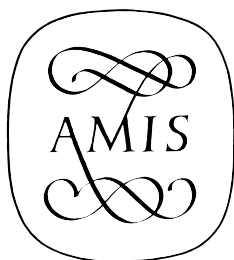


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matter, focused principally on the Renaissance lute—are rewarding to be read simultaneously and deserve adjacent places on the reference shelf.

Kenneth Bé

The Cleveland Museum of Art

Ardal Powell. *The Flute*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002. xi, 347 pp.: 18 color illus., 41 black-and-white illus. ISBN: 0-300-09341-1. \$35.00 (hardcover). Companion compact disc *The Flute on Record, 1902–1940*. Hudson, NY: Folkers & Powell, 2002. FP001. \$18.95. Combined price at www.flutehistory.com, \$43.25 plus S & H.

Ardal Powell's book, simply entitled *The Flute*, is a tremendous achievement. Its account of the transverse flute in the West from the late Middle Ages through the present focuses not only on the nature of the instrument itself and the changes it underwent over its long history, but also on the individuals and firms that made the flute, the people who played and listened to it, the music they played and heard, and the varying manners in which they played and understood the instrument. While it also touches on the transverse flute's earlier presence in other parts of the world and, occasionally, its use in folk traditions, these are not part of the main story. One of the book's greatest strengths is that it shows the interrelationship of the instrument, its repertoire, and its players and their performing styles.

Another strength is the engaging way in which Powell presents the story of the transverse flute. Included among those who make up the intended audience for the book are not only flutists, flute teachers, musicians in general, and academic readers, but also "attentive and curious" flute students. Thus, Powell writes in such a way that a specialized knowledge of music history is not required on the part of the reader, although a number of side-bars provide information about technical topics. He brings his narrative to life by including vivid biographical (or autobiographical) stories about the life experiences of flutists and flute makers of the past, as well as striking quotations from a wide variety of historical sources. Powell enhances his narrative further by including many black-and-white and color plates illustrating music-making scenes, instruments, and players, along with examples of concert programs, musical scores, fingering charts, and more. Finally, he places the whole in a grand narrative, enlivened by his own point of view and interests, that keeps the reader eagerly turning pages.

There has been no broad English-language survey about the flute since Philip Bate's *The Flute: A Study of its History, Development and Construction* was published in 1969. Since then, as Powell puts it, "a vast body of new knowledge has come to light about the instrument and the people who made it in earlier times as well as about those who wrote, played, and heard its music" (p. ix). Modestly portraying his study as "a sort of progress report on a part of that inquiry," Powell draws together a large body of information from an exceptionally diverse collection of sources, including much work published in other languages, dissertations, other unpublished materials, and little-known articles from journals devoted to the flute not indexed in any of the standard sources. Ingeniously, Powell meets the enormous challenge of giving an adequate account of both older and newer literature about the flute by including a series of bibliographic essays, placed at the end of the book, that describe and discuss reference and general works, sources pertaining to the larger history and criticism of the flute, and sources relating to the content of individual chapters. These bibliographic essays make for interesting reading in their own right and indeed are essential if one is to understand the basis for the narrative told in the main part of the text. They also serve to lead curious readers to a variety of sources from which they can learn a good deal more. Further to commend in the bibliographic essays is the generous credit Powell gives to other authors upon whose work he draws, while at the same time evaluating their strengths and weaknesses for the reader.

Although Powell claims that *The Flute* "does not set out to extend the boundaries of scholarship any further by contributing new material" (p. ix), he often sheds new light on it because of the attention he pays to the interrelationship of the various categories of material he presents. Moreover, his insistence that one should not view the history of changes in the instrument as "progress" or as an abstract line of mechanical development may yet appear new to some readers. Because of its broad subject matter the book is far too extensive to be adequately summarized in a review, but I do want to touch on every chapter, since each tells a complex and interesting story all its own.

In chapter 1, "Shepherds, Monks, and Soldiers," Powell discusses the transverse flute's arrival in Western Europe, its physical aspects insofar as they can be deduced, its appearance in medieval literature and pictures, and the different ways in which it may have been used. Chapter 2, "The Flute at War and at Home," highlights the military flute or fife before

turning to the transverse flute and its increasing use in secular music. Powell then directs his attention to sixteenth-century printed treatises about musical instruments that provide us with the first written technical information about the flute we have. While most of what he says about those frequently confusing sources can be trusted, there are some inconsistencies or muddled descriptions, for example in his discussion of the flute fingering charts in Martin Agricola's *Musica instrumentalis deudsch* (1529, second ed. 1545).¹ In connection with Philibert Jambe de Fer's *L'Epitome musicale de tons, sons et accordz, es voix humaines, fleustes d'Alleman, fleustes à neuf trous, violes, & violons* of 1556, Powell makes the important point that for Jambe de Fer, the true basic scale of the renaissance flute was the Dorian rather than the major scale (pp. 33, 47). Finally, Powell traces the increasing use of the flute in small chamber consorts, Italian theatrical entertainments, and sacred compositions in the sixteenth century, informs us about the astonishing numbers of flutes owned by various courts, and concludes with a survey of all known surviving sixteenth-century flutes, the largest group of which seems to be pitched at $a'=410$ and most of which work best in flat modes.

In "Consort and Solo: The Seventeenth Century" (chapter 3), Powell continues his discussion of musical treatises that shed light on the construction and use of the flute—notably Michael Praetorius's *Syntagma musicum* of 1619 and Marin Mersenne's *Harmonie universelle* of 1636. After passing through some dangerous thickets having to do with transposition matters and flute bore, Powell elegantly traces the flute's emergence as a prized instrument at the court of Louis XIV. Not only was the

1. With regard to Agricola's first set of fingering charts (1529) Powell states that "a consort of flutes (sounding an octave higher than the written notes) can cover a range from D below the bass stave as far as E3 above the treble" (p. 36). But sixteenth-century flutes did not play as low as d in the bass clef, so that information is misleading. Rather, as other scholars have pointed out, the three sizes of flutes for which Agricola provided fingering charts in 1529 seem to have been meant to sound an octave and a fourth higher than the pitches illustrated in the charts, with the lowest note on the largest of these flutes thus being g in the bass clef. Indeed, Powell himself has stated this on an earlier page, although he confuses the issue by adding that "the fingering chart showing a D–A–E consort is really for a G–D–A consort transposing the notated music up a fifth" (p. 34). For a more accurate explanation of this matter, see Howard Brown, "Notes (and Transposing Notes) On the Transverse Flute in the Early Sixteenth Century," this *Journal* 12 (1986): 5–39. See also William E. Hettrick, *The "Musica instrumentalis deudsch" of Martin Agricola* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), and Anne Smith, "The Renaissance Flute," in John Solum, *The Early Flute* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 11–33.

flute used in new ways, appearing in intimate concerts in solo and chamber settings as well as in opera and ballet performances, but it also acquired a new character—one associated with sad, tender, and languishing feelings, and with love. These changes were closely interrelated with structural changes being made in the tenor-sized instrument (the flute in d'), including changes in bore, numbers of pieces, shapes and sizes of embouchure and fingerholes, the thickness of walls, and the addition of an E $\flat$ key.

In chapter 4, devoted to "The Early Eighteenth Century: The 'Baroque' Flute's Golden Age," Powell documents the change from "a closed world of private performances" (p. 68) to the larger and more public spaces in which a new class of flute virtuosi began to emerge. Soon music for flute was being produced all over Europe in a variety of styles, while different styles of instruments, too, were being produced in flute makers' workshops. Although early eighteenth-century flutes commonly shared a conical bore and three-piece construction, each maker "developed a personal concept of tone and intonation, and devised original technical means of achieving his ideas" (p. 74). Maximum bore diameters and bore tapers, for example, differed significantly, as did the pitch of early baroque flutes. In addition to flutes and flute music, Powell refreshingly pays attention to flute players, both professional and amateur, ultimately giving pride of place to Johann Joachim Quantz (1697–1773), who constitutes the principal focus of chapter 5. In Powell's words, "Quantz's threefold activities, as a composer-performer, an instrument maker, and a writer, place him at the heart of this book, as a persuasive example of its theme that the flute, its music, and its performance technique are all bound tightly together in a vital but fragile relationship" (p. 88). Among other interesting points, Powell suggests that the difficult keys in which the flute specialists at the Dresden court, one of whom was Quantz, were expected to play give "a quite new aspect to Quantz's interest in improving his flute's intonation" (p. 95).

In chapter 6, Powell addresses technical innovations made in the design, mechanism, and sound ideal of the "classical flute" during the second half of the eighteenth century. For example, new keys for F, B $\flat$, and G $\sharp$ were applied to the flute, as well as keys for low C $\sharp$ and C on flutes with a longer footjoint, especially by English makers. In Dresden, August Grenser made flutes that were slimmer and lighter than baroque models, were tuned to favor sharp keys, and voiced with a less full but more penetrating tone. As increasing numbers of dilettantes took up the flute, a vigorous musical instrument trade dealing in large quantities of instru-

ments developed; and listeners could, for the first time, regularly hear traveling virtuoso flutists, each with an individual style of composition and performance.

In the following four chapters (7–10), Powell continues to trace these same matters from the late eighteenth century through the nineteenth century. As concert audiences broadened and became less exclusive, they demanded variety, and the playing of visiting flutists became the subject of increased commentary in the press. In the climate of the Romantic movement the idea that a flutist could hold the status of a “great artist” emerged; soon flutists were competing with violinists in their cultivation of a brilliant style of playing, their display of antics, an impressive volume of tone, and their use of special effects such as harmonics, the glide, and the “vibration” on sustained tones. In chapter 8, “Flute Mania,” Powell particularly addresses the increasing interest in reforming the mechanics and, to some extent, the sound of the flute. He is quick to argue, however, that flutes of the period were not too defective to give an adequate account of its music, as some modern historians of the flute have alleged, nor were they insufficiently loud for orchestras of the time. Still, among the concerns addressed by early nineteenth-century experimenters were simplifying fingerings, improving evenness of tone, achieving “equal” intonation, introducing mechanisms to facilitate the glide, experimenting with the size of the flute’s bore, and extending the lower range of the flute as far as *g*. By around 1820, most of Europe had adopted some kind of flute with eight or nine keys, with middle *c* as the lowest note, except for Paris, where the official flute of the Conservatoire remained the four-keyed flute. Then in 1826 Captain James Carel Gerhard Gordon, in collaboration with August Buffet *jeune*, first designed a flute based on an open-key system.

Powell’s discussion of Theobald Boehm (1794–1881), begun in chapter 8, is the focus of chapter 9, where he investigates in detail the genesis of the brilliant and controversial innovations that Boehm brought to the design of the flute in 1832 and 1847. Important revisions in Boehm’s model of 1847 included the introduction of a cylindrical bore in the main part of the instrument, a so-called “parabolic” headjoint, a tube of metal (Boehm experimented with brass, copper, silver, and German silver), toneholes of the maximum possible size closed by padded keys, and a mechanism that built on the innovations of his 1832 pattern. Even though present-day Boehm-system instruments differ in significant ways from the flutes Boehm and his contemporaries built and played, it was Boehm who virtually single-handedly invented the modern flute. Yet, the

adoption of the Boehm-system flute was far from uniform, and in chapter 10, "Nineteenth-Century Eclecticism," Powell addresses the controversies that continued to rage among flutists, composers, and conductors over the mechanism, tone, and character of the flute, as well as further innovations made in the design and manufacture of flutes.

Chapter 11, devoted to "The French Flute School," describes the historical roots of and the emergence of the style that originated at the Paris Conservatoire and came to dominate flute playing internationally for much of the twentieth century. Its main attributes are "the use of the French-style silver flute . . . , a preoccupation with tone, a standard repertoire, and a set of teaching materials in which the Taffanel-Gaubert method and the tone development exercises of Marcel Moyse . . . hold a central place" (p. 208).² I was delighted to read Powell's examination of the mythic aspects of the French School, which in its later years was primarily maintained through Moyse's phenomenal popularity as a teacher in the 1960s and 1970s. In this chapter, Powell also gives an account of the new French repertoire for flute that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, "hand in hand with an entirely fresh notion of what made music expressive" (p. 218).

The final chapters (12–14) deal with the influence of the technology of recording on flute playing, the flute in the early music revival, and the flute in the "postmodern age." In the first of these chapters, Powell takes stock of the influence of recording on flute preferences and flute playing, stating that "within a few decades of the first high-fidelity recordings

2. In connection with earlier flute teaching at the Paris Conservatoire, Powell is misleading when he says, on page 212, that the contents of the earliest tutor used there, François Devienne's *Nouvelle méthode théorique et pratique pour la flûte*, were revised and altered so much that within a few decades subsequent editions retained nothing of the original material. Elsewhere I have argued that the foundation for the later French Flute School's approach to embouchure and tone development lay in Devienne's exercises for playing the scale in long tones and lessons for playing different sizes of intervals, particularly as they were elaborated on and expanded in revised editions of his method issued after his death: see Jane Bowers, "The Long and Curious History of the Devienne Method for the Flute," in *Music in Performance and Society: Essays in Honor of Roland Jackson*, ed. Malcolm Cole and John Koegel (Warren, Michigan: Harmonie Park Press, 1997), 205–27; and Bowers, "Later History of Devienne's Flute Method," in *François Devienne's Nouvelle Méthode théorique et pratique pour la flûte* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 1999), 27–31. One other correction is that the bilingual French and German edition of the Devienne method that Powell states was issued in Hamburg in 1795 (p. 212) probably was not issued before 1812, since it includes new material not found in other editions published before then.

[that is, by around the mid-1940s] previously distinct national fashions of playing had dramatically altered and begun to merge together into a new recognizably modern shape,” and that “by about 1960, all but a handful of flutists in western Europe, North America, and Japan played a metal French-style Boehm flute . . . with a relatively uniform technique and concept of style” (p. 225). Before widespread standardization took place, however, early recorded performances illustrate a fascinating sound world quite different from our own, and here the companion CD, *The Flute on Record, 1902–1940*, is invaluable. Powell also discusses flute-making firms active in the early and mid-twentieth century. While lamenting the homogenization of the flute-making industry between the Depression and the post-war years, he does have some good words for the recording industry’s impact on flute repertoire: it became more diverse, thanks to the industry’s stimulus of interest in little-known music, both new and old.

In chapter 13, “The Flute in the Early Music Revival,” Powell covers developments such as the publication of modern editions that attempted to reconstruct authoritative versions of early music, the issuing of facsimile editions of music and instrumental methods, attempts on the part of instrument makers to make copies of original instruments suitable for professional performance, and pioneering musicians who put the “baroque” flute on the modern map, along with the subsequent entrenchment of a certain standardized manner of performing baroque music. In the final chapter, “The Postmodern Age,” Powell presents an eclectic, properly postmodern mixture of topics, including the vast increase in numbers of amateur flutists; the expansion of flute teaching as the educational industry developed; changes pertaining to the design and manufacture of flutes, including the invention of new types of low flutes, quarter-tone flutes, and a slide flute; the increased focus on physical aspects of playing such as embouchure, breathing, and sound production; and the continuing loss of tonal variety on the part of flutes and flute players. Yet Powell ends *The Flute* on a positive note, pointing out that increasing contact between flutists, teachers, and makers, facilitated by the growth of flute societies, specialized magazines, and the internet, has diversified the information sources and range of musical stimulation available to flutists, and flutes are now available in a wide variety of modern models and materials. Moreover, because changes to the flute and flute playing since the 1970s have been as profound as in any thirty-year period in the past, “it would be unwise to conclude that the flute’s

mechanical development for musical purposes seems essentially to have ceased" (p. 281).

Before concluding, I should like to issue a small warning about a smattering of unclear or incorrect citations that appear in Powell's otherwise excellent book. These include occasional titles and dates of sources, some personal names (for example, it is not instrument maker Christophe Delusse whose *L'Art de la flûte traversiere* appeared in 1761 [p.123], but flutist and composer de Lusse, whose first name does not appear in contemporary sources, but to whom Fétis referred as Charles and by which name Powell identifies him in the index), and other miscellaneous matters. Moreover, while the book's method of citation is generally well designed and allows Powell to comment on a wide variety of sources without interrupting the flow of the narrative, readers who wish to locate complete bibliographical information for sources only briefly mentioned in the endnotes must search the bibliographical essay that precedes the notes for each chapter, or even occasionally hunt through the bibliographical essay for an earlier chapter. It helps that the index (which is good overall) generally lists the principal references to authors' names that appear in the bibliographical essays, making it easier to find full citations. Yet, this requires still further hunting back and forth between text, notes, index, and bibliographical essays.

These are minor cavils, however. Powell's achievement is a tremendous one, and he is to be heartily congratulated and warmly thanked for doing such painstaking research and for presenting the story of the transverse flute, its players, its listeners, its makers, its teachers, its students, its scholars, and its repertoire in such a comprehensive and compelling fashion. Powell is also to be commended for more clearly showing those of us who are scholarly researchers how much work still needs to be done to fill in the gaps in our knowledge. Moreover, he has begun to correct a predominantly male-centered scholarship about the flute by giving women flute makers, players, and composers their due throughout. Above all, this book is liberating. If only all flute teachers, players, students, and admirers of the instrument were to read it, there should be a collective freeing up from the relatively narrow traditions of flute playing in which most of us have been brought up, and the wider world of the flute that would open up to them should become yet more interesting and compelling.

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