

# 10 Tunes to Teach by Ear

*For woodwind – beginner to advanced*

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



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

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 are for all instrumental families, and 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 Woodwind'. 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 Woodwind: 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.

I have included resources for flutes and clarinets. However, material can be adapted for all woodwind instruments. Keys and register can be altered to accommodate the needs of your pupils: their instrument, experience and level of performance. More advanced material appears in the latter half of the resource.



# Uncle Bernard's Polka (flute)

Trad. English

Sheet music for Uncle Bernard's Polka (flute), featuring lyrics and musical notation.

**Lyrics:**

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

**Chords:**

G D C G

**Lyrics:**

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

**Chords:**

D G G

**Lyrics:**

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

**Chords:**

D G G D G

# Uncle Bernard's Polka (clarinet)

Trad. English

6

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

G D C G

6

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

D G G

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*

D G G D G

### 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 example 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

The musical score is written for four staves in 4/4 time, key of D major (one sharp). The first system shows a teacher's melody and three pupils joining in progressively. The teacher's melody starts with a quarter note G, followed by a quarter note A, then a half note B, and a quarter note C. The first pupil joins in with a quarter note D, followed by a quarter note E, then a half note F, and a quarter note G. The second pupil joins in with a quarter note A, followed by a quarter note B, then a half note C, and a quarter note D. The third pupil joins in with a quarter note E, followed by a quarter note F, then a half note G, and a quarter note A. The second system shows the continuation of the melody and accompaniment, ending with repeat signs. The melody consists of a sequence of eighth and quarter notes, while the accompaniment is a simple rhythmic pattern of quarter notes and rests.

## Morning from Peer Gynt (flute)

Grieg



## Morning from Peer Gynt (clarinet)

Grieg



**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 (flute) or G to E and A and E (clarinet).



# Hunt the Squirrel/Hela'r Wiwer (flute)

Trad. English/Irish/Welsh?

6

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

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

# Hunt the Squirrel/Hela'r Wiwer (clarinet)

Trad. English/Irish/Welsh?

6

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

**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! (flute)

Trad. Zulu

Shuffle feel

4

7

# Lashon' ilang' uMam' akabuyi! (clarinet)

Trad. Zulu

Shuffle feel

4

7

### **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 (flute)

Trad. American/Irish

Optional teacher's part

The first system of the musical score consists of four staves, all in treble clef, key of D major (two sharps), and 2/4 time. The first staff is labeled 'Optional teacher's part'. The melody is composed of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some slurs. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff features a series of eighth notes followed by rests, with a final eighth note and a quarter rest. The fourth staff provides a simple harmonic accompaniment using quarter and eighth notes.

The second system of the musical score also consists of four staves, continuing the piece from the first system. It maintains the same key signature and time signature. The notation follows the same patterns as the first system, with the first staff being the optional teacher's part and the fourth staff providing harmonic support.

# Oh Them Britches Full of Stitches (clarinet)

Trad. American/Irish

Optional teacher's part

The first system of the musical score consists of four staves in 2/4 time. The first staff is labeled 'Optional teacher's part' and contains a melody of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff contains a continuous eighth-note accompaniment. The third staff features a pattern of eighth notes followed by rests. The fourth staff provides a bass line with eighth and sixteenth notes.

9

The second system of the musical score, starting at measure 9, continues the four-staff arrangement. The first staff continues the melody, the second staff continues the eighth-note accompaniment, the third staff continues the eighth-note and rest pattern, and the fourth staff continues the bass line.



**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 an A major scale: A BA, B C#B etc. for flute, or the bottom half of a C major scale: C DC, D ED etc. for clarinet. See more how this strategy works on the 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.

# Wade in the Water (flute)

Spiritual

The musical score is written for flute in 4/4 time. It consists of four systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The melody is primarily in the treble staff, while the bass staff provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes. Measure numbers 8, 14, and 19 are indicated at the start of their respective systems. The piece concludes with a double bar line in the final measure of the fourth system.

8

14

19

# Wade in the Water (clarinet)

Spiritual

The musical score is written for three staves in 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first system (measures 1-7) shows the clarinet part with a melodic line in the first staff, a supporting line in the second staff, and a bass line in the third staff. The second system (measures 8-13) continues the melody with more complex rhythmic patterns. The third system (measures 14-18) features a more active bass line. The fourth system (measures 19-23) concludes the piece with a final melodic phrase and a double bar line.

8

14

19

**Top tips**

This tune has a call and response feel. The clarinet version already reflects this. For flutes, 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.

If bars 19 and 20 for the top clarinet part are too tricky, replace them with bars 3 and 4.

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 (flute)

Trad. Welsh

The musical score for "Mopsi Don (flute)" is written in 6/8 time and consists of two staves. The melody is primarily in the upper staff, while the lower staff provides a simple harmonic accompaniment. The piece is divided into four systems, each containing four measures. The first system starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The second system begins with a measure rest labeled '5'. The third system begins with a measure rest labeled '9'. The fourth system begins with a measure rest labeled '13'. Each system concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots. The melody features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing beamed eighth notes. The accompaniment consists of dotted half notes and quarter notes.

5

9

13

## Mopsi Don (clarinet)

Trad. Welsh

The musical score is written for a clarinet in 6/8 time. It consists of four systems, each with a melody line on a treble clef staff and a bass line on a bass clef staff. The melody line includes a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature of 6/8. The bass line consists of a single note (Bb) repeated throughout. The melody line is marked with measure numbers 1, 5, 9, and 13 at the beginning of each system. The melody line ends with a double bar line and repeat dots. The bass line ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

5

9

13

### Top tips

The top clarinet part could be played up an octave.

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 example 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: E = knees, F = tummy, G = shoulders, C = 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 (flute)

Trad. French

The musical score is written for flute in treble clef, key of D major (two sharps), and 3/8 time. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system contains measures 1 through 8. The melody in the upper staff begins with a quarter rest, followed by eighth and sixteenth notes. The bass staff provides a simple accompaniment of quarter notes. A first ending bracket labeled '1.' spans measures 7 and 8. The second system begins at measure 9, indicated by a '9' and a repeat sign. The melody in the upper staff features more complex rhythms, including eighth and sixteenth notes. The bass staff continues with quarter notes. This system includes two first ending brackets: one labeled '1.' for measures 10-11 and another labeled '2.' for measures 12-13, both leading to a final double bar line.



# Bourrée (clarinet)

Trad. French

9

1.

2.

1.

2.

**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).)

The clarinet melody in the second half can be easily divided between experienced and less experienced pupils, phrase by phrase.

# Logan Water (flute)

Trad. Scottish

The musical score for "Logan Water (flute)" is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of three systems of three staves each. The first staff of each system contains the melody, while the second and third staves provide harmonic accompaniment. The score begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The first system covers measures 1 through 5. The second system, starting at measure 6, continues the melody and accompaniment. The third system, starting at measure 11, concludes the piece with a double bar line. The melody is characterized by eighth and sixteenth notes, while the accompaniment features a mix of half notes and quarter notes.

Logan Water (clarinet)

Trad. Scottish

6

11

### 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.:

\*A B IC

A B IC B A

A B IC B A IB A G...

\*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 a 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 (flute and clarinet)

Trad. Bulgarian

11/8

*Cat-er-pill-ar butt-er-fly cat-er-pill-ar*

3

6

The musical score is written for three staves. The first staff is a vocal line with lyrics in italics. The second and third staves are instrumental lines for flute and clarinet. The time signature is 11/8. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The score is divided into three systems, each starting with a measure number (1, 3, 6). The first system contains measures 1-2. The second system contains measures 3-4. The third system contains measures 5-6. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

**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.

The version of the tune that I have used here is slightly simplified for ease of memorisation.

## 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.

Learning by ear will develop aural and ensemble skills – great ends in themselves, but it's also important to integrate the learning with other skills. Use the material to consolidate technical learning. Tailor the tunes accordingly, 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, as the learning can be easily continued at home. If this is not the case, 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* 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. They can be used for all instrumental families.

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[Wild About Woodwind: Inspiring, effective teaching resources : Wild, Ruth: Amazon.co.uk: Books](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Wild-About-Woodwind-Inspiring-effective-teaching-resources-Wild-Ruth/dp/1851956000)



