



The Recorder Maven

Recorder Advice From Elijah Ducon

Dear Elijah,

How can I reliably get a low 'F' on my alto recorder every time?

Baffled in Brooklyn

Dear Baffled,

The extremities of the recorder and how to achieve the notes they comprise are a recurring issue for players on all levels, but especially for beginners.

Low 'F' at the bottom and high 'F' at the top can be elusive. I will deal with high notes at another time.

First, make sure you have correctly assembled your instrument. You start with the head, middle and foot joints. Put the head joint onto the middle joint and adjust it so that the windway is directly centered above the holes. Then put on the foot joint. The placing of the foot joint is crucial for getting the lowest notes on the instrument. Put the foot joint on with its double holes slightly to the right of the holes of the middle joint. Hold the recorder as if you were about to play. Keeping your hands at right angles, cover all six holes of the middle joint with your fingers. Now, lift and drop your right pinky on the double-holes. Make sure your fingers are

relaxed. Slowly rotate the foot joint with your left hand until your right pinky lifts and drops in a position that completely covers both holes. Do not stretch or push your finger. The pinky should lift and fall onto the double-holes with ease. Once the foot joint is in an accommodating position, half the battle with low 'F' is won.

Next, there is the problem of breath pressure. Remember, with all the holes covered for low 'F' the only escape hatches for your air column are the windway and the bell. Since the air is at its most forced when playing this note, you will have to absolutely relax and send very little air through the instrument at first. Keep your lips very loose, and do not dig your fingers into the holes. I suggest you sit back in a comfortable chair, close your eyes, take deep breaths and slowly sigh the air out of your body a few times before you actually try to play the note. Once you get it, try to be aware of your relaxed physical demeanor so that you will have a sensory recall of what you did. Practice low 'F' in this manner, until you feel where the note is. Once the note speaks you may slowly add more air to open the sound.

As far as "reliably" and "every time" are concerned, I smilingly say to you: One of the reasons we might enjoy playing the recorder is because the instrument is like a fickle lover. We can never be sure what our gentle proddings will elicit. .. We just keep coaxing and hoping for the best.

Good luck!

Elijah Ducon

Please send your questions for **The Recorder Maven** to: elijahducon1@gmail.com