



The United States Army Field Band

The Musical Ambassadors of the Army
Washington, DC

Flute Clinic

by

Staff Sergeant Kendra Boettcher

Staff Sergeant Jennifer Nitchman

Staff Sergeant Dana Tan

The United States Army Field Band
4214 Field Band Drive • Fort Meade, Maryland 20755-5330

Phone: (301) 677-6586 • Fax: (301) 677-6533
E-mail: fldbnd@emh1.ftmeade.army.mil • Website: www.army.mil/fieldband

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PREFACE

These comments about flute playing are intended to help high school age musicians derive the most from their practice time. This advice is by no means intended to be definitive. It is written with the intent of helping high school flute players and their band directors improve skills and conquer many flute problems.

PRACTICING

Think about the following points, made by the internationally renowned flutist and teacher, Trevor Wye:

1) Practice the flute only because you want to; if you don't want to—don't! It is almost useless to spend your allocated practice time wishing that you weren't practicing.

2) Having decided to practice, make it difficult. Like a pest inspector, examine every corner of your tone and technique for flaws and practice to remove them. Only by this method will you improve quickly. Try to invent new ways to cure old problems.

3) Always try to practice what you can't play. Don't indulge in too much self-flattery by playing through what you can already do well.

4) Because practice can be tiring, always make sure your posture and hand position are correct.

It is important to consult a good teacher on all of these points.

TONE

In the study of tone, as in any other aspect of flute playing, a good private teacher should be your best guide. Listen carefully all of the time and do not be distracted by surrounding events. If your flute tone is rudimentary, work in the low register and build from there.

The best way to improve tone quality is to play long, slow notes. This gives the player the opportunity to examine tone in close detail. Beware, though, because long notes played carelessly or without thought will not achieve any positive result.

Example 1 (page 1–4) shows a very basic long tone exercise. Many flutists start their long tone exercises on B or C in the middle register, but students should ultimately begin the exercise on a note that they feel very comfortable playing, and one they feel has a good sound.

In general, long tones can be practiced over the entire range of the flute. It is most beneficial to the sound—and least stressful on the lips—to play long tones in a descending pattern towards the low register, then ascending into the high register. Long tones should be practiced each day for at least five minutes of a thirty-minute practice session.

TECHNIQUE

In many ways, certain aspects of flute technique (for instance, finger dexterity and multiple-tonguing) can be some of the easiest things to learn. However, the fundamental aspect of coordination is one of the biggest problems for many young students. The question of “What do I do when...?” is often enough to frustrate many young students to the point of not wanting to continue playing their instruments.

In the case of the flute, the coordination, once learned so well that it becomes second nature, is really quite simple. Remember the following order:

- 1) Prepare the fingers to play the note.
- 2) Set the embouchure for the note.
- 3) Begin moving the air.
- 4) Use the tongue to articulate over the air stream.

Of course, all this is easier said than done, as the student needs to learn how to do all four of these steps in a split second of actual time.

Example 2 (page 1–4) may be used to practice doing these four elements in correct order in very slow motion. In between each note of the exercise, make sure the fingers are all ready to play the next note before starting to blow. Then, make sure the embouchure is ready—again, before the air starts moving. Finally, as the air starts to move (it will sound like the articulation “whooh”) add a “doo” or “too,” only after the note had begun to sound. The resulting notes in the exercise will sound like “Whooh-doo, whooh-doo, whooh-doo.” Yes, it will seem unmusical at first, but as this coordination is mastered, gradually compress each element closer and closer together until all four steps are occurring so rapidly that they no longer sound separate.

ARTICULATION

Donald Peck, principal flutist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, once said in an interview, “There is too much tongue in tonguing.” It sounds like a funny thing to say, but especially for the flute player, it is very true. Often, when one thinks of articulation, it is equated with tonguing. However, articulation in music is much the same as articulation in speech. If we refer to someone as being “articulate,” we generally mean they are easy to understand and adept at getting their points across to other people. Articulation in music is really the same thing. Consequently, use of the tongue plays a part, but so does slurring, phrasing, and timing. So Peck’s statement, “There is too much tongue in tonguing,” actually makes sense.

To be articulate on the flute, one must learn how to produce the highest quality sound in the shortest amount of time. This becomes particularly important when employing double- and triple-tonguing. Because multiple-tonguing is so often required of flutists, many young flutists ask, “What can I practice to improve my double- (or triple-) tonguing?” The answer is to practice single-tonguing! *Example 3* (page 1–4) is an excellent single-tonguing study that should be practiced in all keys. First, practice it with no tongue at all, using only “breath” attacks (as if saying, “ha, ha, ha, ha”). After becoming reasonably good at this—which may take several weeks because it requires a great deal of stamina—start adding a slight amount of tongue to the beginning of each note, all the while remem-

bering the order learned when practicing *Example 2*.

INTONATION AND VIBRATO

Although intonation can be very precarious on the flute, it does not have to be. If the instrument is blown correctly, almost all intonation problems become minimal. A very easy way to check whether or not one is blowing into the flute in a fundamentally “correct” manner is to play a middle D (make sure the left hand index finger is raised), then play a low register D (which means lowering the left hand index finger). Ideally, the player should be able to alternate between these two notes without any change in embouchure. In this instance, the raising and lowering of the left hand index finger works much like an octave key would on the oboe or saxophone. One should be able to alternate fairly rapidly between these two notes, slurring one octave intervals. If unable to do this, flute players are probably relying too much on their “faces” (or embouchures) and too little on air support. Several common problems may result: the tone may sound over-focused and weak, the pitch may be quite low, and the high register may sound pinched and extremely sharp. *Example 4* (page 1–5) is a variation of *Example 2* that may be used to encourage the use of “more air and less face.” *Example 5* may be used for similar purposes, but the octaves also offer an excellent opportunity to study intonation at the same time. Ideally, both exercises will be practiced using an electronic tuner to check the intonation at various points.

Matching pitch with a tuner can be very beneficial. However, one of the best ways to benefit from practice with a tuner is to set it to play a pitch (much like the drone of a bagpipe), then play scales or melodies over the top of that pitch. For instance, if one is going to practice a scale of G major, set the tuner to “G” and play the scale over the top of the drone pitch. This encourages listening to the intonation of all notes—not just unisons and octaves, but other intervals as well.

Vibrato is too complex a subject to try to address in a handout. Our best advice is to encourage private study. Every flute teacher has his or her own approach to the teaching and use of vibrato. It really all comes down to a matter of personal taste. The only thing that can be said for certainty is that, if a flutist already has a beautiful sound, a nice vibrato can enhance it. If the sound isn’t good to start,

no amount of vibrato—good, bad, or otherwise—is going to make it any better.

BREATHING AND SCALES

Because the flute player uses more air than any other wind player, it is important that the basic fundamentals of breathing are learned correctly. The most common mistake many students make is to raise their shoulders when taking a breath. This tightens the throat, which often leads to a bleating, goat-like vibrato, and may develop into grunts or vocal chord noises while playing. An easy way to illustrate correct breathing is to for players to put their hands on their abdomens and notice that, when breathing in, the abdomen moves out and when breathing out, the abdomen moves in. Players should be “thinner” when breathing out and “fatter” when breathing in. They must understand that correct breathing makes them “wider” instead of

“taller.” By raising the shoulders, one actually makes the abdomen thinner when inhaling, creating tension and decreasing the amount of space for air intake.

Breathing will present fewer problems when the player continues the forward flow of the musical phrase. An excellent way to practice this idea is to learn to experience the movement of a beautiful tone throughout the entire range of the instrument. One way to practice this is to play scales and arpeggios *in as expressive a manner as possible*. Try to match the tone color to the key being played. Increase the intensity of the tone when ascending, and return to the same starting note when descending. Experiment with the use of tone color to highlight change of key. Let each two bar phrase lead naturally to the next two. *Example 6* (page 1–6) shows a scale pattern that may be played in this manner, preferably transposed to all keys (*see Scale Supplement*).

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

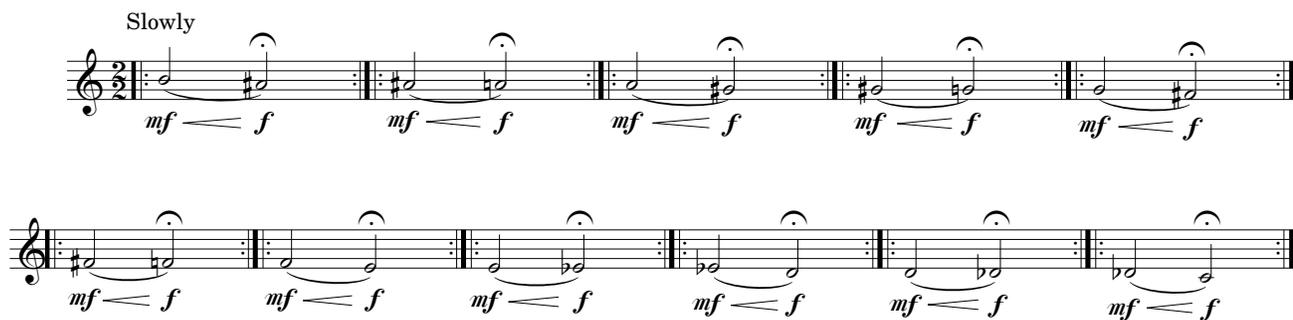
| | |
|--|--|
| <i>A Beginner’s Book for the Flute, Part 1 and 2</i> | Trevor Wye (Novello) This book is available with piano accompaniment book or accompaniment cassette |
| <i>A Practice Book for the Flute, Volumes 1–6</i> | Trevor Wye (Novello) |
| <i>Seven Daily Exercises, op. 5</i> | M. A. Reichert (Cundy-Bettoney) |
| <i>De la Sonorité</i> | Marcel Moyse (Leduc) |
| <i>Tone Development Through Interpretation</i> | Marcel Moyse (Leduc) |
| <i>Exercices Journaliers (Daily Exercises)</i> | Taffanel-Gaubert (Leduc) |

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FLUTE EXAMPLES

Example 1

Slowly



mf < *f* *mf* < *f* *mf* < *f* *mf* < *f* *mf* < *f*

mf < *f* *mf* < *f* *mf* < *f* *mf* < *f* *mf* < *f* *mf* < *f*

Example 2

Ascending (continue up to high C)



etc...

Descending (continue down to low C)



etc...

Example 3

Freely ♩ = 60-72 after Reichert



mf < *f* *mf* < *f* *mf* < *f* *mf* < *f* *mf* < *f*

mf < *f* *mf* < *f* *mf* < *f* *mf* < *f* *mf* < *f*

Example 4

Ascending (continue up to high C)
etc..

Descending (continue down to low C)
etc.

Example 4 consists of two musical staves. The first staff is labeled 'Ascending' and shows a scale starting on middle C and moving up chromatically. A long slur covers the entire scale, with the instruction '(continue up to high C)'. The second staff is labeled 'Descending' and shows a scale starting on a high note and moving down chromatically. A long slur covers the entire scale, with the instruction '(continue down to low C)'. Both staves end with 'etc..'.

Example 5

C major C minor

C diminished

C# major C# minor

C# diminished

Repeat pattern beginning on each note of the chromatic scale.

Example 5 consists of four musical staves. The first two staves are for C major and C minor, each showing a chromatic scale with a repeat sign at the end. The next two staves are for C# major and C# minor, also showing chromatic scales with repeat signs. The C# diminished scale is shown on a single staff with a repeat sign. A note at the bottom right says 'Repeat pattern beginning on each note of the chromatic scale.'

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Example 6

F major

f

Musical notation for the first section of the exercise in F major. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (Bb), and a common time signature (C). The music is marked with a forte dynamic (*f*). The notation features eighth-note patterns with slurs and breath marks.

D minor

pp *simile*

Musical notation for the second section of the exercise in D minor. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb), and a common time signature (C). The music is marked with a pianissimo dynamic (*pp*) and the instruction *simile*. The notation features eighth-note patterns with slurs and breath marks.

Scale Supplement

The fifteen major and minor scales make up our musical “ABCs.” Just as a person wishing to read learns the alphabet first, a musician cannot expect to master an instrument without first learning the basic set of scales. By diligently practicing the major scales and all three forms of the minor scales, they will become automatic, just like reading the alphabet. This will make playing, especially sight reading, much easier so that the musician can concentrate towards the ultimate goal—making music!

Each scale below should be played slowly at first, ensuring that each note is played correctly. Gradually work for speed, but do not rush. Use a metronome whenever possible to guarantee evenness and a steady tempo. The player should practice difficult scales twice as often as easy ones to develop competence in all keys. As skills increase, change rhythmic patterns and increase tempos. Advanced players can still use scales to work on intonation, technique, range, and dynamics.

Use the following patterns one at a time or in combination to get even more benefit from scale practice:

| | |
|---|--|
| <div data-bbox="183 810 779 966"> <p>A</p> </div> <div data-bbox="183 966 779 1123"> <p>B</p> </div> <div data-bbox="183 1123 779 1278"> <p>C</p> </div> | <div data-bbox="876 810 1481 966"> <p>D</p> </div> <div data-bbox="876 966 1481 1123"> <p>E</p> </div> <div data-bbox="876 1123 1481 1278"> <p>F</p> </div> |
|---|--|

C Major

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| <p>A natural minor</p> | <p>A harmonic minor</p> |
|------------------------|-------------------------|

A melodic minor

Scale Supplement

G Major



E natural minor

E harmonic minor



E melodic minor



F Major

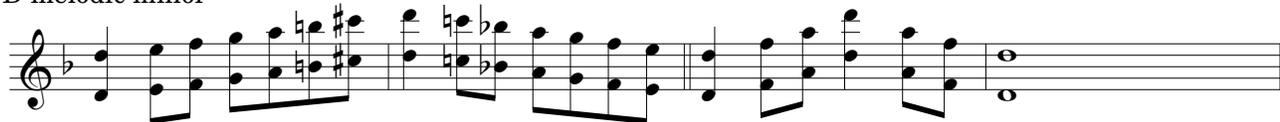


D natural minor

D harmonic minor



D melodic minor



D Major

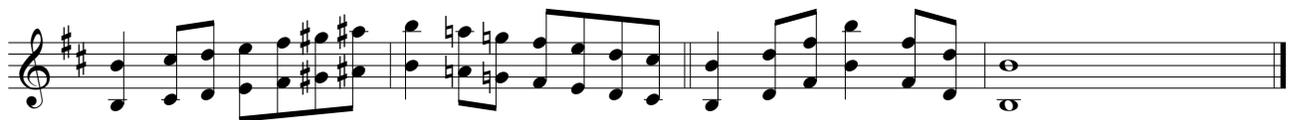


B natural minor

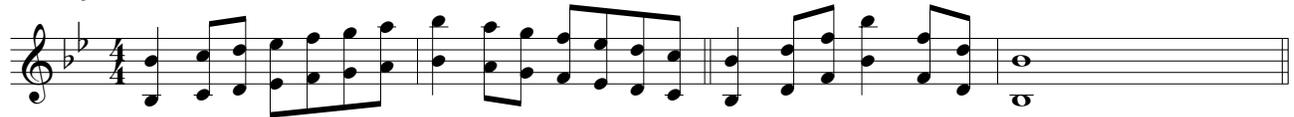
B harmonic minor



B melodic minor



Bb Major



G natural minor

G harmonic minor

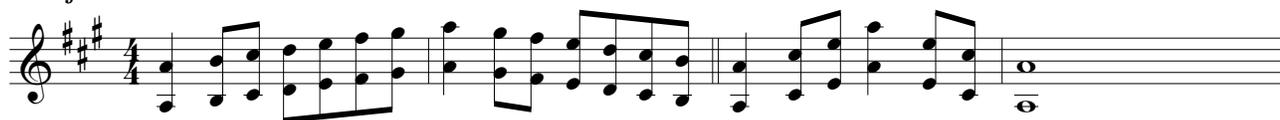


G melodic minor



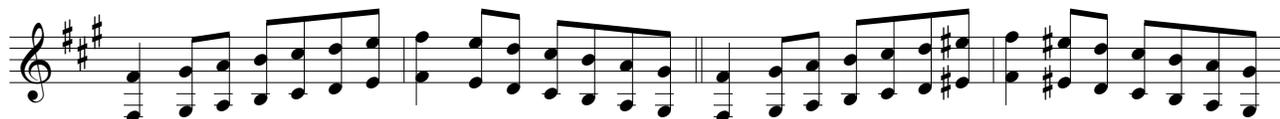
Scale Supplement

A Major



F# natural minor

F# harmonic minor



F# melodic minor



Eb Major



C natural minor

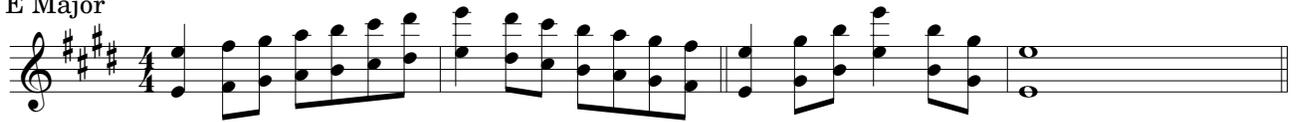
C harmonic minor



C melodic minor

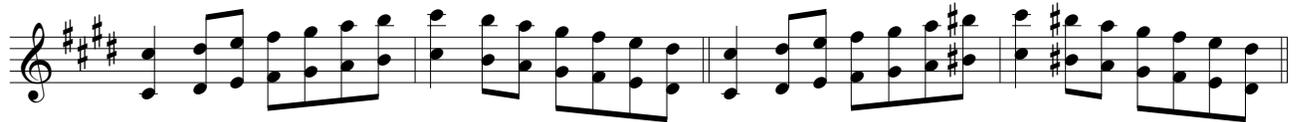


E Major

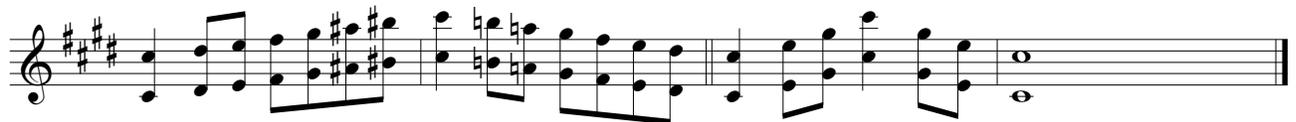


C# natural minor

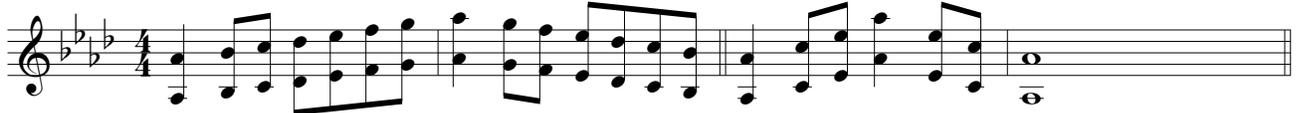
C# harmonic minor



C# melodic minor

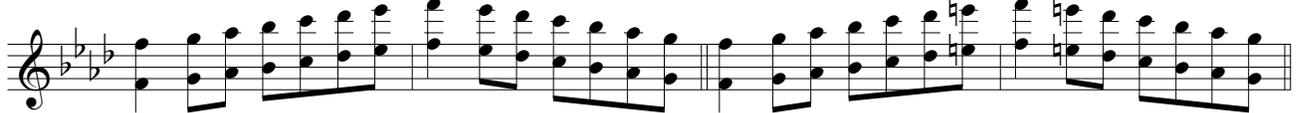


Ab Major



F natural minor

F harmonic minor

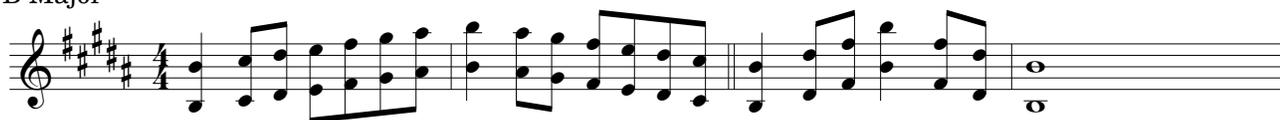


F melodic minor



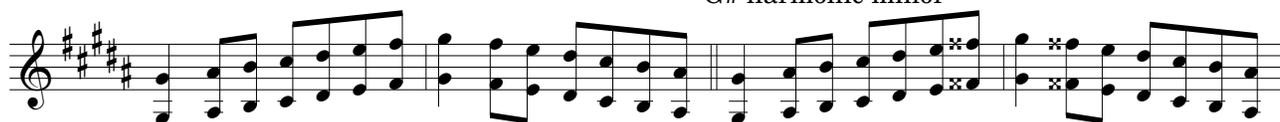
Scale Supplement

B Major

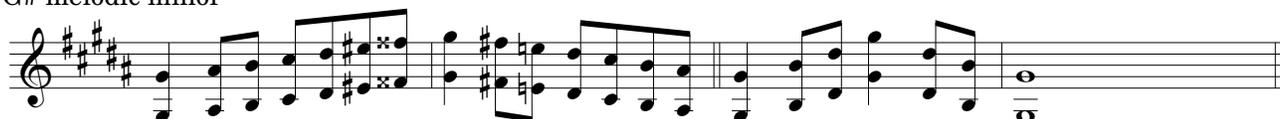


G# natural minor

G# harmonic minor



G# melodic minor



Db Major



Bb natural minor

Bb harmonic minor

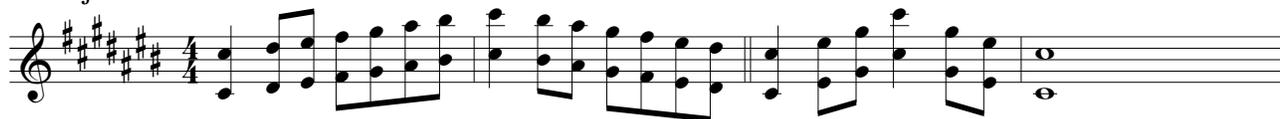


Bb melodic minor



Scale Supplement

C# Major

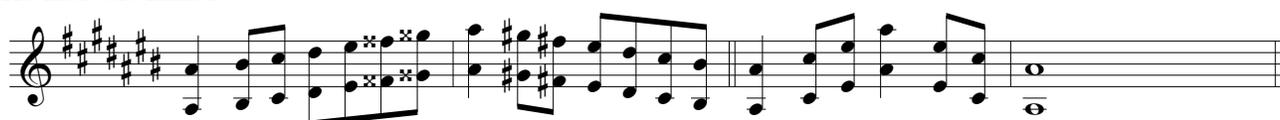


A# natural minor

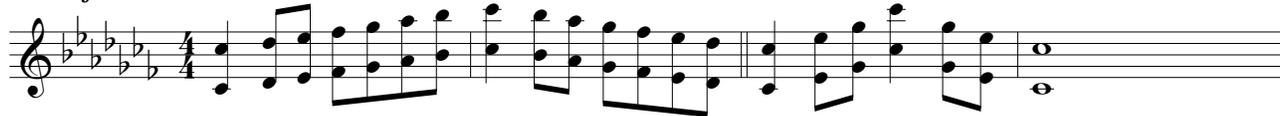
A# harmonic minor



A# melodic minor



Cb Major



Ab natural minor

Ab harmonic minor



Ab melodic minor

