Production of Extended Techniques on the Flute

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Sarah Curtiss, Brianna Meissner, Alexis Schwinghamer, Mari Tonsfeldt, Sierra Wenning

Introduction

Extended techniques are methods of playing that create non-traditional sounds. This involves producing sound on the flute in different ways than dictated by traditional playing.

The flute is a cylindrical tube that is open on both ends. By manipulating how you activate the tube and/or the vibrations within the tube, extended techniques produce different timbres.

The practice of these techniques is important pedagogically because it strengthens different aspects of traditional playing and allows the flutist to explore new realms of sound and varied repertoire.

References


Techniques, Notations, and Descriptions

Natural Harmonics

Each fingered note in the low register of a flute can produce a series of overtones. These higher pitches are produced by overblowing.

Flutter Tonguing

This technique is an interruption of the airstream in traditional playing. The effect is created by either “rolling R’s” with the tongue or a gargling action in the throat.

Multiphonics

Any fingering on the flute, standard or otherwise, can produce more than one simultaneous pitch. This is done by creating an airstream that encompasses both notes.

Whistle Tones

Whistle tones are produced when a very slow and focused airstream hits the edge of the lip plate. Although the flute does not vibrate (it is just the sound of the air breaking across the edge), the fingering used affects the pitch produced due to the resonance of the tube.

Singing and Playing

It is possible to sing and play simultaneously. This is simplest in unison or in octaves but with practice, it is possible to sing and play separate pitches or melodies.

Percussive Sounds

Percussive sounds are created by activating the tube of the flute without the use of a traditional airstream. This can be done, for example, by striking the flute in different ways.

Key Clicks
Key Clicks with Tone
Tongue Stop