

## chapter two

# Glorious Opening Tunes

**B**efore we put those Natural notes into songs we have to learn two very important aspects of playing the sax. The first of these is

*the art of  
tonguing*



The tongue is the most important primary colour and is vital to brighten up your playing. So, how to tongue when playing the sax. This took me far too long to master, and it will take you about 30 seconds!

Blow the note **C** (octave key **off**) and hold it for about 10 seconds and at the end of this time lift your tongue and place it on the reed. The result – *the note stops dead*. Now blow for five seconds, and lift the tongue to touch the reed. Again the note stops dead. Try for one second, then add the tongue so the note immediately stops. That's it! You are now tonguing. These short, crisp notes are called **staccato**.

Now to refine **staccato**, without blowing, say “T” and practise flicking the tongue out of your mouth almost as though you have a slight lisp.

20

“T” Staccato  
on a **C**

So, blow the **C**, say “T.T...T.T...” flicking the tongue on and off the reed. The note should be short. You are aiming to flick the tip of the tongue on the tip of the reed. The “T” should just



**tickle** the end of your tongue at the start of the note, and should sound soft, light and clipped. Make sure you are holding the sax away from your body, standing up straight. The mouthpiece should be level. It is best illustrated by a dot over the note: •



The aim is to coordinate the tongue with the fingers. The way to do this is to play the **staccato** on all the natural notes, with one ‘T’ for each note. Try **C major**:

• • • • • • •  
**C B A G F E D** bot C

21

**C B A G**  
**F E D** bot C  
 Staccato

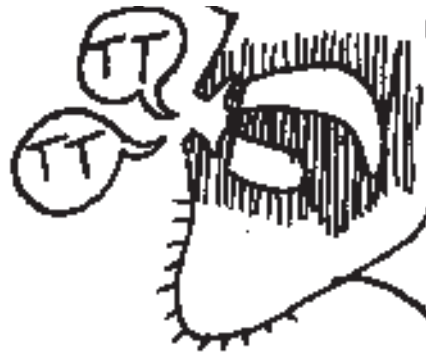


As you will hear, use **staccato** like a *spice* in your cooking – just a little to give it taste but not too much or you'll have *Montezuma's revenge!* At the other extreme, none at all and the music will be bland.



Knowing how to play **staccato** leads to the other important form of tonguing.

**Legato** is flicking the tongue on and off at the beginning of **C** (octave key **off**) together with blowing through the rest of the note. So, what we have is one continuous long note, with the tongue flicked on and off at the start. This is best illustrated by a **—**. Try this in **C major**:



22

**C B A G**  
**F E D** bot **C**  
Legato

— — — — —  
**C B A G F E D** bot **C**

The difference between these two tonguing methods is that **legato** is a long note with a highlighted beginning and **staccato** is just a short clipped note.

Keep the tip of the tongue on the tip of the reed so that it has a soft and subtle effect on the note. It should just

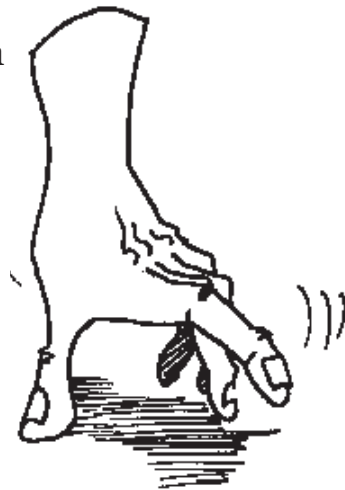


touch and make one clean sound. If it makes two sounds then you are not getting the tongue off the reed quickly enough. Remember, keep the sax away from your body standing to attention. Mouthpiece level.



Try the **legato** on every note. Then try it on every second note. Then on every third, fourth, fifth and sixth notes. Really listen to the different ways this affects your phrasing. Using the tongue in this way really brings certain notes alive, and keeps each phrase interesting.

Last but not least, **slurring** is when you blow and move the fingers up and down changing from one note to another smoothly without tonguing. Since you started playing, this is what you have been doing – ‘*let those fingers do the walking*’.



**23**

Swing feel tonguing every other note

**24**

Swing feel tonguing every 3rd note

**25**

Swing feel tonguing every 4th note

**26**

Swing feel tonguing every 5th note

**27**

Swing feel tonguing every 6th note

**28**

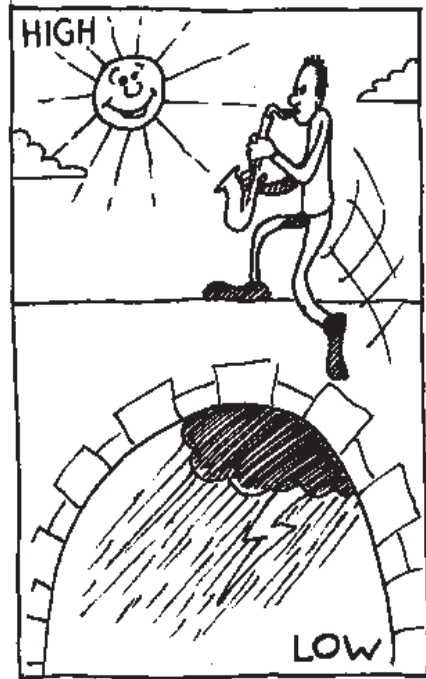
Slurring  
C B A G  
F E D bot C



## *Crossing the Bridge*

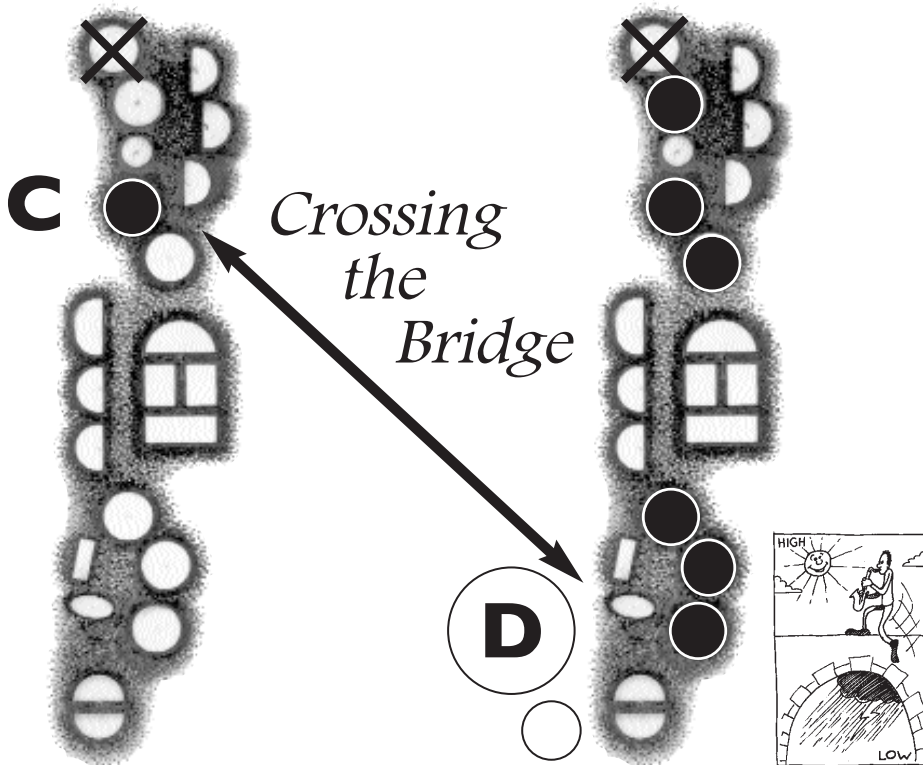
This is the second aspect of playing that we need to learn before putting those naturals into songs.

‘*Crossing the Bridge*’ is moving from **C** up to **(D)** (six fingers) while depressing the octave key at exactly the same time. Get used to crossing the bridge back and forth with no hesitation or stopping to admire the view. It seems like an awful lot of work to move only one natural note, from **C** to **(D)**, but this is the way Adolf designed his saxophone and it becomes second nature with time.



Remember a **(D)** will take slightly more air than a **C**. Think of it as a seamless journey from one register to another.

Make sure your fingers are *touch tight* to the keys and remember the left-hand thumb should be sitting **over** the octave key. If one finger or thumb is even fractionally late arriving at the keys, the note will sound distorted. Work on these hand movements until you can cross the bridge smoothly – this is exactly the sort of finger exercise you can do in front of the TV.



29

Crossing  
the Bridge  
C to D



# Camptown Races

Foster (1850)

The best way to start coordinating the left and right hand natural notes is to play lots of tunes. This will enable you to feel confident with playing around with the order of the notes you've just learned. Then you can really start showing off.

This one is free. Cost me  
'nought pence'! I liked that and  
the ridiculous in me kept hearing  
the cartoon rooster 'Foghorn  
Leghorn' singing it. And  
Camptown also starred in one of  
the opening send-up gags penned  
by Richard Pryor in Mel Brooks's  
*Blazing Saddles* with 'them Yankee  
cowboys'. To cap its immense  
cred, I stumbled upon a random

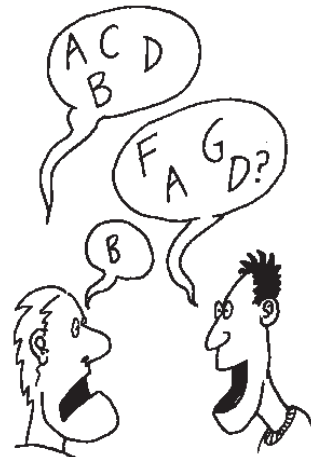




two-minute version by one of my favourite alto saxmen, Paul Desmond, originator of the most famous jazz-pop crossover, *Take Five*, with his famous accomplice, pianist Dave Brubeck.

Over the page is the layout of the notes for *Camptown Races*, split into phrases. All you need to do is to play the notes in the order they are laid out, breathing where shown. Listen to the CD. Octave key **(on)**.

All tunes are split up into musical *Phrases*. A musical phrase is just like a spoken sentence. Sometimes we say short phrases, ‘*yeah...I dunno*’, and sometimes we gabble on for hours before drawing breath. A musical phrase, just like a verbal one, starts and finishes upon breathing, the words being replaced by notes. Remember the saxophone is an extension of your singing voice.



*Camptown Races*

Verse 1 Camp-town la- dies sing that song / <sup>2</sup>Doo-dah Doo-dah/

30

ⓐ ⓑ ⓓ ⓔ ⓖ ⓗ ⓘ ⓙ ⓚ ⓛ ⓜ /

Slow with sax

<sup>3</sup>Camp-town race track five miles long/

ⓐ ⓑ ⓓ ⓔ ⓖ ⓗ ⓘ

31

<sup>4</sup>Oh! De-doo-dah day! /

Slow without sax

ⓐ ⓑ ⓓ ⓔ ⓖ ⓘ

Chorus <sup>5</sup>Gwine to run all night! / <sup>6</sup>Gwine to run all day! /

ⓐ ⓑ ⓓ ⓔ ⓖ ⓘ ⓙ ⓚ ⓛ ⓜ ⓝ ⓞ ⓟ ⓠ ⓡ /

<sup>7</sup>I'll bet my mon-ey on de bob-tail nag /

ⓐ ⓑ ⓓ ⓔ ⓖ ⓘ ⓙ ⓚ ⓛ ⓜ ⓝ ⓞ ⓟ ⓠ ⓡ /

<sup>8</sup>Some-bod- y bet on de bay. /

ⓐ ⓑ ⓓ ⓔ ⓖ ⓘ ⓙ ⓚ ⓛ ⓘ

Listen to me playing the tune on the CD. Really get your inner ear listening to music as proactively as possible because this whole approach is about listening by ear, which is crucial. You have to really have big ears to learn about this instrument. *Camptown Races* – play the phrases very, very slowly indeed on their own.



## *Camptown Races*

Verse 2 <sup>9</sup>I came down dah wid my hat caved in/ <sup>10</sup>Doo-dah Doo-dah/

(G) (G) (E) (G) (A) (G) (E) / (E) (D) (E) (D) /

<sup>11</sup>I go back home wid a pocket full of tin /

(G) (G) (E) (G) (A) (G) (E) /

<sup>12</sup>Oh! De Doo-dah day! /

(D) (F) (E) (D) C /

Chorus <sup>13</sup>Gwine to run all night! / <sup>14</sup>Gwine to run all day! /

C C (E) (G) (C) / (A) (A) (C) (A) (G) /

<sup>15</sup>I'll bet my mon-ey on de bob-tail nag /

(G) (G) (E) (G) (A) (G) (E) /

<sup>16</sup>Some-bod- y bet on de bay./

(D) (F) (E) (D) C /

OK, so we are going to do a verse of *Camptown Races*, beautifully, slowly, with the music. Listen to it, get your ear going and once you feel confident try and play that along with me and along with the music. Once you have got that then try to do it on your own. But first things first, get it accurate, get it singing, and get it sounding beautiful.



The main fingering difficulty will be in phrases 5 and 13, when you cross the bridge from **C** with the octave key **off** to the **(E)** with the octave key **on**, then to **(G)**. From the **(G)** with three fingers you are then going to have to pivot to the high **(C)**. That is going to be the main area of awkwardness, so get your fingers used to working and doing exactly what you are telling them to do.

The other thing, there will be two bridge crossings from the **(E)** to the **(D)**, falling to the **C**. Now do this tune slowly, do it accurately, and get it sounding as beautiful as possible. Now try playing it on your own. Once you have got it accurate we will be speeding it up and doing a real cowboy showdown, *Blazing Saddles* version of it.

32

**C** major  
**C** **(on)** **D E F**  
**G A B C**

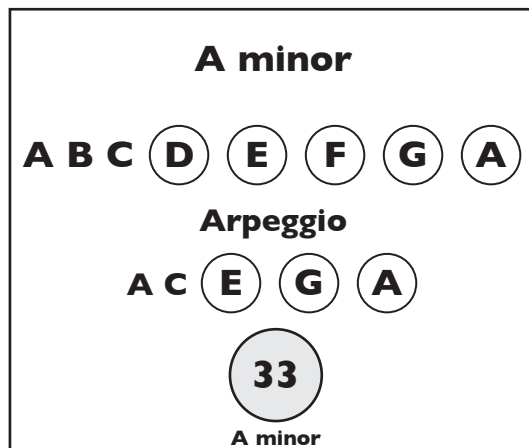
Finally, *Camptown Races* is in the key of **C major** (happy). Every song we play will be in a specific key. It is essential to play each scale as part of learning the songs. If you know the specific scale really well, the song you are playing will be so much easier.



# Ain't No Sunshine

Bill Withers (1971)

One of the most soulful of songs is *Ain't No Sunshine*, by Bill Withers, whose version featured in the film, *Notting Hill*. It's a moving, top melody in the key of A minor (sad). For a mind-blowing version, seek out a recording of the late great Isaac Hayes's 17-minute epic at the Wattstax concert in 1972, when the 'Black Moses' spellbound his followers not only with 'that' voice but also with his alto saxman Emerson Able blowing some superlative sax phrases.



*Ain't No Sunshine*Verse 1 <sup>1</sup>Ain't no sun-shine when she's gone /**E G A C B G A /**<sup>2</sup>It's not warm when she's a-way /**E G A C B G A /**<sup>3</sup>Ain't no sun-shine when she's go- ne /**A A C (E) (D) (E) (E) (D) /**<sup>4</sup>And she's al-ways gone too long /**C (D) C A G A A /**<sup>5</sup>An-y-time / <sup>6</sup>she goes a-way //**C (D) C / A G A A //**Verse 2 <sup>7</sup>Wonder this time where she's gone /**E G A C B G A /**<sup>8</sup>Wonder if she's gone to stay /**E G A C B G A /**<sup>9</sup>Ain't no sun-shine when she's go- ne /**A A C (E) (D) (E) (E) (D) /**<sup>10</sup>And this house just ain't no home an-y-time /**C (D) C A G A A C (D) C /**<sup>11</sup>She goes a-way //**A G A A //**

# AIN'T NO SUNSHINE

## *Ain't No Sunshine*

Phrases 12-19 <sup>12</sup>And I know, I know, I know, I know /

**E G A G A G A G A C /**

<sup>13</sup>And I know, I know, I know, I know /

**E G A G A G A G A E /**

<sup>20</sup>Hey I ought to leave young things a-lon-e /

**(E) (D) (E) (E) (G) (E) (D) (C) (D) /**

<sup>21</sup>But ain't no sun-shine when she's gone /

**<sup>g</sup> (E) (D) (D) C A G A /**

12-13  
**x 4**

Verse 3 <sup>22</sup>Ain't no sun-shine when she's gone /

**E G A C B G A /**

<sup>23</sup>On-ly dark-ness every day /

**E G A C B G A /**

<sup>24</sup>Ain't no sun-shine when she's go- ne /

**A A C (E) (D) (E) (E) (D) /**

<sup>25</sup>And this house just ain't no home an-y-time /

**C (D) C A G A A C (D) C /**

<sup>26</sup>She goes a-way //

**A G A A //**

(cont.)



*Ain't No Sunshine*Verse 4 <sup>27</sup>Wonder this time where she's gone /**E G A C B G A /**<sup>28</sup>Wonder if she's gone to stay /**E G A C B G A /**<sup>29</sup>Ain't no sun-shine when she's go- ne /**A A C (E) (D) (E) (E) (D) /**<sup>30</sup>And this house just ain't no home an-y-time /**C (D) C A G A A C (D) C /**<sup>31</sup>She goes a-way / <sup>32</sup>An-y-time / <sup>33</sup>She goes a-way /**A G A A / C (D) C / A G A A /**<sup>34</sup>An-y-time / <sup>35</sup>She goes a-way /**C (D) C / A G A A /**<sup>36</sup>An-y-time / <sup>37</sup>She goes a-way /**C (D) C / A G A A /**

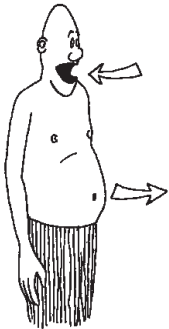
Now as you can see there was a definite **C** to the **(D)** and back to the **C** so that is why there are bridge crossings. Any repeat notes use the tongue and, if you can, start thinking



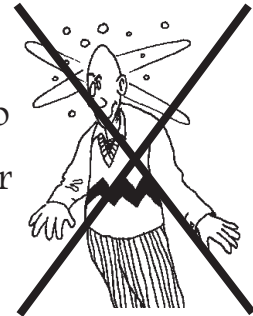


## *Ain't No Sunshine*

about where you are going to introduce the legato, where you can flick the tongue on to make certain phrases count. Without the tongue it has got a completely different sound. So really think about where you are putting the tonguing and the legato within this tune. This is a song, like *Camptown*, that we will be coming back to later to do in a higher register.

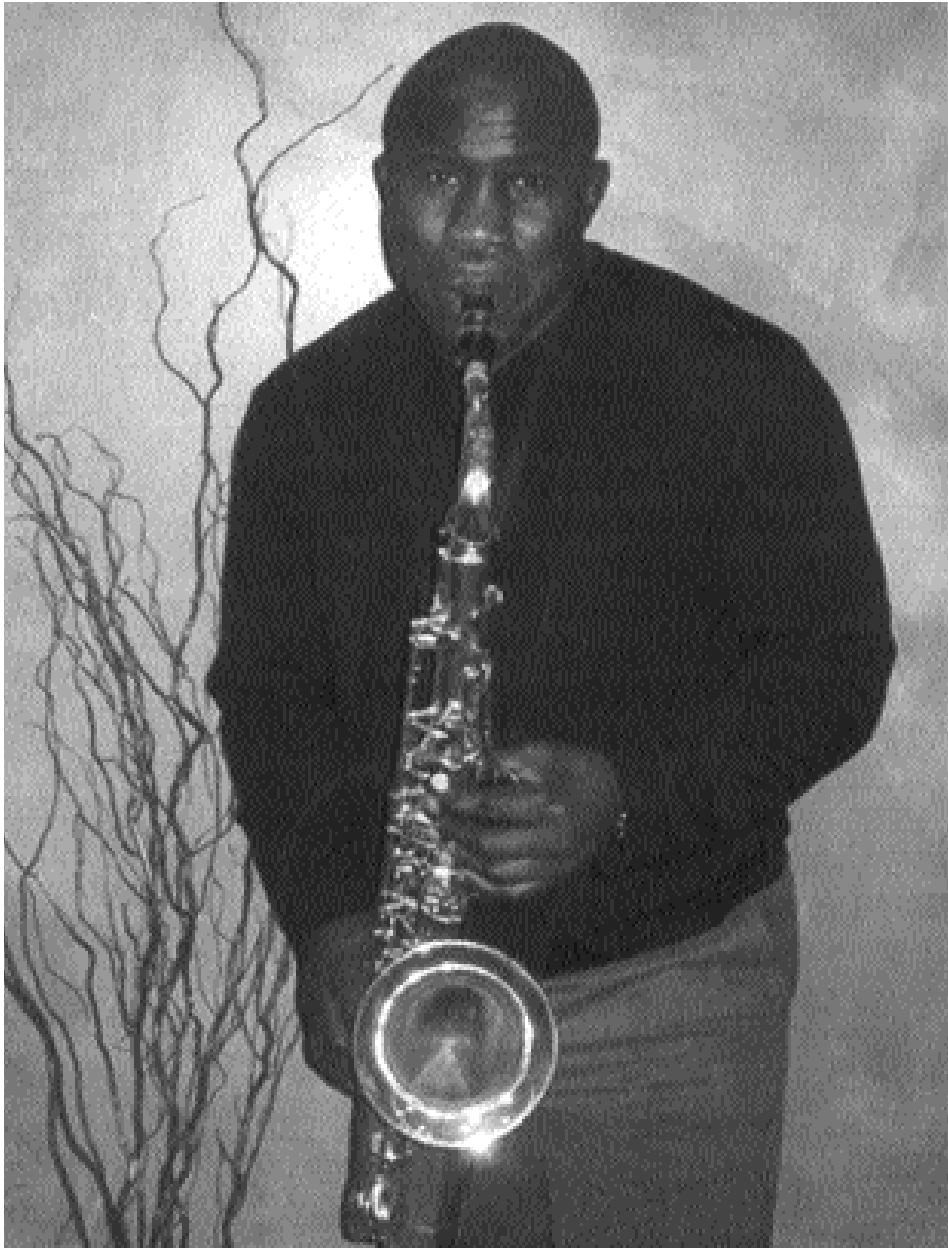


Learn to play *Ain't No Sunshine* by heart, that is without looking at the notes. Once you've done this, try **stretching** the phrases, holding the notes longer and longer, playing really slowly. So you are working on improving your breathing and concentrating on pushing your stomach out. But don't go all wobbly.



Later on in your saxophone career, you will be blowing non-stop on certain tracks for up to six or seven minutes. So it is vital to breathe the correct way from the start.





# Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

(traditional)

Living in a rugby crazed city, and with the Blowout Sax HQ positioned a big garryowen away from Bath's Recreation Ground, next up is *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*. This presents you with an easy opening gig at the boozier or mate's gaffe for England's rugby internationals. I even taught this to the popular England and Bath rugby celebrity, Victor Ubogo.

The thing with *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* is to practise pivoting, crossing the bridge from the **(D)** to **B** it's just a different bridge to the one from **(D)** to **C**, so coordinate the fingers accordingly: **(D) ↔ B, B ↔ (D)**. Just practise that movement. The other bridge we're going to have to cross is from **(D)** to **G** – so again, slow the air down, keep the air as soft as possible as you cross the bridge. *Swing Low, Sweet*



*Chariot* we're now going to put on the music on and I'm going to do a little play along version. Again, this will be on your CD, listen to it, really get the tune in your head. Point the pen along with the fingering as well and really think about how I'm phrasing it and what I am putting in to produce the sound of *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*.

Make sure that you have really got your fingers around each and every single phrase. Remember as you hit the low **D** to slightly slacken off a little bit with the jaw. Have your bridge crossing beautifully poised so there is no mistaking that you are getting it really smooth. Also remember to just tongue as you cross the bridge – so when you go from the **(D)** to the **B**, flick the tongue on legato style just to settle the note down. Same thing with the **G**.

First things first. Play the track solo, get it really accomplished, right under your fingers, and then have a go with the music in given time. Again, we will come back to this one – we're going to play it up high as well.



# SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT

# 87

## *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*

Chorus  
1, 2 and 3

<sup>1</sup>Swing low / <sup>2</sup>sweet char-i- ot /  
**(D) B / (D) G GED /**

<sup>3</sup>Com-in-g for to carry me home /  
**G G G G B (D) (D) (D) /**

<sup>4</sup>Swing low / <sup>5</sup>sweet chari-ot /  
**(E) (D) B / (D) G GED /**

<sup>6</sup>Com-ing for to carry me home /  
**G G G G B B A G /**

Verses  
1 and 2

<sup>7</sup>I looked over Jor-dan / <sup>8</sup>and what did I see /  
**B (D) G G G E G / G G G G E D /**

<sup>9</sup>Com-in-g for to carry me home /  
**G G G G B (D) (D) (D) /**

<sup>10</sup>A band of angels coming after me /  
**(D) (E) (D) B B / G G G G E D /**

<sup>11</sup>Com-ing for to carry me home //  
**G G G G B B A G //**

*Sequence*

Chorus

Verse 1

Chorus

Verse 2

Chorus

34

With sax

35

Without sax



# When the Saints Go Marchin' In

(traditional)

The fourth tune in this chapter is immortalised by that jazz legend, pop star, actor and global ambassador of goodwill, Louis ‘Satchmo’ Armstrong. Play *When the Saints* like this icon did – with wholesome joy. I make no apologies for teaching many of his favoured tracks because this man from New Orleans will always possess that magical ability to make us smile. As a musical pioneer he developed his own inimitable sound with an intensity and an expressiveness few can rival. That is the ultimate goal of a musician.

In this tune we are crossing the bridge often from **C** to **D**. By now this should be seamless. The big thing is to get the bounce and the buoyancy and general joy. Use lots of staccato to keep the tune bright, driving on, and get it ‘under your fingers’.



# WHEN THE SAINTS

# 89

Verses  
1 and 2

<sup>1</sup>Oh when the Saints /  
**G B C (D) /**

<sup>2</sup>Go mar-ching in /  
**G B C (D) /**

<sup>3</sup>Oh when the Saints go mar-ching in /  
**G B C (D) B G B A /**

<sup>4</sup>I wan-na be in that num-ber /  
**B B A G G B (D) (D) C /**

<sup>5</sup>When the Saints go mar-ching in /  
**B C (D) B G A G /**

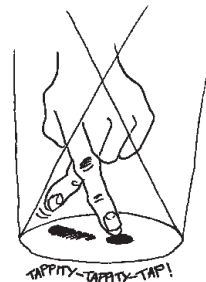
**36**

Verses 1 and 2  
with sax

**37**

Verses 1 and 2  
without sax

When you play this, or any other tune, let the melody run around in your head. Transfer the **feel** and the **rhythm** of this to the **touch** of your fingers. Hence the term ‘*dancing with your fingers*’.



We’ll go back to add higher verses to *Camptown* and *When the Saints* to help these opening tunes sing even more.



## Chapter 2

### *Glorious Opening Tunes*

#### Summary

We have learned:

- Four famous tunes, two of which we'll come back to later
  - Crossing the Bridge smoothly
  - Tonguing so it highlights the notes
  - Getting those fingers coordinated

The CD will reinforce the tunes and help us in

- Developing Big Ears to learn to play along

We want you to learn each tune by heart and here's how:

1. Play the first phrase twice.
2. Turn the page over and then play it again. If you don't play it right, look for the note you are missing. This will help with note recognition in your brain – figure that out yourself. The more you do this the better you will get at it, to the point





where with me I can hit the note straight off – this is the way to becoming a good musician, especially playing by ear. Then with time you’ll be able to work out any piece of music, even your own phrasing, really quickly.



3. Keep checking that you know the tune, the next day, the day after that. At this point we are only talking about natural notes so that simplifies the search.

This is what we call having the tune ‘under your fingers’, so you can pick it up and show off at a moment’s notice how good you already are on the saxophone.

