

ABRSM Pathways through the Recorder Syllabus

This poster showcases exciting pieces from the new syllabus, grouped by theme and colour-coded for clarity. Most selections are fresh, lesser-known works chosen for their strong teaching potential. Use the poster in your lessons, to inspire lesson planning, explore new repertoire, and introduce engaging, topic-based pathways to your students.

Grade 1

A8 Egg and Spoon Race by Ailie Robertson (Treble)

A new commission from the ABRSM composer mentoring scheme. The recorder and the piano combine to create a vision of an egg and spoon race where the egg doesn't always seem to stay on the spoon. The mainly tongued articulation and largely stepwise movements are good for developing coordination and the rests give rhythmic variety here.



B4 Lullaby in the Ocean by Edward Lun (Descant)

A new commission from the ABRSM composer mentoring scheme. A gentle lullaby with a calm feel that suits the descant recorder. The pedalled piano part gives atmosphere and there is an opportunity to use legato tonguing for the detached notes, to illustrate the undulating phrases.



B5 Catching Snowflakes on my tongue by Ailie Robertson (Descant)

A new commission from the ABRSM composer mentoring scheme. A gentle piece where the pure descant recorder tone suits the image of the snow. The finger patterns are comfortable for the elementary learner and some slurs encourage precise coordination.



C10 New Shoes by Alexandra Skevington (Descant)

A new commission from the ABRSM composer mentoring scheme, this playful piece depicts a trip to the shoe shop—from excited clomping to a nostalgic moment, tiptoeing, and finally walking out in new shoes. It's great for developing staccato playing with elementary students, and off-beat chords in the accompaniment add character. The composer suggests the fun trick of 'sniffing' a rest on the first beat to keep time.



Grade 2

A7 Splish Splosh Splat by Alexandra Skevington (Descant)

A new commission from the ABRSM composer mentoring scheme, this joyful piece captures the fun of jumping in puddles—whether in anticipation or fond memory. Rests and off-beat entries offer useful teaching points, with crisp tonguing needed for quaver rhythms. A mid-piece tempo change adds interest.



B5 Mustard Fields by Zana Clarke (Descant, also Treble Grade 2 B6)

From Dawn and Dusk Book 1 (1996–98), this unaccompanied piece has a folk-like style. With no printed dynamics, players can shape phrases freely. It aids development of phrasing, breath control, and gentle tonguing, and is available for both descant and treble.



B7 Dream Song by Thomas Metcalf (Descant)

A new commission from the ABRSM composer mentoring scheme. The gentle legato and mainly soft dynamic feel give a lullaby quality to this piece and the key change in the middle adds interest. The slurred phrases require precise finger coordination and the gentle staccato adds to the light ending, with an atmospheric piano part.



C5 Sly Fox and Boasting Baboon by Elizabeth Cooper (Treble)

Sly Fox, in triple time, features the F major scale with chromatic touches in the middle section. Boasting Baboon has a dance-like 4/4 feel and nimble passage work.



C8 Polka Dot Polka by Ailie Robertson (Descant)

This uses the Polka style and has some dotted quaver rhythms, as well as some slurs and tenuto. The semiquavers are useful for teaching finger control and the G major tonality is bright.



Grade 3

A6 Cheeky sparrow by Elizabeth Cooper (Descant)

This piece has a playful character and rhythmic variety. It can be unaccompanied, though there is an optional piano part.



B7 Tranquillo by H. Genzmer (Duet) (Treble)

Genzmer was a student of Hindemith and writes in a neoclassical style. This provides an introduction to the modern duet repertoire for the Grade 3 student.



B10 Air by Walter Leigh (Treble)

This short piece uses the alto recorder with a legato tone and there are smooth phrases, with a mainly ABA form and some dynamic contrasts in the middle section which follow the natural strengths of the instrument. It is useful for teaching slurs, finger control and breath control.



B10 Nakshatrn (A Star's Light) by Vishak Ramaprasad (Descant)

A new commission from the ABRSM composer mentoring scheme. The thoughtful character is illustrated with some slurs and gently undulating phrases. A small trill adds to the variety of techniques and the lower range of the descant is also used atmospherically.



C3 Inquisitive Puppy and Hopping Rabbit by Elizabeth Cooper (Treble)

Inquisitive Puppy, in 4/4, features slurs, dotted crotchet rhythms, and a final trill as a teaching point. Hopping Rabbit, in 6/8, has a dance-like character with a mid-piece tempo change.



Grade 4

B3 Blues (from Jolly Joker) by Viktor Fortin (Treble)

Austrian composer Viktor Fortin wrote this as part of a set of seven catchy pieces in popular styles for alto or bass recorder with piano or guitar. It showcases swing style, stays mostly in the alto's middle range, includes a rubato-friendly cadenza, and ends with a multiphonic effect.



B6 Columba Palumbis by A. Davis (Descant)

From a 1998 collection of technical studies, each depicting a bird character. Rather than imitating birdsong, the composer notes that 'external musical and other references' may be found. Columba Palumbus (the Wood Pigeon) uses legato quaver phrases to evoke its cooing call.



B7 Turquoise Turtle by T. Dehnhard (Descant)

This accompanied piece, in a blues style, reflects Dehnhard's jazz influences. Grace notes enhance the style, while low register chromatic notes offer opportunities to teach half holding.



B8 A little piece by En Shao (Treble)

This Andantino features changing time signatures, beginning in 5/4 and changing to 6/4 and 3/4 later on. There is also slurred and tenuto articulation. It is useful for working on shaping and the slurred leap up to high D at the end is a good teaching point for thumb technique.



B10 Waterlily by Barbara Heller (Descant)

Originally written for flute or clarinet, this piece has been adapted for recorder in the book 'My Favourite Melodies' by Sarah Jeffrey. It was composed in 2008 and has long legato lines and a beautiful sound world with the piano part. Keeping the pitch steady is a good challenge here, as well as shaping the phrases and finding a musical rubato feel in combination with the piano.



Grade 5

B7 Moment Musical by Hans Gal (Treble)

This short piece has a variety of articulation and a moderate tempo, with lyrical phrases and a slow section at the end. It references the short poetic 'moment musical' piano pieces that were written by composers such as Schubert. Hans Gal was an Austrian composer who emigrated to the UK in 1938.



B8 Andantino semplice by Gordon Jacob (Treble)

This gentle Sonata movement written in the 1960s and dedicated to Anthony Pringsheim, has a lyrical legato feel with long phrases that invite subtle vibrato. It aids breath control and consistency across the range, showcasing Jacob's neoclassical style and understanding of wind instruments.



B8 Prelude The Sea Front by Althea Talbot-Howard (Descant) (also Treble B11)

Folk-influenced in style, this piece features lyrical phrases that suit the recorder, with room for rubato in the opening and strong drive in the faster section. It includes slurring, legato tonguing, and opportunities for folk-style ornamentation.



C1 Akrobatik by Hans Günther Allers (Descant)

From a suite of five character pieces for intermediate players, this educational and engaging work features time changes, accents, and a leggiero feel that suits the descant recorder. Slurred semiquavers help develop finger coordination.



Grade 6

A4 Gabrielle Maditelle by van Eyck (Descant)

This is in triple time and it segues straight into the variations, which become more complex as the piece continues. This is a more technically accessible piece than some of the longer Van Eyck variations and could also be played on a tenor.



B10 Immortelle by Staeps (Treble)

This lyrical piece has some beautiful interplay for recorder and piano and is also playable on bass. It is an opportunity for advanced players to explore different textures with the piano accompaniment and phrase shapes.



C8 Butterflie by Haverkaate (Treble)

Haverkaate is a pioneer of jazz style works for the recorder and this piece is a fun evocation of a butterfly, with a swung style. Some dexterity is needed for the finger patterns, which are rewarding to play.



Grade 7

A2 Adagio and Allegro from Sonata in G minor by Barsanti (Treble)

A stylish slow movement where added ornamentation is possible, paired with a lively Allegro. Composed in 1724 while Barsanti was in London, the Op. 1 Sonatas reflect his Italianate style. An oboist and recorder player, he performed at the Haymarket Theatre during Handel's opera productions.



A5 Malle Symen by van Eyck (Descant)

This well-known theme and set of two variations requires strong finger control and dexterity, as well as rhythmic stability. Once again this could also be played on tenor.



C10 The Kid from Venezuela by Pete Rose (Treble)

Rose, known for pioneering jazz-influenced recorder works, wrote this energetic descant piece in 1990 for Aldo Abreu. A technical challenge for advanced players, it's structured as a 12-bar blues inspired by the Jamaican folk song 'Matilda,' blending modern jazz with quotes from Telemann and Bach and including notated solos for recorder and piano.



C6 Quickly and with precision by Hand (Treble)

Hand was a very prolific composer for the recorder and this work has lyrical phrases and a range of articulation effects. It's good for encouraging students to produce focused top notes in order to realise the upper phrases but also requires a rich low register tone. The trills add to the expressive palette.



C7 Abigail's Jig by Richard Lambert (Descant)

With Irish jig rhythms, modal harmony, and modern touches, this piece evokes a folk style. It includes challenging finger coordination throughout and ends with an effective flourish, suiting more advanced students.



Grade 8

A2 Ricercata Quarta by Bassano (Treble)

From Bassano's Op. 17 Ricercari (1585, cited by Hintermeier in a 1712 edition), this piece—likely originally for cornett—is transcribed here for treble recorder. A contrasting unaccompanied early Baroque work, it challenges advanced players with scalar and arpeggiated passages and demands effective phrasing.



A5 Comagain by van Eyck (Descant)

These variations are on the famous John Dowland song *Come Again, sweet love doth now invite* and work really well for descant recorder, although they can also be played on tenor. They are a great technical challenge for an advanced student and good for teaching finger coordination and articulation.



A6 Lento recitativo and Vivate by Glanville-Hicks (Treble)

Composed in 1938, this work by Australian composer Peggy Glanville Hicks features a Lento with long, introspective legato lines—challenging advanced players to maintain intonation and shape phrases with vibrato. The Vivate contrasts with lively, detailed articulation and nimble staccatos.



A11 1st movt from Il Gardellino by Vivaldi (Treble)

This piece uses ornamentation to beautifully illustrate the singing of a goldfinch. It can be played on treble or soprano and originally comes from the famous Op. 10 collection of Flute concertos, though the range and the reference to birdsong suggest that it may originally have been written with the recorder in mind.



B11 Korimako by Gillian Whitehead (Treble)

This evocative piece for the descant from 1996 is written in the style of birdsong and there is a wide range of articulation, with ornamentation and very detailed shaping. It is a great challenge for an advanced student and there is scope for work on rubato and tone as well. Gillian Whitehead is of Maori descent and this has been an important influence on her composing.



KEY

Articulation Female composer Pieces about animals Fast Lyrical 20th/21st Century A new commission Scenic Music about Birds Slow and expressive Extended techniques Folk Influences Jazz Influences Legato