

Welcome to the Introducing Harmonica course at Waltons New School of Music.

This course is designed to teach you the basics of diatonic harmonica playing in various styles. We ask you to keep four important things in mind as you begin:

1. **The more you put into the course, the more you will get out of it.**
2. **Communicate with your teacher** if there is an area you're having difficulty with or something you don't fully understand. Your teacher is here to help you, so don't hesitate to approach him if you're having difficulty with anything.
3. **Have patience.** Although we all want to play recognisable tunes, we also need to concentrate on a number of essential skills. Remember, good technique is the backbone of good playing!
4. **Listen to great harmonica players.** Doing this should be an inspirational rather than frustrating ('I'll never be able to do that') experience!

### Practice

Practice is an essential aspect of any music course, and we all know the phrase 'practice makes perfect'. Yet even the most eager learner might cringe when told to practice daily. Perhaps the most challenging aspect of learning a musical instrument is developing a healthy, productive approach to practice. Your teacher will give you guidelines on how and what to practice, but the real work is up to you, and mostly on your own time. Here are a few tips:

- **Aim to practice every day.** Even a small amount of daily practice is much more effective than a long practice session the day before your next class. Make practice a part of your daily routine. Determine when is the best time for you to practice. If you like practicing in the morning, get up 30 minutes early so that you won't be late for work. If you're an evening person, do your practice before going to bed or before you become sleepy.
- **Make your practice area comfortable.** Is the room well ventilated? Is there good lighting? Is your mobile switched off or on silent? Make sure that your practice area is comfortable and free from distractions so that you can concentrate when practicing.
- **Practice for at least 20 minutes.** Why 20 minutes? We find that this is a manageable time for beginners. As your interest and skill level grows, you will find that your daily practice time will also increase.
- **Reward yourself.** If you have just learned to play something that you've previously had trouble with, by all means reward yourself! You don't have to splurge; just doing something you particularly enjoy will give you a morale boost and further inspire you to learn.
- **Focus on your practice.** Effective practice requires concentration and focus. If you are rushing to do it or are distracted by other things that need doing, you won't get much out of it. Try spending a few minutes in silence before you begin in order to take a few deep breaths and clear your head of other concerns.

### Harmonica Care & Maintenance

Even though most diatonic harmonicas are relatively inexpensive instruments, good quality harmonicas will last for years if you take good care of them. The most delicate parts of a harmonica are the parts that produce the sound, its reeds. A few things to keep in mind:

- **Always store your harmonica in a case.** A hard case is best and protects your harmonica from any minor impacts, but even a leather or cloth bag that fits the harmonica snugly will protect it from dust and scratches.
- **Avoid extreme temperatures,** which can shrink or swell the reeds, and avoid leaving the instrument in direct sunlight.
- **Avoid dust and other particles.** Dust will interfere with the movements of the reeds. Also, don't eat before practicing your harmonica, as you may have food particles in your mouth!
- **Avoid excess moisture.** This can swell the reeds, and possibly cause rust to other parts.
- **Clear out any moisture if possible.** Most of the moisture that might affect your harmonica comes from your mouth. After playing, shake the harmonica a bit, pat it gently against your palm and wipe it clean with a cloth.