

# HARMONIOUS NOISE

## Rudiments of the recorder

By Christopher Grier

As Carl Dolmetsch observed in the Freemasons' Hall some years ago: "It is fairly easy to play the recorder badly . . ." Within that apparent platitude lies a truth acutely known to anyone who has piped a lay either solo or in consort.

The recorder's rudiments can quickly be learnt even by those who have never tackled an instrument before. Its proper mastery, however, requires a great deal of application and artistry, more than may reasonably be expected of the average amateur. But if the tyro never aspires to the heights, he or she can soon give themselves, and, one hopes, others more pleasure in a shorter space of time than they could with any other musical instrument.

Furthermore, to a far greater extent than with the piano or violin, the recorder is something an adult can take up with a reasonable expectation of making a "harmonious noise." (Most people start with the descant size, for various very practical reasons, although in some ways it is the most difficult member of the family to play well).

### WEEK-END COURSE

This was brought home to the writer over the week-end, when the Edinburgh branch of the Society of Recorder Players held a meeting at Carberry Tower, Eskbank. Under the dynamic direction of May Whitby, over a score of men and women had assembled for a course of instruction and recreation.

Within this group there was, needless to say, a considerable range of aptitude, skill, and musicianship, but the communal enthusiasm was patent, whether in rehearsing a set-piece or going through something for fun. (As a visitor, one was very conscious both of the instrumentalists' application and of their sociability). At their best, the results were extremely agreeable, though intonation, as always, was apt to present problems.

At the afternoon session I attended, one of the members told the company of the seventeenth-century Viennese composer Schmelzer, produced transcriptions of his own devising, and in no time had everyone at work giving what was almost certainly the Scottish première of some hitherto unknown and most engaging music.