

Recorder scale practicing system

Practicing scales has immense benefits on all musical instruments. Technical facility, intonation, range, evenness, and many more musical elements are improved. Maybe even the understanding of our tonal system.

For many years I have worked on the development of scale practicing systems for brass instruments. I wasn't too happy with the scales systems I saw for the recorders, so I expanded an exercise by Hans Martin Linde. Or rather I played it in all keys over the full range of the recorders rather than sticking with the original key and the lowest fifth only. Sadly I cannot provide an issue of this modified study.

Quite recently it occurred to me, that I could try my brass systems on the recorders also. With modifications about the ranges these systems worked surprisingly well on my modern Ehlert recorders with keys for the right pinkie. But the real surprise was that they also were playable on my Bleazey session soprano recorder, which has no double holes and hence requires extensive half-holing.

The main idea has been pilfered from the jazz environment in which I once moved. All modes in all keys around the cycle of fifths and arpeggios to the ninth.

To train varied articulations I shift between tongued and slurred every other day. There are many variants within tonguing, which should all be worked on. Only don't overdo the extreme staccato, please, as that furthers some stiffness to the playing and some tensions to the muscles. On recorders and on trombones I hardly ever play a true legato in scales and arpeggios. My preferred legato tonguing uses L- as the consonant, but other schools get good results with R-.

When students and amateurs see my scale system, they often feel scarred. Please don't. Rather use this wonderful motto:

Nothing is too difficult to be skipped!

Play the keys with which you feel comfortable and then expand your comfort zone gradually from there. Mine currently includes bar #52, and I happily will fake the high C# and F#, if a given recorder has no true fingering for that note.

It can be seen that this system was first made for Danish students, but everything should have been sufficiently translated. The bullet and the parenthesis are the shorthand symbols for tongued and slurred respectively, which I use in my practising diary. Actually set up in a computer spreadsheet

The system is specific for F and C recorders in treble and bass clefs (plus for F recorders reading up an octave), but I start out slowly with the Major and Minor keys. Eventually you will see Lydian, Lochrian, Phrygian, Dorian, Mixolydian, and 8-note scales also.

Enjoy!

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