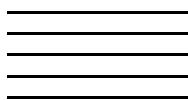


EDUCATION



By *Nina Stern and Isabella Pagel*

After nearly two decades of introducing the recorder to groups of children, the music education organization **S’Cool Sounds (SCS)** has released a 10-week set of lesson plans intended for recorder teachers and enthusiasts at www.scoolsounds.org/publications.

SCS (www.scoolsounds.org) was founded in 2002 with the mission of using the power of music to inspire, educate and connect children and communities. In 2016, after becoming an independent nonprofit, the organization reaffirmed and broadened its dedication to expressive communication, mutual respect, and global awareness through musical training for children and adults who lack access to arts education.

Expanding to bring music to other populations

Over the past 18 years, S’Cool Sounds has reached over 7000 students (*like those in the photo, below right*)

in New York City, NY, at more than 30 different schools. SCS more recently expanded its reach, coming up with ways to teach formerly homeless adults and other vulnerable New Yorkers at affordable and supportive housing residences in New York City (*photo near the end of this article*).

What began as a vision is now a community that believes in social connectedness, in stimulating creativity and imagination, and in giving the gift of music. By making music together we tell our stories and listen closely to the stories of people around us and far away—communicating and connecting in a way that is now more important than ever.

The cross-cultural focus of S’Cool Sounds has also found a natural expansion since 2009, when SCS Artistic Director **Nina Stern** was invited by a humanitarian organization to introduce the SCS music program to children living in the Kibera slum of Nairobi, Kenya (see her report in the *November 2010 AR*). Today, SCS

programs have been implemented in five schools in Kenya working with elementary, middle and high schoolers.

In recent years, SCS has also developed partnerships with a health organization in the East African nation of Burundi and an organization serving Syrian refugees in Jordan (read about this in the *Winter 2016 AR*). In her travels, Stern has reached hundreds of additional students across the U.S. and abroad in Belgium and The Netherlands, sharing her work with students and teachers at music conservatories and teacher training conferences.

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reached over 7000 students
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Sharing success through a new set of lessons

The new S’Cool Sounds lesson plans grew out of the collective SCS experience. SCS teaching artists contributed successful ideas and strategies, testing them across countries and cultures and in a great variety of settings from classrooms to small groups.

The focus is on developing strong recorder technique together with ensemble skills, which evolve through the addition of various percussion instruments. Developed by Stern, together with SCS communications associate **Isabella Pagel**, this beginning curriculum was designed as a 10-week program, with complete lesson plans consisting of recorder and general music instruction for entire classrooms of children or for other beginner groups. The full curriculum is **\$40** including the song collection book.



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Alternatively, each individual lesson plan can be purchased for \$5. The income supports SCS’s nonprofit educational activities.

Students are taught **BAG** as their foundation notes on the recorder and

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progress to a full octave later in the program’s lessons. SCS lesson plans seek to create a beautiful sound on the recorder through engaging technique activities. Improvisation, articulation, making music as an ensemble, basic



S’Cool Sounds Artistic Director Nina Stern (at right) leading a classroom of children at the Ella Baker School in New York City



Isabella Pagel teaching students at the FAFU school in Kibera, Kenya

percussion techniques, and introductory rhythmic notation are also addressed.

The lesson plans include images, such as blowing air on a spoon to cool soup or porridge, to illustrate proper recorder technique, as well as an introduction to basic percussion technique for hand drums, shakers and more. Percussionist **Peter Maund** gave valuable input on teaching percussion to children and other beginners.

Six original *Three-Note Songs*, inspired by musical cultures from around the globe, are provided as ensemble performance pieces. Like many traditional tunes, these pieces are all quite short. While they may look brief on paper—if their original versions are written down at all—traditional melodies can be played for much longer by using various instrumentations on repeats.

Simply adding percussion enlivens the pieces immeasurably. Teachers and group leaders are encouraged to create arrangements that allow all players to be contributing members of the ensemble. Even if students have mastered only one note, or one simple rhythm, there is a place for them in the group—and the ensemble would not be complete without them.

Improvisation, articulation, making music as an ensemble, basic percussion techniques, and introductory rhythmic notation are also addressed.

The effectiveness of the three-note pieces is greatly enhanced by layering the parts, creating improvisatory sections, as well as by adding singing and movement. Later in this article, you will find an example of one of the *Three-Note Songs* with options for a simple arrangement.

While the S'Cool Sounds curriculum is intended for teaching recorder (together with percussion), we have found these lesson plans and activities to be applicable to any instrument. They could also be useful for more advanced amateurs who want to give back to their community through teaching recorder and music. Some activities, such as basic improvisation and technique exercises, might even be useful to improve your own solo and ensemble playing.

Curriculum as culmination

When Stern was asked about the publication of the new SCS curriculum, she responded:

In 2002, when I first founded the music education program—now called S’Cool Sounds—I had no idea how it would grow and develop, how many lives it would touch, and how deeply it would inspire me.

I have been inspired by our incredible team of teaching artists—supremely talented young professional performing musicians who are also dedicated to sharing their passion and their talents with people less fortunate than they. I have learned so much from them—about teaching styles, learning styles, performance styles, about jazz, about traditional Kenyan music, about traditional Arabic music, and about improvisation. Young musicians are just incredibly poised, well-trained and fearless these days.

I have been inspired by all of the people who have helped me along the way, most especially by my board members—highly accomplished professionals who care enough about S’Cool Sounds to contribute a great deal of time, thought and expertise to furthering our mission to inspire, educate and connect children and communities through music.

Several of my board members are also accomplished amateur recorder players and early music lovers who continue to support the work we do year after year. Without their



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S’Cool Sounds Kenyan music director Jacob Saya (at right in photo below) teaching students at WERU High School in Nyahururu, Kenya



Three-Note Samba

Nina Stern

Recorder



Sam-ba the sam-ba we dance all day, sam-ba the sam-ba we play.



Sam-ba the sam-ba we dance all day, sam-ba the sam-ba we play.

Rhythm 1 —||: (Hand drum)



P P D D

Rhythm 2 —||: (Shaker)



Ideas for a sample performance arrangement of Three-Note Samba

1. Play Rhythm 1 on percussion for eight bars.
2. Add Rhythm 2 on percussion for eight bars.
3. Sing the song once through together with the percussion parts.
4. Play only the percussion parts for eight bars.
5. Play the melody once through together with the percussion parts.
6. Play only the percussion parts for eight bars.
7. Play the percussion parts (very softly) while several recorder players improvise, one at a time, in four-bar phrases.
8. Play only the percussion parts for eight bars.
9. Play the percussion parts (very softly) while individual players take a percussion solo in four-bar phrases.
10. Play the melody once through with the percussion parts. (This is where a drone note, rhythmic drone or simple harmony—possibly using some of the additional notes players have learned—could be added.)
11. Grand finale! Conclude with all parts playing (melody and percussion). Have several ensemble members who have choreographed a small dance join the group for a rousing ending.

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dedication we never would have become an independent nonprofit, we wouldn't be working with thousands of children and adults on three continents, and we wouldn't be connecting people through music.

Most of all, though, I am inspired by our students, whether it's a second-grader

in the Bronx fearlessly taking a solo in C Jam Blues or a fifth-grader break dancing to a Cantiga de Santa Maria or a group of kids from one of our schools in the Kibera slum of Nairobi having the courage to compete, in their tattered school uniforms, in a national music competition against schools from all over the country

and winning—not once, not twice, not three, but four times!

Or whether it's formerly homeless tenants in one of our partner organizations, Breaking Ground's residences, daring to perform for everyone, including invited guests, at a Thanksgiving dinner—showing off their new skills. One of our recorder players from a residence in Brooklyn has even been spotted busking at his local subway station.

The recorder is, of course, a much beloved instrument used in professional ensembles and orchestras worldwide. It is beloved by amateurs and professionals alike and it is the perfect introductory instrument for children. For me—a professional recorder player and early music specialist—to see the instrument used to open hearts and minds, to see it give the opportunity for creative expression and to see how it connects people and communities gives me great joy.



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Nina Stern and Jacob Saya with the music team from the Garden of Hope school in Kibera, Kenya



Native New Yorker Nina Stern studied at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Basel, Switzerland, where she received a Soloist's Degree. From Basel, she moved to Milan, Italy, where she was offered a teaching position at the Civica Scuola di Musica. Stern was more recently appointed to the faculty of Juilliard's Historical Performance program in

2012, and has served on the faculties of the Mannes College of Music (where she directed the Historical Performance Program from 1989-96) and the Five Colleges in Massachusetts. She has also been a visiting professor of recorder at Oberlin Conservatory.

Early Music America (EMA) presented its 2019 Laurette Goldberg Award for lifetime achievement in early music outreach and/or educational projects for children or adults by ensembles and individual artists to Stern and S'Cool Sounds (see www.earlymusicamerica.org/web-articles/2019-laurette-goldberg-award). Stern was previously honored with EMA's 2005 Early Music Brings History Alive Award.

Stern performs widely on recorders, chalumeaux and historical clarinets, appearing as a soloist or principal player with orchestras such as The New York Philharmonic, New York City Opera, American Classical Orchestra, Philharmonia Baroque, Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, La Scala Theatre Orchestra,

I Solisti Veneti, Hesperion XX, Opera Lafayette, Handel and Haydn Society, and Tafelmusik. She has recorded for Good Child Music, Erato, Harmonia Mundi, Sony Classics, Newport Classics, Wildboar, Telarc, MSR and Smithsonian labels. Her Recorders Without Borders, two books for beginning recorder players and percussion, is intended for use in the school classroom. Besides periodic reports in AR about the activities of her students over the years and reviews of her CDs in these pages, recently she contributed a short article with percussionist Peter Maund to the ARS Nova e-mag; "Melody through Rhythm, Rhythm through Melody: Adding Percussion to the Recorder Ensemble" is posted at https://americanrecorder.org/ars_nova_e-mag_archive.php. Visit the S'Cool Sounds web site for videos and remote learning opportunities in world music and recorder at www.scoolsounds.org/remote-learning.

Originally from Seattle, WA, Isabella Pagel is a recorder player and teacher who has taught and performed in the U.S. and The Netherlands. She started playing the recorder when she was nine years old, and since then has studied with Nina Stern, Vicki Boeckman and Bart Spanhoeve. She also studied at the Royal Conservatoire of The Hague with Reine-Marie Verhagen.



Pagel began her teaching career at the age of 12 as a ski instructor to four-year-olds. Ever since, she has been dedicated to the teaching process and continues to

teach recorder (and skiing) to children and adults of all ages. She has taught recorder with Pi Muziek voor Kleuters, a unique music program for preschool students in The Hague, The Netherlands.

Pagel joined the S'Cool Sounds team as an intern and a teacher in the Kibera slum of Kenya in 2017. From that point, she took on the role of communications associate and has since traveled to Kenya three times.



SCS teaching artist and jazz musician Ruaridh Pattison (back row center, with tenor saxophone) and adult residents at an SCS Breaking Ground residence