

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO SELECTING AND TEACHING QUALITY LITERATURE TO FIRST YEAR COLLEGE FLUTISTS AS SHOWN THROUGH THE SELECTION OF HANDEL'S SONATA IN F MAJOR, OPUS 1 NUMBER 11

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Flutists seek university study to learn new techniques, refine pre-existing skills, and continue musical growth. Students enter your flute studio with varied musical backgrounds, prior knowledge and experience with the flute, and with or without applied lesson experience. Amidst these variables, and within a short time span, your student will graduate. During applied music study, we as teachers must guide our students to the selection of quality literature that has both historical and pedagogical significance. This may seem like a daunting task as "the flute repertoire is so immense that the eyes glaze and the mind boggles when groping through the multiple choices available."¹ Within this breadth and depth of flute repertoire, there is a variety of quality literature that students can study. Unfortunately, not all students gain consistent exposure to quality literature. Composer credibility, longevity of the work, available recordings, credibility of performers, and technical accessibility are all criteria that should be considered during the selection of literature. Students studying applied flute lessons at the university level need to be studying quality literature that is appropriately selected by ability level and for the opportunity of musical growth. George Frideric Handel's *Sonata in F Major, Op. 1 No. 11* is a prime example of quality literature for a first year collegiate flutist.

Ability Level

In many instances, teachers may incorrectly assess the capabilities of their students and therefore either do not hold high enough expectations or students are given literature that is above their technical, rhythmical, and or musical ability. The process of learning too difficult of music not only frustrates your student but also enforces incorrect habits. When quality literature is learned in a sequential manner, appropriate to the student's ability level, musical growth occurs in a meaningful way with lasting results. If a student attempts to learn a piece of literature that is beyond his or her capabilities, no guarantees can be made that the materials will be learned with musical purity and often times gaps are created in the learning continuum. Determining a student's ability level initially begins during the college audition. Musical capabilities continue to be assessed upon entrance into your studio. Weaknesses are focused on and strengthened and the student is provided with new knowledge, building on his or her prior knowledge base.

Literature Selection Criteria

- 1) Is the composer credible?
- 2) Has the work stood the test of time?
- 3) Are there recordings?
- 4) Who has performed this work?
- 5) Is this work technically accessible at my current level?

¹ John C. Krell, Kincaidiana (Santa Clarita, CA: The National Flute Association, Inc, 1997), 64.

Handel's *Sonata in F Major* is an example of quality flute literature that is appropriate for first year collegiate flutists. "By the time a student is in college, his repertoire should include both accompanied and unaccompanied works from the Baroque, Classical, and 19th- and 20th- centuries in wide technical range. Many students mistakenly believe that they need to play only the most difficult fast pieces and ignore learning phrasing through slow, lyrical pieces as those composed by Gaubert, Faure', or Bach. In the early years basic harmonic structure, contrapuntal style, and ornamentation should be learned through the Handel Sonatas."² All of Handel's Flute Sonatas meet the selection criteria mentioned above. They have composer credibility, have stood the test of time, have been frequently recorded by the world's best musicians, and are technically accessible to flutists. Handel's Flute Sonatas contain beautiful melodies, opportunities for improvisation, and are technically and musically accessible.

George Frideric Handel, 1685-1759, composed during the late Baroque Period. He was considered a great composer and musician during his lifetime and his music continues to be performed today. Handel's *Sonata in F major, HWV 369*, was composed for recorder circa 1725-6 and published in 1732. Technically, this piece is accessible at an early performance level. The range is less than 2 octaves, from D3 (above middle C) to C5. The form is that of a Church Sonata, having four movements: slow-fast-slow-fast. Key centers throughout the four movements are extremely accessible, ranging from the absence of accidentals to two flats and raised leading tone: F major, C major, g minor and d minor. The technical focus therefore is on the musical line and ornamentation.

Study

How do you get your student excited about Baroque music? Have your student listen to recordings of music written in the same time period as the piece that he or she is studying. According to David Lasocki, an expert in the field of Baroque music, in order for students to become aware of a composer's style, they must have "an intensive course in style by playing and listening to as much of his (the composer's) music as possible within a short span of time."³

Students should learn the Handel *Sonata* from an *Urtext* edition. An *Urtext* edition is a facsimile of the composer's original manuscript. It is free from editorial additions such as articulation and ornamentation changes. "Go to the original edition wherever possible and maintain a healthy suspicion of all edited marking, particularly in the instance of early works where such indications were non-existent or at an absolute minimum."⁴ When using an *Urtext* edition, your student can focus on accuracy of notes, rhythm, musical phrasing, and harmonic structure. Once these have been established, the foundation is set for listening to recordings and adding ornamentation. Ornamentation additions and articulation changes should not be made until your student has a clear understanding of the musical line.

Listening

Listening of Handel's *Sonata in F major*, or any piece that is to be performed, should not occur until the student has already invested the time into learning the fundamentals of the

² Mary Karen Clardy, "Auditions, College, and Beyond," *Flute Talk* 18 (November 1998): 19.

³ David Losacki, "Late Baroque Ornamentation: Philosophy and Guidelines," *The American Recorder*, 29:1 (February 1988):9.

⁴ Krell, 64.

piece and is ready to start adding ornamentation and articulation. Listen to each movement separately and in small segments. It is essential that your student listens to several different recordings of the same piece.⁵ This will immediately reinforce the individuality involved in performing Baroque literature. Include recordings of period instruments as well as modern instrumentation. Discuss differences in style, ornamentation, and instrumentation.

Repetition of Listening

- 1) Listen to an entire movement without printed music
- 2) Listen again and follow the music in print
- 3) Circle measures where ornamentation is added
- 4) Discuss different types of ornamentation: grace notes, trills, appoggiaturas, etc.
- 5) Listen again and write in ornamentation
- 6) Repeat the process for every recording
- 7) Write in articulation markings

Ornamentation

Musicians during the Baroque era were expected to be able to improvise. Based on the melodic line and figured bass, performers would add ornamentation and elaboration of the melodic line. The expectation of the composer was that no two performances of his her music would be alike. Similar, yes, but each performer would bring his or her unique playing abilities, compositional techniques and nuances to the performance. Therefore, in an attempt to have historically accurate performances, students should be encouraged and expected to add ornamentation to Baroque literature. "The modern idea that changing and adding to the notes of a composition is a sacrilege must be abandoned: the player of today must realize that there are compositions in which the composer's intentions are being distorted when the music is played as notated."⁶ Ornamentation is one of the earliest examples of improvisation and occurs most frequently in slower movements. Ornamentation must be appropriate to the tempo of the piece. Therefore, there should be less ornamentation added to faster than slower movements. From my experience, most college level students have not been exposed to improvisation. Although the melodic line will be the same for all students, ornamentation is directly dependent upon the capabilities of the individual performer. As the great flutist Johann Joachim Quantz noted, ornamentation gives the performer "an opportunity to demonstrate his judgement, inventiveness and insight."⁷ It is important to reinforce Baroque performance practice: trills begin on the upper note and grace notes are played on the beat. "One of the purposes of a trill in this era was to introduce dissonant flavor between auxiliary (upper) note and the bass. When one begins the trill on the printed note, there is no dissonance and the music loses its point."⁸ Students should "begin by practicing one ornament at a time - passing tone, trill, turn, etc. - wherever possible in a given phrase."⁹ If the melodic line has been

⁵ Two contrasting recordings include: Paula Robison, flute; Kenneth Cooper, harpsichord; Timothy Eddy, cello. Handel: The Sonatas for Flute (complete). SVC-102/-3 HD
Marion Verbruggen, recorder; Tom Koopman, harsichord & chest organ; Jaap Ter Linden, violincello. Handel: The Complete Sonatas for Recorder. HMU 907151

⁶ Laurence Taylor, "Handel Flute Sonatas, Part I," *The Instrumentalist* 13:6 (1959): 74-75.

⁷ Johann Joachim Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* (Berlin,

⁸ Laurence Taylor, "Handel Flute Sonatas, Part II," *The Instrumentalist* 13:7 (1959): 75-77.

⁹ Betty Bang Mather, "Developing Baroque Ornamentation Skills," *The American Recorder* 29:1 (February 1988):4.

learned accurately, as well as rhythm, then the addition of ornaments should be an exciting and enjoyable learning experience for your student.

Conclusion

Good habits must be established from the onset of university study. One aspect of establishing good habits is in the choosing and studying of quality literature. Composer credibility, longevity of the work, available recordings, credibility of performers, and technical accessibility are all factors to be considered during the selection process. Once a piece of quality literature has been selected, such as Handel's *Sonata in F Major*, your student should become familiar with the time period in which the piece he or she is working on. This can be accomplished through listening to other works composed during the same time. Careful note and rhythmic practice through the use of an *Urtext* edition, identifying and playing musical phrases, listening to recordings, and adding ornamentation are the keys to a successful and thorough learning process of quality flute literature.

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