



The Recorder Maven

Recorder Advice From Elijah Ducon

Dear Elijah,

I am very interested in learning how to play the recorder. My wife has offered to buy me a good wooden recorder for my birthday. However, the teacher that I will be taking lessons from says I should start on a plastic recorder. Why is this and what should be my criteria for purchasing an instrument?

"Eager to begin" in Brooklyn Heights

Dear Eager,

Your teacher is right--for many reasons. First and foremost, once you are presented with what it requires to play the recorder you may change your mind. Don't be deceived by the simple lines and lack of keys. Playing the recorder even moderately well will take a bit of work. In the early stages of learning it's best to use a good workhorse instrument that can take a lot of fingering, blowing and tonguing 'abuse' until you get the hang of how to gently handle the instrument. Of the plastic recorders available, I would

suggest the Yamaha Baroque Rottenburg (YBR) series. The full consort family (S.A.T.B.) is readily available. These instruments are very well engineered, play nicely in tune and have a warm, authentic tone. I'm sure your teacher would agree. They are also very reasonably priced.

Once you've established good playing habits and feel committed to--or hooked on--playing the recorder, you may want to take up your wife's offer to buy you a good instrument. (Purchase the Yamaha yourself!) At this stage there are many manufacturers who make good assembly line instruments from which to choose. These instruments are usually made from soft (pear/maple) or hard (palisander/ebony) woods. The soft woods have warm blending qualities, while the hardwoods have more presence and are better suited for solo playing. Two of the more enterprising manufacturers of these instruments are Moeck and Mollenhauer, both of German origin.

If you really take your playing the distance, the time may come when you might like to acquire a custom-made instrument. One that responds to your personal playing abilities. These are usually purchased from the makers themselves, and could become quite costly, depending on the woods used and the craftsmanship employed. Three top-of-the-line makers, Von Huene in Boston, Coolsma in Holland and Boudreau in Canada create instruments for some of the finest players in the world. They make authentic copies of historical instruments as well as instruments of modern design and qualities befitting 21st century recorder players' needs.

Just remember, an instrument can only be as good as the player who brings it to life with his breath and his love for the music he plays. So start

with the plastic your teacher suggests and see where you take it from there.

Good luck!

Elijah Ducon

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