

# 10 Tunes to Teach by Ear

*For brass – beginner to advanced*

- Attractive tunes in a variety of genres
- Many top tips to help you teach without the dots
- Opportunities to develop aural and ensemble skills



## **10 tunes to teach by ear**

### **Introduction**

This resource will help you to teach tunes by ear. It will significantly develop your pupils' aural and ensemble skills, whilst consolidating technique.

The tunes are varied in terms of genre and background, and appear with accompanying parts, which ensure that a range of abilities can participate. All or some of the accompanying parts can be used, depending on the size and nature of the group. The material can be used for individuals and groups of all sizes including whole class.

The resource is particularly aimed at helping you teach pupils tunes they don't already know – as opposed to helping them work out tunes they already know.

There are multiple top tips to help you teach the tunes, no matter what your previous experience is of playing/teaching by ear. Please don't forget that my videos will explain further the various methods of teaching by ear. These videos can be found on my website: [musicwild.co.uk](http://musicwild.co.uk).

### [Videos \(musicwild.co.uk\)](http://musicwild.co.uk)

For a whole range of activities, including teaching with notation and without, and improvisation, please see my book – 'Wild About Brass'. This helps you to teach a comprehensive range of skills, whilst consolidating technique, from beginner level onwards. It is available from Amazon, and other online retailers.

[Wild About Brass: Inspiring, effective teaching resources : Wild, Ruth: Amazon.co.uk: Books](http://Amazon.co.uk: Books)

There are many tips included in 'Ten Tunes to Teach by Ear. Most of the tips apply to all the tunes.

I have left technical and musical details such as phrasing, articulation and dynamics to the teacher's discretion, or the choice of the pupil.

This resource is for all brass instruments. Keys and register can be altered as needed to accommodate the needs of your pupils: their experience and level of performance.



# Uncle Bernard's Polka

Trad. English

1

*I have a fish strip-y and small I have a fish strip-y and small I have a fish*

C G C G

6

*strip-y and small I have a fish strip-y and small I have a fish strip-y and small*

G C C

11

*I have a fish strip-y and small I have a fish strip-y and small I have a fish strip-y and small*

G C C G C

### Top tips

The percussive part can be played by clapping, or tapping on the instrument.

The accompanying parts can be taught by using body parts – see the first video on [musicwild.co.uk](http://musicwild.co.uk).

The melody can be taught in segments – a little bit more each time, whilst you play the tune – see below and the second video on the website.

Ask pupils to spot if there are any repeated sections.

Teacher

Pupil joins in with...

then joins in with...

then joins in with (see bar 6)...

5

# Morning from Peer Gynt

Grieg

The image shows a musical score for the piece 'Morning from Peer Gynt' by Edvard Grieg. The score is written in 3/4 time and consists of three staves. The first staff is the treble clef, the second is the alto clef, and the third is the bass clef. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The first staff has a first ending bracket over the final two measures, with a second ending bracket over the final measure. The second and third staves have a repeat sign at the end of the piece.

**Top tips**

Classical tunes can be taught by ear too.

Drones are a great way to include less experienced players.

To help teach the tune, first do some echo playing including intervals from the tune, such as C to A and D to A.

# Hunt the Squirrel/Hela'r Wiwer

Trad. English/Irish/Welsh?

Mo the squirr-el lives in the woods Mo the squirr-el lives in the woods Mo the squirr-el

6  
lives in the woods Mo the squirr-el lives in the woods Mo the squirr-el lives in the woods Mo the squirr-el

12  
lives in the woods Mo the squirr-el lives in the woods Mo the squirr-el lives in the woods

The musical score is written in 6/8 time. It consists of a vocal line and three instrumental staves. The vocal line includes lyrics and repeat signs. The instrumental staves provide accompaniment for the song.



### **Top tips**

Use tunes taught by ear to help teach or reinforce arpeggios or scales.

Use words to help pupils remember the percussion part or the riff (first and third staves). Pupils can make up their own words if the rhythm is played to them - see first video on [musicwild.co.uk](http://musicwild.co.uk).

Play the tune with pupils learning the bassline (fourth stave) as soon as possible, and they will 'feel' where to change note.

Folk tunes are often well-known in different geographical areas, and nobody can be completely certain from where they originate.

You and your pupils may want to consider the balance – sometimes the underneath parts are higher than the top, which is playing the tune. However, the prominence of the third or the fifth of the chord above the tune can contribute to a 'folky feel', which you may want to keep.

# Lashon' ilang' uMam' akabuyi!

Trad. Zulu

Shuffle feel

The first system of music consists of three staves in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It begins with a whole rest, followed by a repeat sign. The first measure of the repeat contains a quarter rest, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note A4. The second measure contains a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note C5, and a quarter note Bb4. The third measure contains a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note F4. The second staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It begins with a quarter rest, followed by a repeat sign. The first measure of the repeat contains an eighth note G4, an eighth note A4, and a quarter note Bb4. The second measure contains an eighth note C5, an eighth note Bb4, and a quarter note A4. The third measure contains an eighth note G4, an eighth note F4, and a quarter note E4. The third staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It begins with a quarter rest, followed by a repeat sign. The first measure of the repeat contains a half note G4. The second measure contains a half note F4. The third measure contains a half note E4.

4

The second system of music consists of three staves in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It begins with a quarter note G4, an eighth note A4, and a quarter note Bb4. The second measure contains a quarter note C5, a quarter note Bb4, and a quarter note A4. The third measure contains a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, and a quarter note E4. The second staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It begins with an eighth note G4, an eighth note A4, and a quarter note Bb4. The second measure contains an eighth note C5, an eighth note Bb4, and a quarter note A4. The third measure contains an eighth note G4, an eighth note F4, and a quarter note E4. The third staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It begins with a half note G4. The second measure contains a half note F4. The third measure contains a half note E4.

7

The third system of music consists of three staves in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, an eighth note A4, and a quarter note Bb4. The second measure contains a quarter note C5, a quarter note Bb4, and a quarter note A4. The third measure contains a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, and a quarter note E4. The second staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It begins with an eighth note G4, an eighth note A4, and a quarter note Bb4. The second measure contains an eighth note C5, an eighth note Bb4, and a quarter note A4. The third measure contains an eighth note G4, an eighth note F4, and a quarter note E4. The third staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It begins with a half note G4. The second measure contains a half note F4. The third measure contains a half note E4. The system concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

### **Top tips**

It's essential to get the right swung 'feel' for this, both in the melody and the middle part. I suggest listening to the beginning of 'Diamonds on the Soles of her Shoes' (Paul Simon and Ladysmith Black Mambazo) with your pupils. Also repeating 'banana' can help! Pupils playing the third part could also play their notes on the 'groove' rhythm.

The tune is like a conversation – first two phrases (to end of bar 4) person a), second two phrases person b). Drawing attention to this can help memorise the tune.

Pupils learning the tune can learn the other parts too. It will help give them the feel of the groove, and of the harmonic structure.

Not all parts need to play all the time – see the third video on [musicwild.co.uk](http://musicwild.co.uk) for ideas about including pupils in musical decision making.

# Oh Them Britches Full of Stitches

Trad. American/Irish

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with three staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The first system consists of three staves of music. The second system begins with a measure rest (9) above the first staff, followed by three staves of music. The third system also consists of three staves of music. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and repeat signs.

**Top tips**

Familiarise pupils with the notes/rhythms from the tune by playing a relevant scale with a rhythm or melodic figure taken from the melody. For instance, the first three notes of bar seven could be used, playing the figure on each note of the bottom half of a G major scale: G AG, A BA etc. – see second video on [musicwild.co.uk](http://musicwild.co.uk).

Folk/traditional tunes are useful for introducing pupils to learning music by ear, as they often contain repetition.

Pupils playing the third part could play the A at the lower octave if desired.

# Wade in the Water

Spiritual

The musical score for "Wade in the Water" is presented in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of four systems of two staves each. The first system (measures 1-7) features a vocal melody in the upper staff and a piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The second system (measures 8-13) continues the melody and accompaniment. The third system (measures 14-18) shows the melody and accompaniment. The fourth system (measures 19-24) concludes the piece with a double bar line. The piano accompaniment is a simple, steady eighth-note pattern.

**Top tips**

This tune has a call and response feel. Split your group into two, and ask each group to play two bars each at a time. Then swop parts. This gives a satisfying feel, and helps the group to memorise the tune.

You can make accompanying parts as difficult as you like, but always ensure that they are memorable, and quick to learn. Whilst playing the accompanying parts and simultaneously listening to you play the melody, pupils have the opportunity to internalise the melody, whilst being musically involved.

# Mopsi Don

Trad. Welsh

1

5

9

13



### Top tips

For performances it is helpful to add accompaniments played by experienced musicians. This could be piano, and perhaps bass and drums.

To help remember the sections and piece them together, it is useful and fun to associate them with something else. For example, bars 9, 10, 13 and 14 could be 'the waterfall bits'. Encourage ideas from your pupils.

Sometimes tunes, or parts of a tune, lend themselves to being taught as 'a skeleton' first (see below). It is important to note that all of the strategies in this resource help pupils to recognise where they are in a piece. This helps them to learn it, and to get an understanding of structure.

To learn the accompanying part, use body parts: B = knees, C = tummy, D = shoulders, G = head (see first video on [musicwild.co.uk](http://musicwild.co.uk)). Ensure pupils have noticed that bars 7 and 8 are identical to bars 15 and 16.

First...

Then...

# Bourrée

Trad. French

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "Bourrée" in French. The score is written for two staves, treble and bass, in 3/8 time. The first system (measures 1-8) features a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a simple accompaniment. A first ending bracket labeled "1." spans the final two measures of the system. The second system (measures 9-16) begins with a measure rest labeled "9" and a second ending bracket labeled "2." over the first two measures. The treble staff continues with a more complex melodic line, while the bass staff maintains a steady accompaniment. A first ending bracket labeled "1." covers measures 14-15, and a second ending bracket labeled "2." covers the final measure (16).

**Top tips**

Teach segments at a time – smaller then larger, as in previous tunes, such as Uncle Bernard’s Polka.

You can teach each segment by singing it and asking pupils to copy back on their instruments. (Singing ensures that pupils use their ears, and don’t just copy your fingers.) Then play the segment repeatedly – on a loop – to really internalise it.

When pupils play only their segments whilst you perform the tune in its entirety, they may need help to know precisely when to play. You can sing the intervening bits, ‘ghost’ them in (play quietly), or make a gesture with your body to indicate where pupils join in again. (See second video on [musicwild.co.uk](http://musicwild.co.uk).)

# Logan Water

Trad. Scottish

Measures 1-5 of the piece. The first staff contains the melody with eighth and sixteenth notes. The second and third staves provide harmonic accompaniment with sustained notes and occasional eighth notes.

Measures 6-10 of the piece. The first staff continues the melodic line with more complex rhythmic patterns. The second and third staves continue the accompaniment.

Measures 11-15 of the piece. The first staff concludes the melodic phrase. The second and third staves conclude the accompaniment. The piece ends with a double bar line.

### Top tips

If part of the melody alternates with different material you can relate the piece to a sandwich, with the recurring tune being bread, and the other material being fillings – for instance, from the last beat of bar 8 to the dotted quaver in bar 9 and from the last beat of bar 10 to the dotted quaver in bar 11 could be slices of bread, whilst the semiquaver in bar 9 to the third beat (inclusive) in bar 10 and the semiquaver in bar 11 to the third beat (inclusive) in bar 12 could be a sandwich filling and a sandwich topping respectively.

From the last beat of bar 4 to the end of that section - the third beat of bar 8 inclusively – there is not much repetition, so the method suggested in, for instance, Uncle Bernard’s Polka doesn’t work so well. Instead, teach the first three notes of that section, then the first five then, the first eight etc.:

\*G A IBb

G A IBb A G

G A IBb A G IA G F...

\*I = barline

This is a bit like the memory game, where person a) says: ‘I went to the shop to buy an orange’; person b) says: ‘I went to the shops to buy an orange and bag of sugar’ and so on.

Advanced pupils can experiment with ornamentation. Listening to versions of the tune on YouTube can give them ideas. See the third video on [musicwild.co.uk](http://musicwild.co.uk) regarding musical decision making for more advanced students.

# Kopanitsa

Trad. Bulgarian

The musical score for "Kopanitsa" is presented in three systems. Each system consists of three staves: a vocal line and two piano accompaniment staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 8/8. The first system includes the lyrics "Cat-er-pill-ar butt-er-fly cat-er-pill-ar". The second system begins with a measure rest of 3 measures. The third system begins with a measure rest of 6 measures. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a dotted eighth-note pattern in the left hand.

11  $\frac{8}{8}$  *Cat-er-pill-ar butt-er-fly cat-er-pill-ar*

3

6

**Top tips**

The time signature of this tune makes it ideal to use with advanced students.

As in earlier tunes, words can help to feel the rhythm, and it is useful to teach the percussion part and harmony part first.

To find the first two notes in the tune, you can include the interval in a copying back exercise, or play/sing each note and ask pupils to match the pitch on their instrument.

In the 'A' part start by learning the first three notes of the tune in each bar then the first five.

## Going forward

You will probably want to source some tunes yourself now. Those featuring stepwise movement, some repetition, and a simple harmonic structure are best to start off with. English, Welsh, French and American Old Time folk tunes, and spirituals are a good place to start.

It's important to tailor tunes to consolidate the technical points pupils are currently working on, for instance by changing the key or the octave for advanced pupils, or devising easy parts for beginners. For easy parts it's helpful to think in terms of basslines and riffs or ostinati.

There are many strategies described above, and you will find that some suit one tune, and some another. Always keep learning rhythmic and try to help students maintain an idea of where they are in the tune – a feeling of navigating it.

If the tune or accompanying part has been internalised, *or* the pupil has a recording at home (this could be, for instance, you or YouTube), a whole lesson may be spent on it. If not spend part of the lesson working on the material, and return to it the following week. This way you will be able to ensure that enough time is spent on the things pupils can, and need to practise at home.

Remember that full explanations of these methods are demonstrated on [musicwild.co.uk](http://musicwild.co.uk):

[Videos \(musicwild.co.uk\)](http://musicwild.co.uk) – the first one for accompaniments, the second for melodies, and the third one for creativity - musical decision making.

My book 'Wild About *Brass*' will help you to integrate learning new music without notation into a holistic curriculum, which includes learning from notation too. This is available from online retailers such as Amazon:

[Wild About Brass: Inspiring, effective teaching resources : Wild, Ruth: Amazon.co.uk: Books](https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/1851954444)



