

# North Queensland Recorder Society Newsletter

**April 2012**

## **Next Play Day**

The next play day will be on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> April, St Joseph's School, Mundingburra, 2.00 – 4.30. The leader for this play day is Heather Coleman with the intriguing theme 'Can Recorders tell a Story?' Heather plans to introduce us to some contemporary composers using music published by Peacock Press.

Please bring recorders, music stands, something to share for afternoon tea and a gold coin to assist with the expenses of the day.

## **Recorder weekend 2012**

Here is a summary of the details. Please see the accompanying flier and send it to your recorder playing friends.

# Celebrating Diversity

Music for the Recorder Inspired by Different  
Countries and Cultures

**Guest Tutor: Alana Blackburn**

**([www.alanabackburn.com](http://www.alanabackburn.com))**

Workshops will be held at St Joseph's School Mundingburra  
and are suitable for all ages.

**25<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> May**

## Notes and Queries

by Malcolm Tattersall

### The Key to the Key

Ouch! You didn't look at the key signature before we started playing, did you?

*Key signature? What's that?*

The bunch of sharps or flats after the clef in every line of the music.

*Oh, that. I know what it's for but I didn't know it was called a key signature. And you're right, I didn't look at it - sorry!*

*Why is it called a key signature?*

Because it tells us, indirectly, what key the music is in. If we have one sharp, for instance, the music is in G major or E minor. That is, in sol-fa terms, we are using a doh scale which starts on G or a la scale which starts on E (if you think about that for a moment, you will realise that doh is still G).

Our most common scale, the major scale, doh - re - mi - fa - soh - la - ti - doh, is a particular pattern of whole steps and half steps. If we begin it on C, it lines up perfectly with the white notes of the piano and we don't need any sharps or flats. But if we begin on any other note, we need some of the black notes, either sharps or flats, to form the same pattern of whole and half steps. And we put the signs for them at the start of the music instead of putting them in separately every single time we need them.

*Okay, but how do you work out the key from the key signature?*

The connection is so irregular that most people simply rote-learn it - one sharp G, two sharps D, three sharps A, and so on. But there are two rules which are worth remembering:

- The note above the last sharp sign in a sharp key signature is always doh. Key signature F# and C#? Doh must be D, the next note up from C#, and the key is D major or (counting back from doh to la) B minor.
- The second-last flat in a flat key signature is always doh. Key signature Bb, Eb and Ab? Doh must be Eb so we are in Eb major or C minor.

That only leaves two pairs to memorise: C major or A minor with no sharps or flats, and F major or D minor with one flat.

The other approach to learning them is the 'Cycle of Fifths'. It's good but we haven't got time for it now.

*When we were talking about clefs last year you told me about some odd ones. Do we have strange key signatures as well?*

Yes, but it is pretty simple from the players' point of view: we just have to do what the music says - surprise, surprise!

Before key signatures were standardised (about 1750) in the way I have described, composers often put one less flat in a minor key signature because it wasn't always needed anyway. If you think about C minor, for instance, the third flat is Ab and we often use A natural in C minor, so it was just as easy to put in the flat sign as an accidental as it was to put it in the key signature and then cancel it with an accidental every second time.

*You're talking about the melodic minor?*

Yes.

And then at the end of the nineteenth century European musicians like Bartok started taking folk music seriously and they found that its scales weren't always our familiar major and minor scales. They soon got tired of trying to make these unfamiliar scales look 'normal' and started putting in just the flats or sharps that were needed, or even a mixture of flats and sharps. You might come across a key signature of C# and Bb, for instance. Don't panic, just play all C's as C sharps and all B's as B flat and all will be well - slightly weird, but well.

Of course, Bartok's discoveries were only the beginning. We went from Hungarian and Roumanian music to Bulgarian and Macedonian, Turkish, Indian, Khmer, Igbo ... you name it. And younger composers liked what they heard and used some of these scales, or made up their own. Don't panic if you come across them - just play what is written, and enjoy the unusual flavours they bring to the music.

Actually, let's set this piece aside until next week - to give you a chance to look at the ...

*Key signature?*

Very good! ... and we'll play this Bartok duet. You take the top line. What's your key signature?

*Umm ... Ab?? All by itself?*

That's right. And mine, on the bottom line?

*Easy - F# and C#. But how does that go with Ab?*

Let's see. Just trust Mr Bartok.

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For those who want to explore further:

<http://www.dolmetsch.com/musictheory9.htm>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circle\\_of\\_fifths](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circle_of_fifths)

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Thanks to Malcolm Tattersall for continuing to provide such useful and entertaining notes to our queries.

## **Recorder for Sale**

For Sale: "Moeck" tenor recorder

Description: Instrument in perfect order has double keys and is made in rosewood. Exceptional pure tone with even pitch throughout all compass. A joy to play solo or ensembles.

Price: \$500 hard case included. Contact Michael on 0432 835 542 or email: [mchekov@hotmail.com](mailto:mchekov@hotmail.com)

## **Membership of North Queensland Recorder Society**

Are you a financial member? The membership year runs from the first of January and renewals or new memberships can be paid at any play day.

Benefits of membership include

- Reduction in fees for workshops and other Society activities
- Access to the Society's library. (Members can receive a copy of the library catalogue as a CD or as an email attachment on request).
- Guaranteed receipt of newsletters.
- Opportunities to be involved in organising and deciding on Society activities

Membership fees: \$15 (Single), \$25 (Family), \$10 (student).