

for ages 7-11

by Peter Sills

the
Knack
of Making Music
in the classroom

>

featuring
★
the ukulele



Plus...

- guitar
- singing
- recorder
- keyboard
- xylophone
- percussion

For the specialist and generalist music teacher

The Knack of Making Music in the Classroom

The Knack of Making Music in the Classroom began life as a ukulele tutor, but it quickly became clear how easily other classroom instrumentalists could join in and play along.

In my classroom music lessons, children usually begin by learning either ukulele or guitar. As the lesson progresses, they naturally gravitate towards other instruments such as keyboard, xylophone, recorder, and percussion, with plenty of singing along the way.

Every teacher will adapt the material in this book differently, depending on their own experience, teaching style, and the needs of their pupils. Whether you are a specialist music teacher or a non-specialist classroom teacher, the aim remains the same: to make music-making accessible, enjoyable, and successful for every child.

Teaching ukulele — or any combination of instruments — to a large classroom group is very different from one-to-one tuition. In a classroom setting, teachers must balance a wide range of abilities and challenges while maintaining creativity, momentum, and enjoyment throughout the lesson.

Four Simple Steps to Getting Started

Every long journey begins with a single step, and music is no different.

The Knack of Making Music provides teachers and children with a series of carefully structured steps designed to lead naturally towards successful and enjoyable classroom music-making.

Step 1 — The A Song (Track 1)

The first activity introduces the note A, which is particularly easy to play on the ukulele. Children should begin by singing the song, paying close attention to the timing of the “A-A-A” phrases. These songs are specifically designed to help children develop a secure sense of rhythm — an essential skill when playing with others.

Once the song feels comfortable vocally, children can begin playing it on their chosen instruments while continuing to focus on rhythm and timing.

Steps 2 and 3 — The G Song and The Bee Song (Tracks 2 and 3)

These songs follow the same teaching approach as *The A Song*, gradually reinforcing note recognition, rhythm, listening, and ensemble playing skills.

Step 4 — The Bag Song (Track 4)

For some children, this may represent a significant step forward, particularly on ukulele, guitar, or recorder. Not every child will master it immediately, but most will achieve success with encouragement and practice.

Once children can confidently play the notes B, A, and G, a whole world of music opens up to them. From this point onwards, they are able to perform many familiar songs together as part of their classroom music group.

This method is the result of hundreds of music sessions with young children. Every stage has been carefully developed to support both confident learners and those who may struggle with sequencing, coordination, or other learning difficulties.

Chord symbols are provided throughout the book for teachers wishing to accompany the class on piano, guitar, or ukulele. MP3 backing tracks are also available for every song, which may prove especially helpful for non-specialist music teachers. Some lessons additionally include slower practice versions, as indicated on the “Easy View” pages.

A Little About Peter Sills

Peter Sills grew up around music in a jazz club in Ilford, Essex, UK. He began performing at a very young age, appearing on television and playing concerts in and around London, including at the Royal Festival Hall by the age of ten.

At nineteen, he became a professional musician and travelled extensively, performing with bands and orchestras across a wide range of musical styles, including jazz, classical, Russian, Brazilian, and contemporary music. During his career, he worked with artists such as Rick Wakeman.

Peter is also a prolific songwriter. He has written songs for Cliff Richard and achieved chart success in America with Olivia Newton-John.

A turning point in Peter’s life came during a visit to America, where he was entertaining local children in a friend’s garden. A passing driver stopped to watch the music-making and later introduced himself as the director of a summer school for underprivileged children. Although Peter initially explained that he had no teaching experience, he was persuaded to spend several days working at the camp.

The experience proved life-changing.

On returning to the UK, Peter began studying and researching music education for young children. He later worked alongside the schools department at Yamaha Corporation, travelling extensively to give demonstration lessons to both specialist and general classroom teachers. He went on to write several books for the Yamaha Music School.

For more than twenty years, Peter has worked as a music specialist in schools, while continuing to pursue one of his greatest passions — playing gypsy jazz guitar.

Where to find the basic notes on the ukulele

C D E F G A B C

1st strings
2nd strings
3rd strings
4th strings

1st strings
2nd strings
3rd strings
4th strings

Strings played open - fingers off

Left Handed Players

Left handed players will need to follow these instruction in reverse. Ideally, the ukulele should be strung the other way round, but if this is not viable, it is possible to re-tune a standard ukulele left-handed.

The basic guitar, recorder and keyboard notes are shown at the end of each lesson.

Where to find the basic notes on the guitar

C D E F G A B C

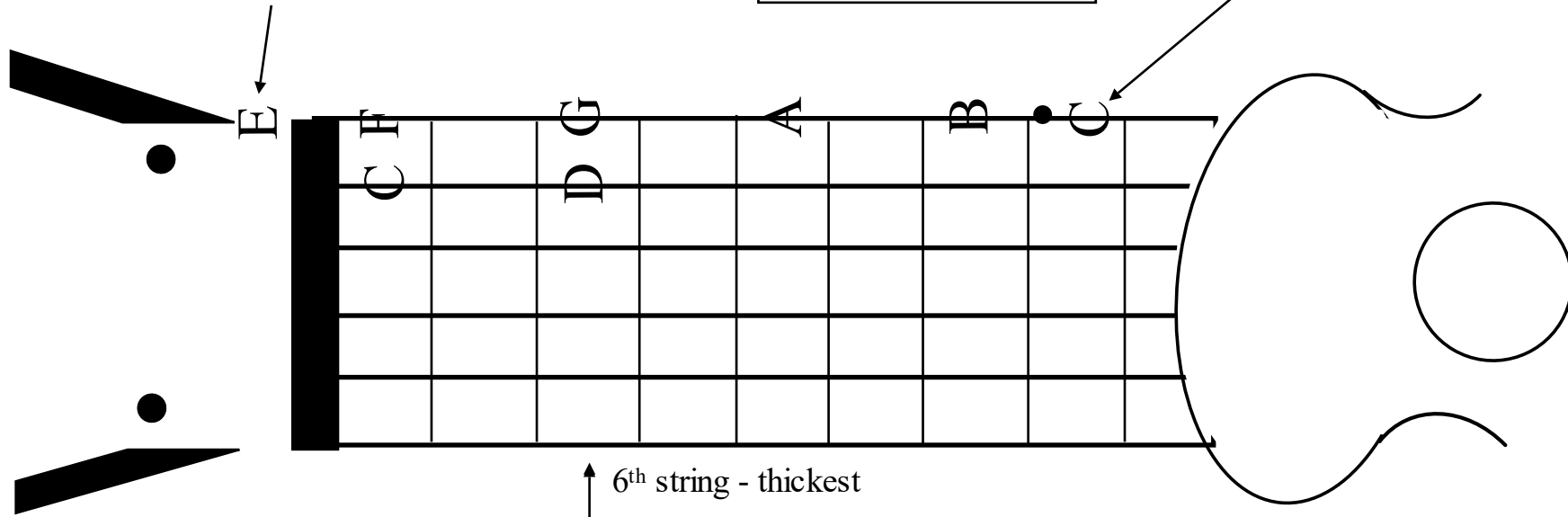
1st
2nd
3rd
4th
5th
6th
strings

T
A
B

String	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C
1st	1	3	0	1	3	5	7	8
2nd								
3rd								
4th								
5th								
6th								

1st string played open - fingers off

Left handed players need to follow these instructions in reverse.



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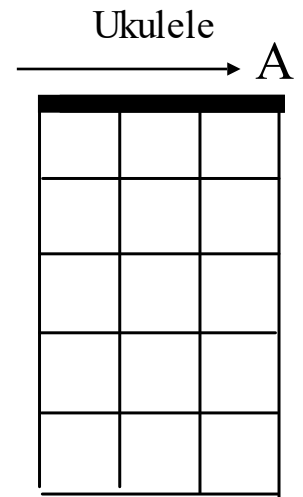
Page	Track
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easy view



the
A Song
 track 1

A Note: notes shown above the thick black line are played open - fingers off.



Guitar, keyboard
 and recorder notes: page 9

A A A

A A A

the A Song

The very first letter of the Alphabet is

A A A

It's a very useful letter as you might expect it's

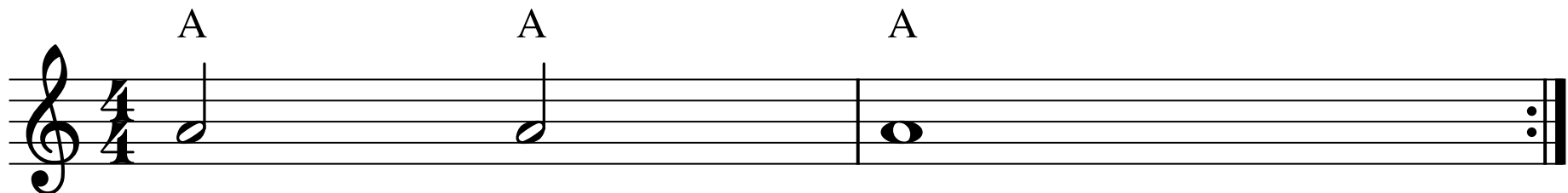
A A A

You can find the letter **A** in the middle of a **DAY**

When you go out to **PLAY**, it's in everything you **SAY**

Because, the very first letter of the alphabet is

A A A



follow
track 1

The A Song

chords

The very first letter of the Alphabet is

Chords

A

A
A

A
D

A
A

It's a very useful letter as you might expect it's

A

A
A

A
D

A
A

You can find the letter A in the middle of a DAY

D

C#7

When you go out to PLAY, it's in everything you SAY

F#m

B

Because, the very first letter of the alphabet is

A

A
A

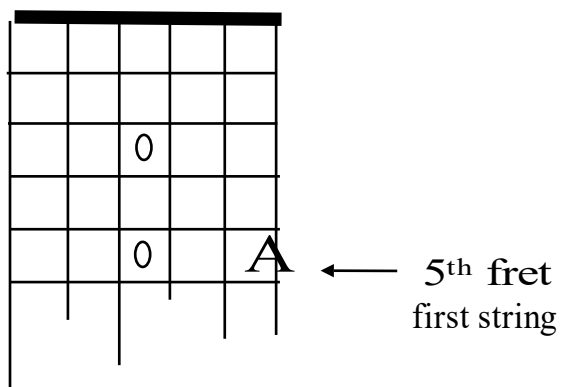
A
D

A
A

The A Song

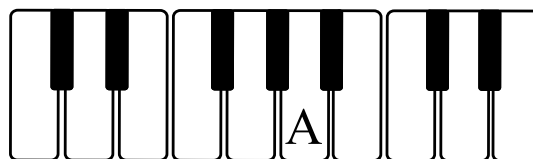
guitar-keyboard-recorder

Guitar



Where to find the notes:

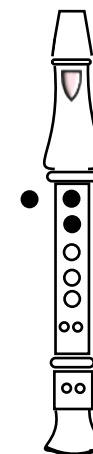
Keyboard



Percussion

Percussion instruments follow the timing of the other players with this song.

Recorder



A

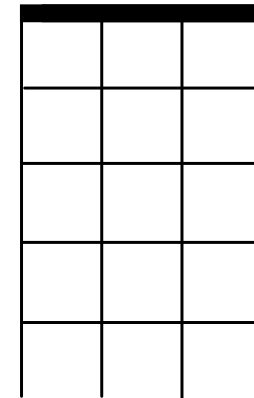
easy view



the **G Song**
track 2

G Note: notes shown above the thick black line are played open - fingers off.

G
0 Ukulele



Guitar, keyboard
and recorder notes: page 13

G GGG

G GGG

The G Song

Imagine a world without the letter **G**

G G G G G G G G

And all the wonderful words, there would not be

G G G G G G G G

I could never be good, I would only be ood

G G G G G G G G

My Mama wouldn't like that would she, no

My Mama wouldn't like that would she

G G G G G G G G

Without a **G**, nothing would go

G G G G G G G G

We couldn't go fast - we couldn't go slow

G G G G G G G G

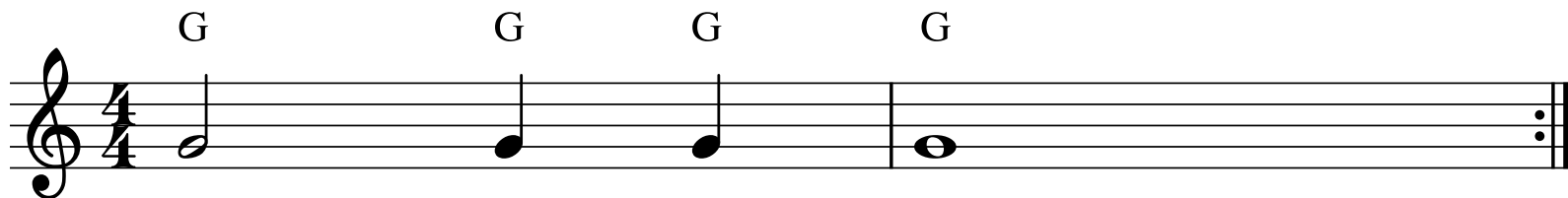
I couldn't gee-up my horse if I had one of course

G G G G G G G G

It's such a wonderful letter to know

Such a wonderful letter to know

G G G G G G G G



follow
track 2

The G Song

chords

Chords

Imagine a world without the letter G

G **C** **G**

G G G G G G G G

G

And all the wonderful words, there would not be

G **C** **G**

G G G G G G G G

G

I could never be good, I would only be ood

G **C** **G**

G G G G G G G G

G

My Mama wouldn't like that would she, no

G **D** **Em** **C**

My Mama wouldn't like that would she

G **D** **G**

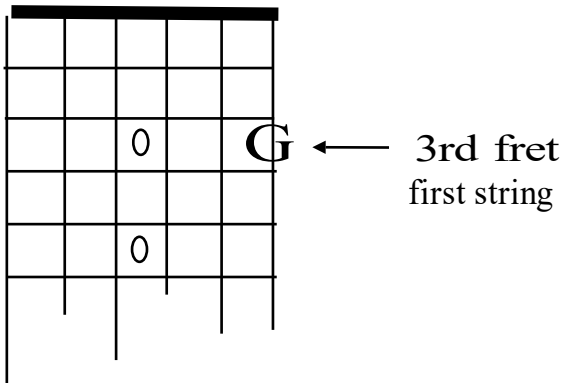
G G G G G G G G

G

The G Song

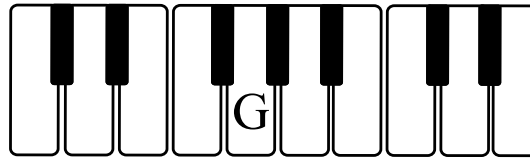
guitar-keyboard-recorder

Guitar



Where to find the notes:

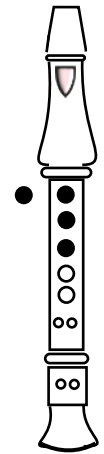
Keyboard



Percussion

Percussion instruments follow the timing of the other players with this song.

Recorder



G

easy view



the **Bee Song**

track 3

Ukulele

		B

Guitar, keyboard
and recorder notes: page 17

B B B

B B B

the Bee Song

A Bee sat in the middle of five lines upon a page

B B B B B B

Happy to be the centre of attention yes he was

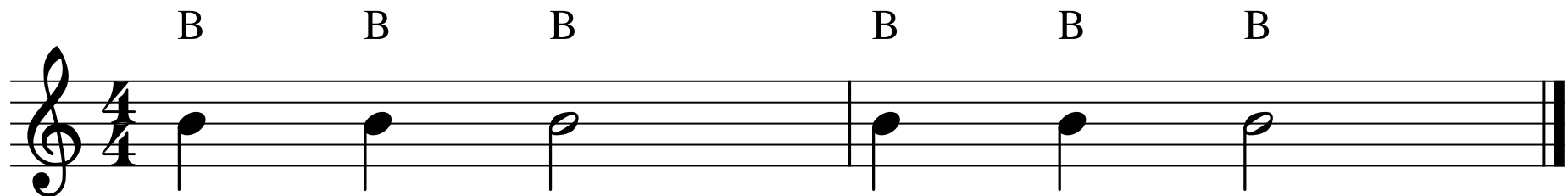
B B B B B B

He considered himself the bee's knees

Of the bumble bee fraternity

And just about as happy as a bee can possibly be

B B B B B B



follow
track 3

the Bee Song

chords

A Bee sat in the middle of five lines upon a page

Chords

B

A

B

B B B B B B

B

Happy to be the centre of attention yes he was

E

A

B

B B B B B B

B

He considered himself the bee's knees

G#m

Of the bumble bee fraternity

G#m

And just about as happy as a bee can possibly be

B

A

B

B B B B B B

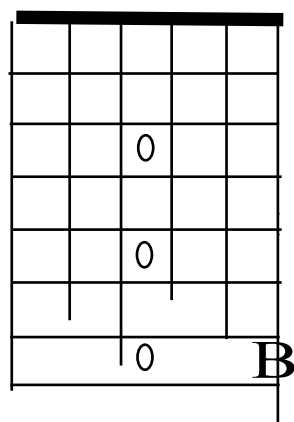
B

the Bee Song

guitar-keyboard-recorder

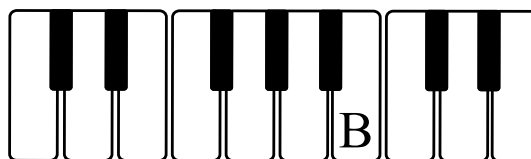
Where to find the notes:

Guitar



← 7th fret
first string

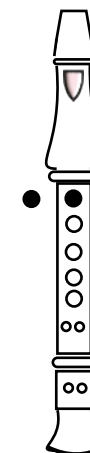
Keyboard



Percussion

Percussion players follow the timing of the other instruments with this song.

Recorder



B

easy view



the
Bag Song

track 4

G	Ukulele	A
		B

Guitar, keyboard
and recorder notes: page 21

B A G

the Bag Song

I went to ^{*}Tesco took a shopping bag

B A G

I went to Tesco took a shopping bag

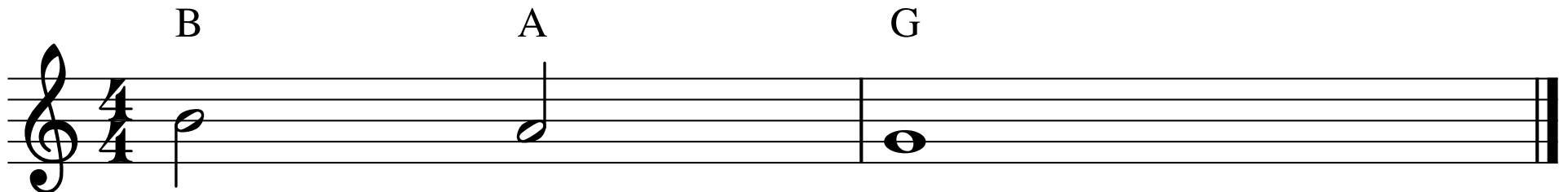
B A G

I bought cabbage and carrots and broccoli and peas
Apples and oranges - SMELLY OLD CHEESE

Cause I went to Tesco took a shopping bag

B A G

* Other supermarkets are available



follow
track 4

the **Bag Song**
chords

I went to Tesco took a shopping bag
Chords **G** **C** **G**

B **A** **G**
G **D** **G**

I went to Tesco took a shopping bag
G **C** **G**

B **A** **G**
G **D** **G**

I bought cabbage and carrots and broccoli and peas
C **G** **C** **G**

Apples and oranges - SMELLY OLD CHEESE
C **G** **D**

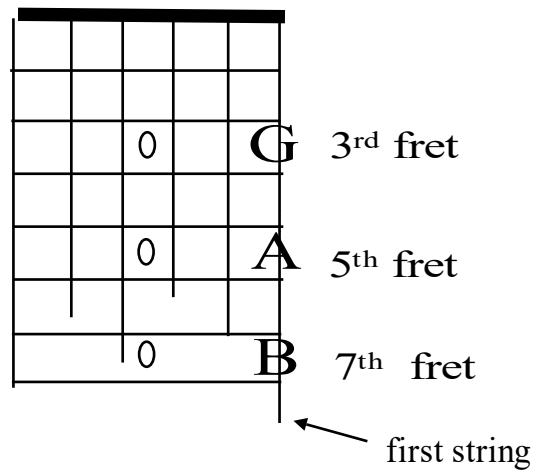
Cause I went to Tesco took a shopping bag
G **C** **G**

B **A** **G**
G **D** **G**

the Bag Song

guitar-keyboard-recorder

Guitar



Where to find the notes:

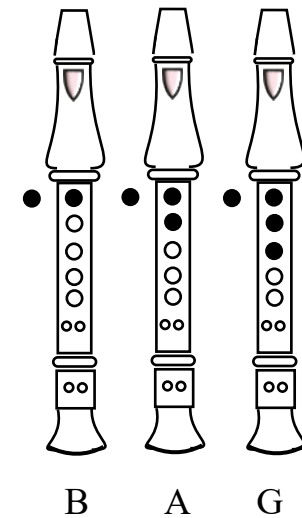
Keyboard



Percussion

Percussion players follow the timing of the other instruments with this song.

Recorder



easy view



Hot X Buns

track 5

G Ukulele A

		B

Guitar, keyboard
and recorder notes: page 25

B A G B A G

G G G G A A A A

B A G

Hot X Buns

follow
track 5

1st melody/**chords**

B A G B A G

Hot X buns Hot X buns

G **D** **G** **G** **D** **G**

Chords

G G G G A A A A

One a pen ny two a pen ny

G **D**

B A G

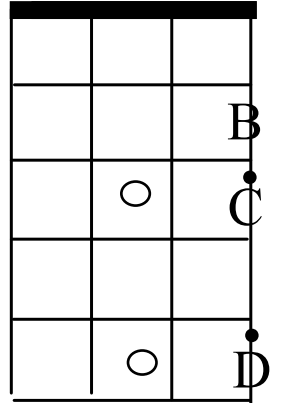
Hot X buns

G **D** **G**

Hot X Buns

2nd melody

Ukulele



Chords: D, C, B, D, C, B

Notes: D, C, B, D, C, B

Lyrics: Hot X buns Hot X buns

Chords: B, B, B, B, C, C, C, C

Notes: B, B, B, B, C, C, C, C

Lyrics: One a pen ny two a pen ny

Chords: D, C, B

Notes: D, C, B

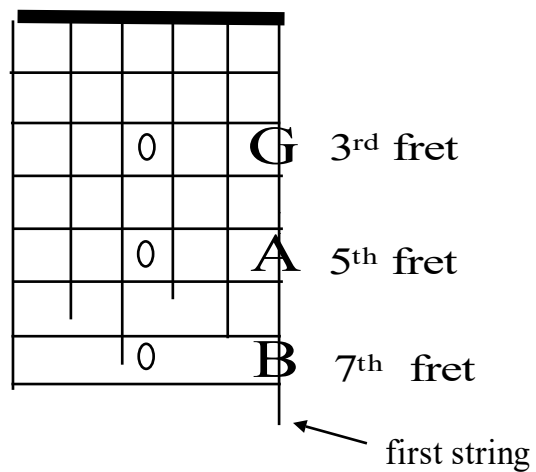
Lyrics: Hot X buns

Hot X Buns

guitar-keyboard-recorder

Where to find the notes - melody 1

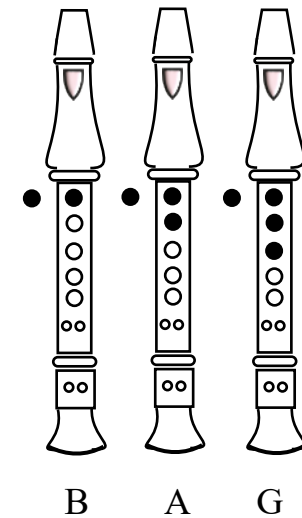
Guitar



Keyboard



Recorder



Percussion

Percussion players follow the timing of the other instruments with this song.