

ABSOLUTE FLUTE

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Faster Fingers on Flute

What a busy half term it has been! I hope you have all been getting back into the swing of everything with the darker evenings and shorter days. With the approaching festive season, it can often feel like life is ramping up and becoming busier than ever.

This half term I have packed in a handful of effective practice techniques that can be used in shorter practices, additional technical resources and a whole lot of information! If you don't have as much time as normal, that is fine but see if you can aim to isolate the areas that really need the work.

A common area to feel stuck on is your finger work. Do you find your fingers feel stiff and clunky? Perhaps you can't play that hard passage easily or speed up your piece. I have compiled some tips and resources to help you bridge the gap and work on your finger technique this half term.

You will also find the second installment of the history of the flute in this newsletter. This time we will look at the renaissance to baroque transition where the flute went through some significant changes to adapt to the evolving music scene. Bigger orchestras, more music and more issues with tuning and projection!

I would also like to invite you all to my Student Winter Concert - more info can be found about this on the back page.

I wish you all a lovely and musical festive period!

Victoria Heath

In this newsletter you can expect:

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Tips, Tricks and Information

Finger Technique

Have you struggled to play that specific passage before? A tricky bar that just won't get up to speed? Read below to find a few tips that might help!

Release Tension - Focus on your hand position. Are they relaxed? Tension in your hand and fingers can be a massive contributor to feeling clunky. Try to curve the fingers, keep wrists aligned, and keep a light touch.

Close Fingers - Are your fingers above and close to the keys at all times? Every extra millimeter your finger travels adds unnecessary time and effort, which slows you down and creates tension. Have a look in the mirror and check they are staying close and no finger is flailing too much.

Chunking - break the hard passage into small parts. 2 notes, 2 beats, 1 bar. Can you isolate and practice the problem?

Metronome - Start by setting the metronome to a slow tempo, and gradually increase the speed as you gain confidence. You can start with only 1 note per click if you want! This method allows you to focus on hitting every note accurately and in time while maintaining a steady beat. This can work for scales or your pieces!

Dotted Rhythms - Play your tricky passage in dotted rhythms first with long-short then short-long. Whichever is the harder one, that is the one to practice. The more dotted you make it, the faster you are practicing these transitions.

Sing - Try singing the notes before you play them, this can prepare the embouchure and mouth shape for any leaps you might have approaching.

Record Yourself - listening back to yourself can be very helpful and help you identify exactly which parts your fingers are struggling on!



Technique Resources

Scales

Scales are your starting point. They are the foundation of good technique. Analyse what you are doing, think about the evenness. If they are easy, speed it up! Maybe find a new type of scale to try - there are so many!

Book Recommendations - Starting out

Moyse - Scales and Arpeggios

Wye - Beginners Book for the Flute

Rubank - Elementary Method for Flute

The Young Flute Player Book 1: Studies

125 Easy Classical Studies for Flute

Book Recommendations - Looking for a Challenge

Reichert - 7 Daily Exercises

Wye - Practice Book for the Flute: Technique

Taffanel & Gaubert - 17 Daily Exercises

Drouet - 72 Studies for Flute



Tips, Tricks and Information Continued...

May Be I Will

Traditional Irish



The History of the Flute - 1600s - 1800s

Last newsletter we learnt about the early development of the flute from the first flute to the 1600s.

During the Renaissance, flute construction had evolved, using different woods and splitting the instrument into 2 and then 3 pieces, allowing for a more refined sound, more adaptable tuning and greater range.

While baroque flutes were made in several sizes, the most common was the D flute, using the D major scale. Notes outside the D major scale were produced by so-called 'forked fingerings'. You can see remnants of this in the top octave of our flute even now. An exception is the note D#. This was the original purpose of the single key that was added for the right hand little finger.

From the 1710s, flutes got split again into 4 sections, keeping the 6 finger holes. Interestingly, a lot of flutes at this time had multiple sized middle sections to allow for greater changes in tuning between different locations and ensembles, known as *corps de rechange* (picture to the right).

The flute also developed from having a cylindrical bore at this time (a constant inner diameter) but to a conical shape. This allowed for the finger holes to become further apart and more evenly spaced, giving rise to more fluid playing.

The Baroque period also introduced new musical techniques, such as vibrato and ornamentation, which added expressiveness and helped increase the popularity of secular music.

As the Baroque era emerged, the transverse flute became a staple in orchestras, further pushing the boundaries of flute playing before some major changes were needed.

Exam Details

- ABRSM In Person Exam bookings are now closed. The exams will take place 03 Nov 2025 - 06 Dec 2025.
- ABRSM Performance (Online) exams can be booked any time and videos submitted within a month.
- ABRSM Theory Exams can be booked any time.
- Trinity In Person Exam bookings are now closed for this term!
- Trinity Digital can be booked any time and videos submitted within a month.





Upcoming Events

Winter Concert!

I will be hosting 2 student Winter Concerts online on -

Saturday 13th December 3:00pm

Friday 19th December 7:00pm

We will be hearing some beautiful solos as well as our debut performance of a few well known Christmas tunes as an ensemble!

I look forward to seeing you there!

London International Festival of Early Music

13-15th November, Blackheath Halls

This is a fabulous event with workshops, exhibitions, concerts and more! Highly recommend!
<https://lifem.org/exhibition/>

Just Flutes

FREE Workshop: Flute, Creativity and Orange Cola – The Art of Self-Esteem

Saturday 15th November, Online FREE

<https://www.justflutes.com/events/>

Monday Night Workshops for Adult Flute Players with Chris Hankin: Even more great French pieces to love!

Monday 8th December 7:00 Online

https://www.justflutes.com/events/monday-night-workshops-adult-flute-players-chris-hankin-even-more?no_frame=1

Monthly Music



Something classic:

Honneger - Danse De La Chevre

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADeSP196pMc>

Something unknown:

Pessard - Andalouse Op 20

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmvQkiBws3Q>

Something a bit different:

The Path of Wind from My Neighbour Totoro

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GIGEBprAEA>

The Conservatoire

Free On Fridays is back!

Fridays 1:30pm

14th November - Holtag Quartet

21st November - James Risdon and Trevor Hughes

A Christmas Carol - Scrooge's Journey

14th December 2:00pm and 3:30pm

Platinum Consort: Handel's Messiah

St John's Waterloo, 22nd November 7:30pm

<https://www.concert-diary.com/concert/2081947651/Platinum-Consort-Handel-s-Messiah>

Thames Philharmonic Choir - Awake! Rejoice

All Saints Church, Kingston, 6th December 7:30pm

<https://www.concert-diary.com/concert/2081193986/Thames-Philharmonic-Choir-Awake-Rejoice>

Thank you for reading!

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