The tutor entitled The Genteel Companion was published in 1683: it was compiled by Humphrey Salter, an English composer, editor and music publisher, and is one of many Methods, or books of recorder instruction.¹ It is an interesting work which, through its teaching of graces, becomes more than a merely technical manual, for it offers tools to the beginner that promote a degree of musicianship. In order to appreciate this, it is necessary to examine the context in which the book was produced, for this highlights an important issue, one which frames the work.

The Genteel Companion emerged within a period that saw the revitalisation of music practice in England. After a period of exile, Charles II returned to the throne in 1660 and, following Puritan rule, during which public music-making was strongly discouraged, music was once again restored to a central position in cultivated life.² It was the resurgence of music-making more generally, and interest in the recorder specifically, which led to a quick succession of publications treating the instrument. These tutors aimed to provide a comprehensive introduction, providing ‘rules’, ‘directions’, ‘lessons’ and ‘instructions’. Some titles of tutors contemporary with Salter’s include:

A Vade Mecum For the Lovers of Musick, Shewing the Excellency of the Rechorder: With some Rules and Directions for the same, John Hudgebut, 1679.

The Delightful Companion: or Choice New lessons for the Recorder or Flute – Plain and Easie Instructions for Beginners, and the Several Graces proper to the Instrument, Robert Carr, 1686.

The Compleat Flute-Master: The whole Art of playing on yᵉ rechorder, layd open in such easy & plain instructions that by them yᵉ meanest capacity may arrive to a perfection on that Instrument, published by John Walsh, 1695.

A significant feature of these tutors is that they were designed as manuals for students to teach themselves: the manual itself was the sole medium of instruction. This guaranteed the accessibility and wide appeal of the publications but also set certain limitations to their teaching. For, being two-dimensional, the information conveyed by the tutors remains inevitably static: written and visual instructions are restricted in and by what they can convey. Thus, although able to communicate the ‘how to’, that is, the mechanics, of playing, they are far less able to articulate those aspects surrounding the mechanics. This requires the guidance of a teacher.

A variety of treatises, both earlier and later than the tutors mentioned, make this clear. For Johann Joachim Quantz, writing in 1752, the teacher forms part of the student’s musical education, supplementing the instruction given by treatises. It is in this way that ‘good taste’ is formed: for Quantz, good taste informs instructions about playing – it involves ideas about and judgement of the manner in which music is played, and it is developed through ‘extensive experience and practice’.³ Hence the value of the teacher, the experienced player.

Earlier treatises also emphasise the value of the teacher. In 1529, Martin Agricola speaks about learning ornamentation from a professional⁴ and Sylvestro Ganassi says,
in 1535, ‘You may ask me when and how to recognise the right time and place for using imitation, dexterity and grace, or when the tone and expression should be lively or suave. Know then, that your instructor should be a practised and experienced singer.’ The role of the teacher is vital, interpreting the teaching imparted by treatises. Musicologist David Lasocki summarises the situation thus:

> In all periods, whether the pupils have been professional or amateur, the finer points of performance, such as breath control, intonation, ornamentation and musical interpretation, have been learnt with the aid of a teacher; they can hardly be imparted by a book.

In the light of this, the claim of Walsh’s publication to guide players to ‘perfection’ on the recorder appears rather grand, and the method adopted by Salter becomes interesting for, as Lasocki notes, ‘ornamentation’ is one of the ‘finer points of performance’. As we shall see, in addition to teaching the mechanics of recorder playing, Salter attempts more than this: he trains the beginner musically through his teaching of graces, providing a starting point for the formation of a basic level of good taste and musical expression.

**Devices**
The chief aim of Salter’s treatise is to teach the mechanics of recorder playing, and the full title of the treatise reflects this: *The Genteel Companion; Being exact Directions for the Recorder.* In this, the book resembles other treatises of the time, including those mentioned above. Furthermore, it provides a method for self-teaching: it is introduced in part as ‘for the advantage of Beginners, that have not the help of a Master to Instruct them’. Salter says of its structure: ‘I have placed in the beginning some easy tunes with dots under the violin notes, by which means they may confirm themselves in the manner of playing every note.’ The inherent structure of the tutor is designed to assist this aim. However, before turning to this, it is worth identifying the devices that are characteristic of the manual: namely, the type of tunes used and the notation employed.

As with other tutors of the time, the various tunes used by Salter form an essential part of his method, for this is the principal way in which the beginner is engaged musically; through playing them, the novice acquires musical instruction. The full title of *The Genteel Companion* claims the inclusion of the *Best and Newest Tunes and Grounds Extant*. Nevertheless, the beginner is not unfamiliar with them, for the tunes derive from a musical tradition which is already familiar. Thus, the titles which are often given to tunes within the tutor recall other popular tunes found in broadside ballads.

These songs provided a medium of communication: tunes accompanied verses that reported on events of state and public affairs. The melodies used by Salter were therefore familiar to the beginner, and for this reason they formed an integral part of the learning process: the student has some idea of how the tunes are meant to sound and is so provided with some form of ‘guidance’. At the very least, familiarity provides some idea of how the tune ought to sound and thereby supplies a measure for self-correction.

The notation adopted within the method also plays a significant role in enabling students to teach themselves: Salter places formal five-line stave notation alongside what was called the ‘dot way’. The ‘dot way’ is a form of tablature in which each line represents the recorder’s thumb- or finger-holes, and the presence of a dot above
various lines indicates whether or not the holes are to be covered. It emerged with tutors such as *The Pleasant Companion*, a flageolet Method written by Thomas Greeting in 1680. Here tunes were conveyed through a combination of the ‘dot way’ and rhythmic markings, which stood above them. Notation on a five-line stave was not used (illus.1).

![Image](image.png)

**Illus.1. The Pleasant Companion, Thomas Greeting, 1680.**

After Greeting’s manual, tutors placed formal notation *alongside* tablature. As we shall see, Salter’s *Companion* provides a clear example of this, and by 1695, with Walsh’s publication of *The Compleat Flute-Master*, formal notation alone is used. The ‘dot way’ has now become obsolete.  

**Structure**

Popular tunes and the ‘dot way’ are the devices through which *The Genteel Companion* instructs its students. Structurally, the Method falls into three sections. Section 1 includes *Directions for playing the Recorder*; initially, these appear descriptively, in prose. Salter instructs the beginner on how to hold the recorder and explains his use of the ‘dot way’, which uses six lines rather than seven. He also informs the beginner how the system functions representationally:

> six lines are appropriated to the first six holes of the pipe; and the first hole is, that underneath which you must stop with your thumb, and the uppermost line belongs to that hole; the second hole is the next to that above the recorder, and you are to stop that with your first finger, and the second line is for that...

Salter also teaches the beginner about note production, including appropriate breath pressure. Thus, as a general indication, Salter recommends to ‘blow gently’, except in those instances when ‘pinching notes on the recorder’. Here, the beginner must blow the recorder ‘a little stronger than you did when you played the other notes’. Salter also gives directions for playing graces, placing these alongside the signs representing them. He also sets out the time and relative values of notes. Having provided written instructions, Salter also presents the information *visually* within comprehensive tables. By this means, he clarifies and consolidates what he has written, as well as preparing students for the tutor proper, wherein tunes are conveyed by means of tablature (illus.2 and 3).
Section 2 applies the Directions given in Section 1 to the playing of twelve selected tunes. These appear both as ‘violin notes’ and as ‘dot way’. In this manner, the beginner is introduced to much of the recorder’s range, from its bottom note (F) to a high D: this is the entire range that Salter initially sets out (apart from the high C#). The learner is acquainted with playing in common and triple time and with increasingly complex note values. The student is familiarised with such forms as the minuet and jig, and with the practice of graces, which are incorporated into the ‘dot way’ tablature rather than written above the notes: the significance of this will be examined shortly.

Section 3 is closely related to the second. It is a series of 61 tunes written in formal notation alone. In this way, the beginner goes beyond the ‘dot way’, reading from ‘violin notes’ with graces notated above by signs. As the beginner proceeds through the book, the tunes gradually become more complex and the pages more densely notated. In this way, co-ordination of tongue and finger is developed.

Undoubtedly, then, Salter adopts a particular strategy, which is embodied within the underlying structure of the tutor. His aim is to communicate the mechanics, or skill, of recorder playing. The ‘dot way’ is an essential part of this process, enabling the student to put theory into practice: it clarifies Salter’s written instructions, indicates fingering, and provides the groundwork from which the novice proceeds to read formal notation.
Moreover, due to the practical nature of the ‘dot way’, music practice is rendered accessible to the beginner in a way that notation on a five-line stave is not. For, through visual representation, an immediate connection is made between the physical finger movement and the note played, the mark on each line matching a finger hole on the recorder, indicating that it is to be covered. This accessibility is strengthened by the fact that a large proportion of the tunes were well-known. The beginner is given a measure of immediate satisfaction, increased by the fact that, because graces are integrated into the dot way, the tunes are presented in an already embellished and colourful form right from the start. Hence the first tune presented to the beginner appears like this:

Illus.4. Tune 1, The Genteel Companion, Humphrey Salter.

**The performance of graces**

The graces form an important element of Salter’s Method. At first sight, instruction about graces confirms the aim of The Genteel Companion – to teach the mechanics of recorder playing for, on first reading, Salter’s directions seem very concise, if not entirely clear. The graces appear to be fully described. There is a range of five: the ‘beat’, the ‘shake’, the ‘slur’ or ‘slide’, the ‘slur and beat’ and the ‘double shake’. Each grace has a sign (apart from the ‘slur and beat’), and the reader is taught how to execute them, both by means of written instructions and through the ‘dot way’.

![Illus.5. The ‘beat’](image)

The sign for the ‘beat’ and its representation in tablature stand above the musical note. Salter advises that it is to be performed ‘by shaking your Finger upon that hole which Line where it stands directs, and leaving it on’. The ‘beat’ appears here on the note C, the tablature indicating that the holes for the thumb and the first, second and third fingers are covered. All remain so, apart from the third finger, which lifts from its hole, shakes, and ends placed upon its hole: this is indicated by a semicircle placed next to the line representing that finger hole.
This grace, the ‘shake’, is performed, according to Salter, ‘by shaking your finger on the hole directed and leaving it off’. The shake is given on the note D, the tablature indicating that the thumb-hole, and the first and second finger-holes are covered. Both remain so while the first finger of the right hand ‘shakes’ on its hole. It is significant that, in contrast to the ‘beat’, the finger ends away from its hole.

Salter says of this grace, the ‘slur’ or ‘slide’, that this is when ‘two or three Notes are tied together by a crooked dash underneath’. On these occasions ‘those two or three notes must be expressed with one breath’. In Salter’s example, the note E is slurred to a D.

For this grace, the ‘slur and beat’, ‘hit your first note with the tip of your tongue, and continuing your breath take up your second, and bring on the first beating.’ The ‘slur and beat’ incorporates exactly that. In this example, an F is slurred to an E which is graced with a ‘beat’. Here the thumb-hole remains covered and the first finger of the right hand ‘shakes’. Interestingly, for reasons we shall see in a moment, the ‘slur and beat’ does not have a notated sign, unlike the other graces.

The ‘double shake’ is played ‘by shaking your fourth finger on your left hand, holding those fingers on that the dots belong to’. It only ever appears on a G in the middle of the stave and, despite its name, it is a ‘beat’ and not a ‘shake’. It requires strong breath pressure to ensure its pitch. Here, the thumb uncovers its hole, the second finger of the left hand is placed on the recorder, as are the first and second fingers of the right hand, and the third finger of the left hand ‘shakes’. The sound that results is a ‘warbling trill’ across the registers.
Despite the apparent specificity of the graces on paper, in practice, Salter’s instructions are not so clear. Of course, this is partly due to the limitations imposed by the written medium, mentioned at the outset. Nevertheless, it is possible that Salter was not entirely unconscious of these limitations, and in fact used them in order to facilitate learning and to develop the student’s musicianship. Even if such a suggestion is open to dispute, the benefits for the beginner are still evident, as we shall see.

I will begin with the indeterminacy of the ‘directions’ on gracing that arise from the limitations of the written text, moving on to those ambiguities that, conceivably, may have been intentional. Thus, we will start with the nature of the graces themselves as evident in practice, before moving on to the teaching of musical form through the placing of graces in the tablature. We will then observe the freer application of graces in the second section, compared with their exactly notated use in the initial Directions. By this means, it will be seen that the graces at some level function instructively rather than prescriptively. For, although the graces are in some sense specific, the ambiguity that accompanies them throughout the tutor encourages the beginner to play around the given notes, to go beyond mere mechanics.

**Ambiguity of finger movement**

In terms of the movement indicated for each grace, then, the initial description breaks down, or rather, opens up in practice. For although Salter makes it clear how graces are to conclude (for example in a ‘beat’ one replaces the moving finger upon its hole and in a ‘shake’ one leaves the finger off its hole), the exact nature of the movement remains ambiguous.

Thus, the degree of movement away from the hole that one makes when playing a grace is not precise. Neither is the proportion of the hole that is to be covered when playing, that is whether all or half of the hole is to be covered, or indeed, something in between. This will have an effect on the interval that is sounded and thus on intonation and upon the ‘vitality’ of the grace, depending upon whether the interval covers a wide or narrow range.

In this way, a ‘shake’ can take on the form of a finger vibrato, as suggested by Marianne Mezger in her research on the English recorder tutors. She notes that finger vibrato, or ‘sweetening’ as it is called, appears only formally in *The Compleat Flute Master*. However, she treats some fingered shakes as ‘sweetening’ in her interpretation of Salter’s *The Genteel Companion*. Whether or not this is appropriate in the light of Salter’s own specific instruction is debatable. Nevertheless, it is clear that there must have been a time of transition. Moreover, the two movements are so closely related to one another that in practice fluidity was likely. The resulting sound would have varied, due to the amount of the hole covered, either accidentally or on purpose.

In addition to the degree of the finger movement, the amount of times one is to shake the finger is not specified, nor is the direction or shape of the movement detailed, that is whether one begins faster and becomes slower, or vice versa. In short, in practice, the skill of ornamentation is less precise than the initial instructions suggest. Different colours and variations are presented to the beginner.

**Graces and musical form**

In Salter’s attempt to convey structural principles to the beginner, musicianship overlays mechanics: for example, in the first series of ‘dot way’ tunes, graces are used to highlight the strong beat of a bar and thus to emphasise the shape of a melody and
its form. The characteristic dance rhythm of minuet, for example, is taught *musically* to the beginner. Graces are repeatedly placed on the first beat of the bar, emphasising the strong beats (as in illus.4 above). Another example of musical sensitivity can be found in the two forms of cadential ornamentation which frequently occur: the first is a ‘beat’ followed by a ‘shake’, and the second, a ‘double shake’ moving to a ‘shake’.

This method develops in the beginner a feel for what is to be expected. Thus when, later on in the treatise, ornaments are not added but are *expected*, the player is implicitly given the choice of whether to insert them or not. By tune 25b then, the player is faced with a piece, a *French Minuwey*, that is only partially ornamented (illus.10). Given the open nature of Salter’s graces, and the grounding that the player has been given through the music examples provided up to this point, the beginner is to some extent able to decide what is appropriate and what is not; the student is expected not merely to play the given notes but to *play around* them.

![Illus.10. Tune 25b, The Genteel Companion, Humphrey Salter.](image)

As we can see, the first eight-bar phrase comprises two sets of four bars, the second set repeating the first. However the gracing is different in each, so that when the D reappears in the second half-phrase, it is not graced as one would expect. Rather, it stands un-ornamented. Nevertheless, because an ornament is expected, it is likely that the beginner will naturally put one in or, at least, consider doing so. Furthermore, in bars 9-16 the ornamentation becomes sparse, and even the strong beats of the bar are not graced.

Yet Salter has encouraged the beginner to grace the strong beats in the ‘dot way’, and having done so, it is likely that the beginner will now insert them. Of course it can be argued that such irregularities result from errors in printing. However, it is possible that such ‘omissions’ are a didactic tool; in any case, they can be used as such. In this way, students can exercise freedom of judgement, combining what was learned through the ‘dot way’ (such as forms and cadential ornamentation) with what they have remembered and acquired through the resonance of the tunes themselves and their largely popular nature.

**Additional graces**

The idea that Salter teaches not just the mechanics of music but encourages a wider musical development is further supported by the fact that the ‘dot way’ supplements the instruction on ornamentation which Salter gives in his initial *Directions*. Firstly, the ‘dot way’ incorporates the ‘slur and beat’ in the finger patterns that it demonstrates. Interestingly, as we saw, the ‘slur and beat’ does *not* have a formal sign itself and does not appear in the main body of tunes. There are notes slurred together which are succeeded by a ‘beat’, but none that are slurred to a note with a ‘beat’.
Secondly, the ‘dot way’ adds a series of grace notes (what we might call upper or lower appoggiaturas) that are not given specific signs. In this way then, from the beginning, playing formally *unarticulated* graces in the ‘dot way’ trains students so that they can use the graces in the tunes that follow, even choosing when and where to place them. Here is a summary of the graces identified that do not receive formal articulation:

![Illus.11. Additional graces in The Genteel Companion, Humphrey Salter.](image)

**Conclusion**

*The Genteel Companion* embodies the spirit of a period in which there was an abundance of music-making, both professional and amateur. Its aim, like that of other tutors of the time, is to provide the beginner with as complete an introduction to the recorder as it is possible for a written manual to provide. Salter succeeds in accomplishing this. Additionally, however, Salter’s tutor proceeds beyond the mechanics of recorder playing in some respects. For, although the tutor in no way aims to, or succeeds in, supplanting the role of the teacher, it does proceed beyond the mere technicalities of playing. Through the guidance of the ‘dot way’, and the graces that appear in it, the beginner becomes accustomed to musical forms and to certain intricacies of ornamentation.

From then onwards, the student starts to take charge of what is played, and when. Of course, as mentioned, the deliberateness of this tactic is disputable, for ambiguities and omissions are inevitable in a written work, with its textual constraints, and the limitations of the printing process. However, it is possible that the ambiguities in *The Genteel Companion* were in part intentional and, in any case, that they were of advantage to the beginner. In particular, as we have seen, Salter’s instruction on graces can be said to provide a ‘method’ within a method, one providing a foundation in good taste and musical expression.
Notes

1 Some titles of contemporary tutors appear below. However, a summary of tutors is provided in table form by Uri A. Dror, ‘“The Genteel Companion”: A Look into English Recorder Method Books between the end of the 17th and the end of the 18th Centuries’ in Erta Nieuwsbrief 9/3 (2005), pp.55-58.


3 Johann Joachim Quantz, On Playing the Flute, ed. Edward R Reilly (London, Faber and Faber, 2001), chapter 28, §7, p.297. Quantz makes a sharp distinction between mechanics and musicianship. He maintains that in order to become an ‘able and learned musician’ one must have a ‘special talent’. However, he believes that those without this talent are still of use, being able to serve as, what he calls, a good ‘ripienist’ or ‘performer of the middle parts’. Quantz says: ‘Whoever has a healthy body, with well-disposed and healthy limbs, and yet is not stupid or of unsound mind can, with much industry, learn what is called the mechanics of music, and these are the proper qualifications of a ripienist. Everything he needs to know… may be understood through rules that can be clearly and fully explained.’ Ibid., introduction, §7, p.14.

4 Martin Agricola, Musica instrumentalis deudsch, 1529 [second edition appears in 1545]. See David Lasocki, ‘Instruction books from c1500 to the present day’ in Cambridge Companion to the Recorder, ed. John Mansfield Thomson (Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.120.

5 My italic. Sylvestro Ganassi, Opera Intitulata Fontegara, 1535, p.89.

6 Lasocki, ‘Instruction books and methods for the recorder from around 1500 to the present day’, p.119.

7 The didactic method of The Genteel Companion has received scant attention. Marianne Mezger discusses its graces within the context of other English recorder tutors, specifically, J. Hudgebut’s A Vade Mecum (1679), J. Banister’s The most Pleasant Companion (1681), R. Carr’s The Delightful Companion, 2nd edition (1686), and the anonymous Walsh publication The Compleat Flute Master (1695), including republications of the latter. See Jacques Paisible, Five Sonatas for Alto Recorder and Continuo, ed. Marianne Mezger (Brighton: Dolce, 1993), pp.ii-ix. An article by Uri A. Dror focuses on three recorder tutors: Salter’s The Genteel Companion (1683), The Compleat Tutor by Daniel Wright (ca. 1734-1740) and The Modern Music Master by Peter Prelleur (ca. 1730). Although Dror deals with key features of Salter’s tutor, including target audience, directions for playing, notation, fingerings and graces and musical examples. It is concerned more with providing a description of the work rather than an interpretation of its method and devices. ‘The Genteel Companion’: A Look into English Recorder Method Books between the end of the 17th and the end of the 18th Centuries’, pp.46-58.

8 Humphrey Salter, The Genteel Companion, 1683.

9 My italic. Ibid., – full title.

10 My italic. Ibid., preface.

11 Popular tunes play an important role within other tutors as well. Thus, for example the tune Ah Cruell Bloody Fate was written by Henry Purcell for Nathaniel Lee’s Theodosius in 1680. It appears in Salter’s recorder tutor as well as others, including John Banister’s The Most Pleasant Companion (1681) and Thomas Greeting’s The Pleasant Companion. It also appears in other musical instruction books such as Musicks Recreation on the Viol, Lyra-way (1682). For more information on this tune and details of others see Claude. M. Simpson, The British Broadside Ballad and Its Music (Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1966).

12 The origins and associations of a selection of the tunes in The Genteel Companion are as follows: Haile to the Myrtle Shades (no.2) and Ah Cruell Bloody Fate (no.4) were both written by Henry Purcell for Nathaniel Lee’s Theodosius in 1680. The tune Hey Boyes up go wee (no.10) was originally a political song written by Francis Quarles. It arose in 1641 out of a pamphlet war between the high-church and the Puritans. In 1682, Thomas D’Urfey reworked the song for his play The Royalist (Act IV). A Song in the Duke of Guies (nos.14 and 15): the full title in the original is Love and Jealousie: or A Song in the Duke of Guies. It is written by John Dryden and ‘printed for P. Brooksby at the Golden-Ball’, 1683. In addition to its given title, Salter writes the first line of the
piece at the end of his ‘adaptation’ (for he re-arranges the sections of the piece), ‘Tell me Thirsis.’ Mr. Fardinels Ground (nos.40 and 41) originated in the early 1680s when the violinist Michel Farineli wrote some ‘divisions on a ground’. The ground was one that had been used for centuries, being La Folia or Les folies d’Espagne. The tune The Kings Health (no.46a) is also based on La Folia ground. However the title derives from that of Thomas D’Urfey’s panegyric on Charles II, using the tune. For further information on Thomas D’Urfey see The Songs of D’Urfey, ed. Cyrus Lawrence Day (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1933). See also Simpson, The British Broadside Ballad and Its Music, passim.


14 It is possible that this development is linked to the level of musical literacy, for the benefit of tablature is that it allows a beginner to play without any prior knowledge of formal five-line stave notation. The ultimate move towards the sole use of formal notation may reflect the emergence of a more general music education and musical literacy.

15 ‘There are two ways of setting tunes for the Recorder the Dot way; some sets them on seven lines, some on six, which is the general way, and it is in my opinion the best, for more do but hinder the readiness of sight, and when the other two are wanted I make a short line underneath’. Salter, The Genteel Companion, p.2.

16 Ibid
17 Ibid., pp.3,4.
18 Ibid., p.5.


20 This tutor, as others, is written for the treble recorder in F.

21 Ibid., p.6.
22 Ibid
23 Ibid
24 Ibid
25 Ibid

26 Lasocki, ‘Instruction books and methods for the recorder from around 1500 to the present day’, p.126.

27 This became apparent in private conversation with Marianne Mezger. A summary of her thought on ornamentation in the English tutors can be found in the Introduction to Paisible, Five Sonatas, ed. Marianne Mezger, pp.ii-ix.