



Contents

Preface	3
Foreword	4
Acknowledgements	5
About the Author	6
Session 1	7
• <i>traits, history, types of harmonica, basic techniques</i>	
Session 2	11
• <i>practice scale of holes 5 - 8</i>	
Session 3	13
• <i>semibreve, minim, crotchet notes</i>	
Session 4	17
• <i>quaver, dotted crotchet notes, tie</i>	
Session 5	19
• <i>slur, pick-up note, practice of holes 1 - 4</i>	
Session 6	23
• <i>alla breve, fermata, syncopation</i>	
Session 7	27
• <i>upper octave of holes 9 - 12</i>	
Session 8	29
• <i>dynamics: crescendo, decrescendo, tenuto</i>	
Session 9	33
• <i>6/8 time, dynamics: piano, forte, mezzo piano, mezzo forte</i>	
Session 10	37
• <i>repeat signs, tempos: Andante, Moderato, Allegretto, Allegro</i>	
Session 11	41
• <i>triplets, ritardando, staccato, legato</i>	
Session 12	45
• <i>sixteenth note, dotted eighth note</i>	
Session 13	49
• <i>sharp, flat, natural, chromatic scale</i>	
Session 14	55
• <i>full length solo pieces</i>	
Session 15	61
• <i>full length duet pieces</i>	
Session 16	67
• <i>musical terms, major periods of classical music, selected pieces for more advanced learners</i>	



Preface

Harmonica in Practice: Elementary is the first locally published harmonica music coursebook in English. It attempts to promote the learning of chromatic harmonica to both Chinese- and English-speaking communities.

Harmonica in Practice: Elementary focuses on elementary skills in playing harmonica on the one hand and general musical knowledge and musicianship on the other. Concepts such as rhythms and tempos, scales, groupings of notes and rests, dynamics, articulations, repeats are included.

The playing of harmonica is approached through both the appreciation of music and the exercise of techniques. A wide range of music repertoire is selected to help learners understand and appreciate various genres as well as acquire and practise various skills to be learned. The selected material is popular music pieces that learners will come across within schools and mass media.

These music pieces are mainly written in cipher notation rather than stave notation, because it is commonly used in harmonica playing in Asia-Pacific Region. However, to help learners learn both notations, blank stave is provided for learners to transcribe selected music pieces from cipher notation to stave notation. Through instructor's assistance and exercises, learners will gradually master both notations.

Ensemble playing is vital to the acquisition of musicianship. Hence, a number of popular solos and duets are included. For trios and quartets, they will be included in *Harmonica in Practice: Intermediate* and *Harmonica in Practice: Advanced* respectively.

It is sincerely hoped that this coursebook can effectively help learners not only take in the basic skills in harmonica playing but also develop musicianship and passion for music.



Foreword

I am most delighted to witness the birth of an excellent book dedicated to the harmonica world. This is to my knowledge the first harmonica teaching method book written in English by a Chinese harmonica expert, *Mr. Seto, Andy Wood-hung*, who is locally born, brought up and has thoroughly inherited the unique harmonica culture of Hong Kong. This book thus contributes to serving the interest of a much wider population of harmonica lovers as well as closing the gap in understanding and appreciation of Chinese and Western style of harmonica culture and education.

Andy is a great harmonica enthusiast with infectious charming personality and musicianship. He is also an experienced teacher who holds a master degree in education. This book has greatly reflected his highly organized and systematic way of thinking and teaching. In each chapter, the objective of the lesson is clearly stated with simple explanation and illustrative practice exercises. In parallel with the music theory, *Andy* has successfully let the students learn the elementary skills in playing harmonica with different rhythms, tempos, dynamics and many other music expressions. He has also chosen a great variety of tailor-made music pieces in his planned exercises, with simple eye-catching and interesting introductory phrases made to each work, which is something not often found in practice books for musical instruments!

Another unique feature of this book is the adoption of both numeric and stave notation as language for the music. This must be the first harmonica textbook that has clearly explained the meaning and conversion principle of numeric notation in music (a form of music score commonly used in Asian harmonica players) in terms of standard stave notation. It thus introduces not only our traditional music notations to the western world but also simultaneously bridges the gap for Asian harmonica players to learn reading music in standard stave notation. This is certainly an exciting move to expand the horizon of harmonica art form by sharing of our music more effectively with other parts of the world.

It has been a great pleasure for me to read through this book and I am looking forward to seeing the intermediate and advanced book of the same series in the near future.

Dr. Ho Pak Cheong, CECS
President
Hong Kong Harmonica Association
Ten Outstanding Young Person of Hong Kong 2002



Session 1

OBJECTIVES:

1. To understand the traits, the history, and types of harmonica.
2. To learn basic techniques of harmonica playing
3. To practise scale of holes 5-8

Brief Introduction of the Instrument

Traits

- A harmonica or mouth harp is a wind instrument with multiple, variably-tuned brass or bronze reeds that can freely vibrate.
- It is placed between the lips and played by inhalation and exhalation.
- The varying notes available are played by moving the instrument to and fro on the lips.
- As it had fixed notes, no tuning was necessary.

History

- The introduction of the Chinese sheng into Europe in 1777 led to many experiments in the use of the reed.
- The harmonica appeared in Vienna in the mid-1820s. Although it is not known for certain who invented it, a possible candidate is Georg Anton Reinlein.
- Early harmonicas were hand-made, the wooden body-work carved and the reeds beaten from brass wire and fitted individually into the brass or bell metal reed-plates. Later a second reed-plate, which produced notes by sucking the air in, was added below the original one.
- One major production centre was set up in the small town of Trossingen (where the firm of Hohner was founded in 1857) in south-west Germany.



Chinese Sheng



Hohner Factory in Trossingen, Germany

- As a result of industrialization in the 1880s, harmonica became an instrument of mass production and was soon played in almost every country in the world. It reached its peak in the late 1920s when the German harmonica industry, which by then had gained a worldwide monopoly, was producing more than 50 million instruments a year.
- In the 1920s the chromatic harmonica was developed and was brought into prominence by Larry Adler in the late 1930s, followed later by Tommy Reilly. Despite the fact that serious works were written for it by composers such as Ralph Vaughan Williams and James Moody, the harmonica has never been widely accepted in the mainstream classical music field.

Types

- There are two main types of harmonica - the diatonic and the chromatic.
- Basically, the diatonic harmonica is designed to produce the notes of the tonic chord of the key in which it is tuned by exhalation and the other notes of the diatonic scale by inhalation. On this type of instrument only the middle octave of the three-octave range is complete.
- The chromatic harmonica consists basically of two harmonicas in keys a semitone apart. It has a slide mechanism operated by a small hand-lever, which enables the player to change from one set to the other.
- The early type of chromatic instrument (10 holes, 40 reeds) was soon superseded by the 12-hole instrument of 48 reeds with three completed octave ranges.
- This type of instrument is now virtually standard, although a bigger model (16 holes, 64 reeds) with a range of four octaves is also available.
- Many other types of harmonica are designed for special purposes in group and band performance. These include bass and chord accompaniment instruments.



Diatonic and chromatic harmonica

[Ivor Beynon, G. Romani / Christophwagner: ' Harmonica (i) [mouth organ]', *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed August 14, 2007), <http://www.grovemusic.com.easyaccess1.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session_search_id=856507539&hitnum=4§ion=music.12384>]

Ways of Holding the Harmonica

- Hold the body of the harmonica in your left hand between the thumb and other fingers. The index finger should not cover the hole number on the front plate of the harmonica.
- Fold the right hand over the harmonica, forming the shape of a clam.
- The index finger of the right hand is used to control the lever.



Puckering

- Tighten your lips as if to whistle
- Press them firmly against the harmonica.
- Blow into and draw from hole 5.
- Aim at getting a single and clear tone.
- Don't overblow the harmonica; otherwise the reeds will be damaged.



General Care of the Harmonica

- Rinse your mouth with water before playing.
- Turn the harmonica over and strike it against cloth to get rid of the moisture in the reeds.
- Warm the harmonica with hands or inside pocket.
- Use a damp cloth (or water, if necessary) to wash the metal surface of the harmonica.

Cipher Notation

1̇ 2̇ 3̇ 4̇ 5̇ 6̇ 7̇ 1̇ 1̇ 2̇ 3̇ 4̇ 5̇ 6̇ 7̇ 1̇ 1̇ 2̇ 3̇ 4̇ 5̇ 6̇ 7̇ 1̇

lever in normal position

lever in pressed position

Cipher Notation

#1̇ #2̇ #3̇ #4̇ #5̇ #6̇ #7̇ 1̇ 1̇ 2̇ 3̇ 4̇ 5̇ 6̇ 7̇ 1̇ 1̇ 2̇ 3̇ 4̇ 5̇ 6̇ #1̇ 2̇

■ Practice of Scale

(1) | 1 - 1 - | 3 - 3 - | 5 - 5 - | 1̇ - 1̇ - ||

(2) | 1̇ - 1̇ - | 5 - 5 - | 3 - 3 - | 1 - 1 - ||

(3) | 1 - 2 - | 3 - 4 - | 5 - 6 - | 7 - 1̇ - ||

(4) | 1 1 2 2 | 3 3 4 4 | 5 5 6 6 | 7 7 1̇ 1̇ ||

(5) | 1 3 2 4 | 3 5 4 6 | 5 7 6 7 | 1̇ - - - |

| 1̇ 6 7 5 | 6 4 5 3 | 4 2 3 2 | 1 - - - ||

(6) | 1 23 2 34 | 3 45 4 56 | 5 67 6 71̇ | 7 67 1̇ - |

(7) | 1̇ 76 7 65 | 6 54 5 43 | 4 32 3 21 | 2 17 1 - ||