

# Theory and Application



## Ornamentation on the Whistle 1

**THE NOTION OF TEACHING** *whistle* in a class is a relatively new one. For centuries before, people either worked out how to play for themselves, or learned from a more experienced player in a one-to-one basis. For this reason there is no one method of teaching aspects such as decorative techniques.

When it comes to ornamentation, it can become a matter of the player's own methods, and you may find conflicting advice

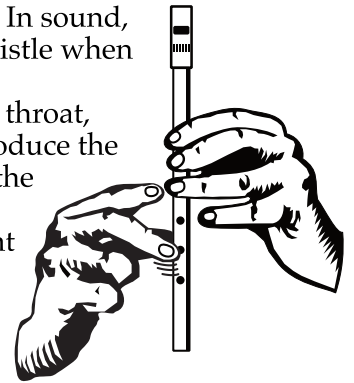
depending on where you look. Here I'm going to try and describe various decorative techniques in the hope that it will be able to find your way through this thorny subject.

I should also say that I believe it's better to play a tune plainly and well than badly with lots of ornamentation. It's only when you've reached a certain proficiency that you'll be able to elaborate tunes so that it sounds natural.

### Vibrato

The definition of vibrato is "a rapid fluctuation in the pitch of a note". In sound, it's the wavering of a note, and it can especially be effective on the whistle when playing slow airs.

There are two ways of achieving the effect: from the diaphragm or throat, or using your fingers. The first method is perhaps more difficult to produce the desired effect quickly and needs lots of practice. The other, the use of the fingers, is easier and can be achieved instantly. Try this: play a long, smooth G note (3 fingers down). Now with your 2nd finger of the right hand, shake it over the 5th hole, up and down, on and off the hole. The effect is slight, but discernible.



### Sliding

A nice decoration is the sliding of one note into another; it is particularly effective on slow airs. On the whistle this is done simply by starting off with the note below and swiping your finger across and off the hole

to give a smooth transition to the note above. Start off on the high  $\dot{E}$  note and slide your second finger smoothly off the hole so that you end up by playing the high  $\dot{F}\#$ . Practise this.

### Starting Grace Notes

The *starting grace note* involves adding a higher note before the proper note you're about to play. Although the higher note could be any higher note, you can start off by learning a system: the **D**, **E**, **F#**, and **G** notes will be preceded by the **A** note; the **A** and **B** notes will be preceded by the **C** note. You don't use a starting grace note on the **C** note. You do not have to remove all of your fingers to make

this decoration; just twitching your finger off the A note will produce the desired effect.

(A) D (A) E (A) F# (A) G (C) A (C) B

### Mid-Grace Notes and Tapping

These are both single notes used to separate two notes of the same pitch. You might normally use tonguing as a way of separating the notes, but with mid-grace notes and taps

you employ a continuous flow of breath, only interrupted by the finger ornament. *Mid-grace* notes use a higher note as the separator, while *taps* use the note below.

Mid-grace notes

E (C) E F# (C) F# G (C) G A (C) A B (C) B C# C#

Taps

E (D) E F# (E) F# G (F#) G A (G) A B (A) B C# (B) C#