

# Third-graders pick up musical skills on recorder

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The Beatles, Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, David Bowie, Jimi Hendrix and Lou Reed have a lot in common. Aside from the fact that they've all helped cement rock and roll as a mainstream musical genre, they also all have a connection to an unlikely instrument, the recorder. From "Fool On The Hill" and "Ruby Tuesday" to "Stairway To Heaven" and "Life On Mars?," the instrument can be heard in some of our most iconic and beloved songs.

The recorder has an illustrious past. The oldest surviving example dates back to 14th-century Europe. A collection of 76 recorders was listed in the personal effects of King Henry VIII at the time of his death. Handel, Vivaldi and Bach all incorporated the instrument into their compositions. Shakespeare even wrote it into the third act of Hamlet.

Bethany Bennett, music teacher at Conley Elementary School recently introduced her third-graders to the recorder and they are now moving the instrument's heritage forward. But it all begins with practice. "If you have a love of practice, that carries over into so many other things in life," explained Bennett.

Her entire classroom management plan is based around the habits of rehearsal. "My students are very accustomed to me giving an instruction and then it being an immediate opportunity to practice that instruction. If we get it wrong, we just do it again."

Within 20 minutes of picking up the instrument, the students were able to play an entire song. Preslee Donaldson, was delighted by her new found skill. "I love it," she said. She is especially eager to use the online resources available to her through the school district's investment in the Quaver music curriculum. "I'm really excited to do all the songs on the website," she said.

A modern advancement to be sure, the Quaver curriculum enhances and expands upon Bennett's classroom instruction. Students can create their own account, log in and practice the recorder or any other musical instrument or concept whenever they'd like. "It's a high quality curriculum and it's free for them to do at home. There are musical games and it even has a mixing board. They can change the frequency and the amplitude and add sound effects and filters like Auto-Tune. The resources are just limitless."

During class, Sherrick Williams learned that "there are different kinds of recorders and one is bended and the rest are straight." The bent neck of the bass recorder is a 20th-century innovation that brings the body of the instrument closer to the player. Each Conley student received their own soprano recorder that is theirs to keep.

Sherrick found the recorder to be "a peaceful



**Sherrick Williams is now part of the instrument's lineage.** AMANDA THOMPSON

instrument" and he is inspired by the idea that he's now part of the instrument's lineage. "We're the next generation," he said. "We'll be in history and if we talk to people about the recorder and show them, they will know how to play it too."

That's exactly what Bennett hopes her students gain through their study. "This social emotional community that we share through music is something kids really, really need right now," she said. "They come in here and this is a safe, loving space."

"They're getting to appreciate that this has been happening for a long time and they are a part of it. It makes them feel connected in a way that maybe they don't get in a lot of other places at this age. For them to understand why these musical traditions are important for our past and our present, it's not one directional. It carries on to our future too."

*Amanda Karioth Thompson is the Assistant Director for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture ([www.tallahasseearts.org](http://www.tallahasseearts.org)).*