable and covers a wide span of skills leaving the teacher the possibility to be more creative and innovative.

The author's conscious choice of restricting herself to a selection of traditional and classical material corresponds to a specific educational function but it also implies many impromptu approaches and other aesthetic dimensions and practices and is not intended to constrain the user, but to allow him or her to take easy steps within what is a kind of language for the recorder, leaving space for other additions and more various and complex uses.

I believe that this work, which is meritorious in approach and implementation, can and must be circulated among the teachers of this instrument who are involved in basic musical and instrumental education, as well as among those engaged in music education in schools or in training and professional in-service training for teachers. It will certainly be an excellent reference for anyone, child or adult, who is interested in a serious self-study course with, of course, a teacher by their side.

As a colleague, I thank Ludovica Scoppola for having put into this work her decades of experience as a teacher and performer of the highest calibre, devoting her labours to those taking their first steps in music holding a recorder in their hand. In this book I have found precision, enthusiasm and expertise which it has been my privilege to meet over many years of parallel teaching at the International Courses of Early Music in Urbino and at several national and international educational gatherings.

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INTRODUCTION

The method of instrumental practice is aimed at all those who, at any age, wish to learn to play the descant recorder, through the reading of music. During the course, step by step, the various chapters introduce the fingering for the recorder, together with the understanding of the musical symbols. The goal, at the end of the study course, is to be in a position to perform all the notes on the instrument and to be able to read music at a basic level, which is the first step in dealing with the specific technical studies and the music written for the instrument.

Each chapter, through progressive exercises, introduces a new note and new topics of music theory, in order to achieve a gradual mastery of the fingering of the instrument. Each topic is then examined closely by studying pieces from the traditional, Renaissance, Baroque and Classical repertoires. The pieces in the early chapters, given the limited usable notes, are from traditional Italian repertoires and from those of other European countries. Further on, there are short compositions in Renaissance, Baroque and Classical styles by composers of different styles and eras. The choice of presenting pieces for the most part in duet form, that is, two descant or descant and bass (and it is understood that this second part is to be played by the teacher), stems from the belief that to accustom the student from the start to listening to a second part consolidates control of rhythm, intonation and phrasing, as well as making the course of study more stimulating.

The progressive difficulty found in the course of the method is measured according to the experience gained from teaching students of different ages, and can be varied and adapted to the needs of each student. The workbook at the start of each chapter can be condensed, expanded or developed in relation to different learning abilities. Especially for the first few chapters, the succession of new topics can often be made more effective by practising first with the voice and then with the instrument during the exercises. In fact, dealing with one problem at a time, and suggesting that the student should sing (first together and then alone) each new theme, helps in the learning process of rhythm and intonation, independently from the specific difficulties of the instrument, in this case related to the output of sound and the covering of the holes.

The scales are also introduced gradually, aiming to help the student master the fingering of the scales up to three sharps and three flats and relative minor scales. From Chapter 15, in which slurs are introduced, the scales are to be played both in staccato and slurred form, with arpeggios and intervals of thirds. The minor scales, presented at the end of the method, can then be performed using the same pattern as the major scales. For each scale there are written examples and from Chapter 21 some exercises and pieces with key signature according to Early Music prescription are introduced.

While the slurs indicating note values are introduced right from the first chapters, those indicating phrasing are introduced only from Chapter 15, that is, when a reasonable mastery of covering the holes can be expected. In the latter case, it is advisable first to perform the staccato exercise and then the slurred one. In Chapter 17 there are examples of exercises on possible variations with slurs, both for the improvement of technical skill and for the rendering of a piece. It is therefore clear that in the following pages it must be the teacher who judges when and how to affix slurs to the exercises and to the pieces which appear in the method.

The progression suggested for learning the fingering begins with the use of the five fingers of the left hand, then to proceed to the use of the right hand first with E (the easiest position) then with F, D (where care must be taken over the covering of the double hole) and finally to C. Since

young children often struggle with bottom C, in this case it is recommended not to insist and to return to the chapter later, when the student has become more familiar with the instrument. For the position of G# (chap. 18) an alternative to the original one is offered, which is, closing the right ring finger for those who find it difficult to rotate the right hand for the opening of the half hole. In this case too, the above can be taken up and examined more closely at a later stage. For the high notes, the method, devised as an initiation to the practice of the descant recorder, stops at the D above the stave, since the playing of the higher notes is dealt with at a more advanced stage.

Along with the fingering, the main musical values and times are gradually introduced. The 2/2, 3/2 and 4/2 times are restricted just to Chapter 13. If the teacher considers the subject too complex, it can easily be skipped. 3/8 time is approached in the same chapter as 6/8 time because it is intended as a subdivision of the next one.

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The method was created and developed over decades of teaching. It has been devised, developed and tested with and for the students whom I have trained on the recorder courses.

A special thanks is addressed to all my students who, in their doubts, difficulties and uncertainties along with their curiosity, interest and enthusiasm, have given me an efficient motivation to deepen a teaching method that has arisen from experience. Thanks also to my colleagues of the Sylvestro Ganassi School of Music in Rome, with whom in recent years the teaching system undertaken has been shared and discussed, as well as to recorder colleagues scattered throughout Europe, for fruitful exchanges of views on specific methodologies and teaching repertoires. Special thanks finally go to Armando Pinci who, with great patience and professionalism, has revised and corrected the method, to Stefano Bragetti for his valuable advice and his enthusiasm for this adventure, and to Marco Ravasini for the cover photo in which he has managed to express to great effect the spirit of this work.

LUDOVICA SCOPPOLA