

Reach for A Star, Book 2

By Marcelline Moody

Reviewed by Catherine West

Berandol Music

Teacher's Manual/CD: \$55

Reproducible Student Pages/CD: \$55

Both: \$105

I am not an unbiased reviewer of the present offering: I speak as a huge fan of *Reach for a Star* Book 1, and am eager to start working with the long-anticipated Book 2. Once again Marcelline Moody has created a masterpiece for recorder teachers, incorporating breadth of repertoire, engaging and creative teaching strategies, and musicality.

As with the first book, this book comes with a high quality accompaniment CD containing tracks with and without the recorder line. The student pages are a one-time expense (per school) as they can be reproduced legally, making the program highly affordable. The teacher book is a treasure trove, beginning with the Introductory section containing basic advice, a summary of sure-fire teaching strategies ("Nail That Note", "Divide and Conquer", the floor staff and others), and a teacher-friendly summary of the theory and technique covered in this volume (including sixteenth-notes, anacrusis, articulation, phrasing, breathing, slurs, major and minor etc.). New notes include high C, high D, low C, low F, F sharp, and B flat, in that order. New notes are added slowly, allowing time to develop the important technical skills above, and to build rhythmic understandings such as hemiola and seven beats in a bar.

Progressing through the book teachers will find a wealth of active games and creative materials, often featuring Ms. Moody's signature turn of phrase (for example, an "Interrupted Siesta" to practice performing rests accurately, an "Anacrusis, Anacrusis" round which prepares for "London's Burning", the "Seven-Eight Slither"). The repertoire is a fresh and unusual combination of fine MKM compositions, traditional songs, and material drawn from historical sources. Often a familiar or review piece is used to introduce a new concept (such as playing Frère Jacques in major and minor keys using the new notes F# and Bb), while there are many more ambitious pieces for consolidating musicianship and performance skills, for example, The Skye Boat Song, Aria from the Peasant Cantata by Bach, and Simple Gifts. The teaching plans are always helpful, including many movement suggestions, and creative activities. Many lovely Orff and piano settings are included, with tenor recorder becoming an option in some by the end of the volume.

Working with *Reach for A Star* for the second year, I would affirm the importance of taking the time to go through all the steps and repertoire. At this pace, students remain engaged by the variety of activities, and really solidify their skills, experiencing the sheer pleasure of mastery. This program encourages us as teachers to make haste very slowly, always emphasizing musicianship and enjoyment. And don't for a minute consider not giving out those stars – my students were very offended when I thought we might skip one: "Ms. West it says here we get a green star!" Lesson learned, and thank-you Marcelline Moody for this very fine program.

"Indecision" from Reach For A Star, Book 2, is our Curriculum Corner for this issue. Marcelline Moody is a member of the Ostinato Editorial Board. Catherine West is the Editor.