

To the Gym with Marcel Moyse

Confession: I am looking for colour

To make a melody sound beautiful I have thought up some exercises in the way Marcel Moyse did. This manner of making your own exercises is his way of practicing, but he never described it in one of his books. When teaching though, he made his students work this way. As I mentioned in my previous article on his art of teaching, Moyse was keen on experimenting with inversions, transpositions, slurs, dynamics and the development of tone colours. By focusing on each of these elements of the music he was in fact playing around with the given material. This playing around can be done with Moyse's own exercises, but of course you can also use exercises by others. The important thing is to understand Moyse's way of working.

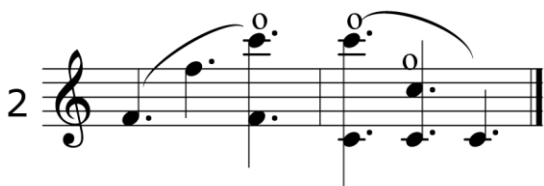
In this way of working the process of practicing is more important than the results you produce. It is, as mentioned before, like going to the gym for your weekly fitness-hour. It's worthwhile just doing it!

For this article I have chosen an exercise from Philippe Bernold's *La Technique de l'Embouchure* (edition La Stravaganza ST 8803), Vocalise nr. 19 with my proposal on how to practice and improve the tone colours in the difficult registers.



Exercise 1 Très lié, soutenu et souple (Very legato, sustained and flexible)

With this exercise Bernold wants to deal with tone production in a methodical manner. In his opinion most exercise books focus mostly on the fingering technique. Here he wants to emphasize the production of a fine sound in flute playing. The target is to play this rather nasty combination of notes as colourful as possible – if possible on just one breath. Pay special attention to the intonation and recognize the importance of the harmonic context.



Exercise 2

To begin with we have to find a nice low c^1 , not too flat and rich in harmonics. To achieve this, play the last note, f^1 , and then its first two harmonics, f^2 and c^3 . Make the c^3 very clear, without any pressure and as much in tune as possible. (Feel as if you are picking it from the air). Then play the same harmonic c^3 , this time as an overtone of c^1 . Without changing the fingering slur the c^3 down one octave to c^2 and then another octave to reach the c^1 , keeping in mind the clear sound of the highest c.



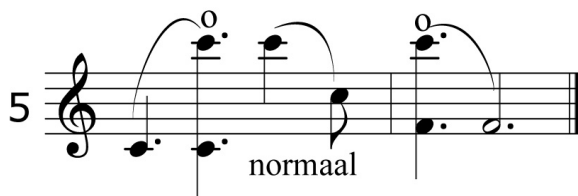
Exercise 3

Now that you have found a focussed c^1 , rich in harmonics, you slur it a semitone higher, to the $d\flat^1$. After this you play both notes an octave higher, using the fingering of the low notes, as harmonics. This gives a nice $d\flat^2$ that is well in tune. Now keep this $d\flat^2$ in mind and play the c^1 - $d\flat^2$ slur as written and listen carefully to the intonation and tone colour. When you have found a colourful $d\flat^2$, slur it to f^2 and then to $d\flat^3$. This $d\flat^3$ should sound as beautiful and clear as your c^3 .



Exercise 4

Now that we have found the most difficult notes in this exercise, ($d\flat^3$, c^3 , c^1) we can add the in between notes and play them in the same colourful manner. Be aware of the intonation of the e^1 , it tends to be flat, and a flat e^1 might make the c^1 cloudy and flat. (Use the right hand pinkie with the e^1 until you slur down to the c^1)



Exercise 5

This fifth exercise is in fact an inversion of exercise 2. Play a nice, warm c^1 and slur it in one leap to the third harmonic, c^3 , making it clear and in tune. Then play a c^3 with normal fingering, there should be no change in pitch. Play a c^2 in between to check the intonation,

then play the high c^3 as the (second) harmonic of f (fingering a low f) and end up with a rich and warm f^1 .

“If one only forms the idea that a thing is not difficult, it becomes much easier.” (Th. Böhm)

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