Lindsay's Elements of Flute-playing

A Study in Performance Practice

Facsimile of the Edition of 1828–30

Edited, with an Introduction, by Ardal Powell

And a Commentary by Richard M. Wilson

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Contents

THE ELEMENTS

OF

FLUTE-PLAYING,

ACCORDING TO THE

MOST APPROVED PRINCIPLES

OF

MODERN FINGERING;

BY

THOMAS LINDSAY.

Sacrifice Execution to Tone, and Tone to Expression.—JAMES' *Word or Two.*
Upon this hint I spake.—SHAKSPEARE.

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T. Lindsay

Preface

Thomas Lindsay published his flute method *The Elements of Flute-Playing* in two parts that together amount to 158 pages, in 1828 and 1830. This is a facsimile reprint of the work, from a nineteenth-century edition in this writer's collection. Spots and specks on the manuscript have been removed, along with ink stains and other soiling, and the document is reproduced at a size slightly smaller than the original, unconventional, format (58 by 82 picas). Only a few modest attempts have been made to enhance or replace faint or missing detail.

The dates and places of Lindsay's birth and death are unknown. He worked in London as a composer and arranger of music for the flute, and a publisher and merchant of sheet music. Over the years he engaged in these activities at a succession of shops, where he also sold musical instruments and offered flute lessons. London directories for the years 1825–1833 listed him as a flute and flageolet maker.

The method is written for the simple-system flute of the day, more precisely the distinctive English eight-key flute, and thus it is especially valuable to those who play historical flutes seriously. But the *Elements* will be of value to all musicians and scholars interested in early romantic practices, as we may infer from a one-sentence review of Part II of the Elements in the June, 1830, issue of *La Belle Assembleé or Court and Fashionable Magazine*:

> *Had this excellent little work been adapted solely to the peculiarities of the [flute] we would not have introduced it in a work professedly addressed to the fair sex; but on casually perusing It, we found some of the best-selected extracts and most apposite remarks that we have ever met with on many subjects, equally applicable to the voice and to other instruments; particularly on the turn, the shake, the appogiatura, the rhythmical division of sentences, and a few most valuable apophthegms on taste and expression; and though this portion of the work does not form more than one quarter of the contents, we consider them well worth the price affixed to the whole.*

The Commentary on the facsimile presents detailed information on how these ideas apply in practice on the instruments of Lindsay's era. Lindsay advocates "modern fingering" which incorporated special techniques, peculiar to the new types of British flutes of the 1820s with medium- to large-size holes, for expressive intonation. The regular use of harmonic fingerings added more color and gracefulness to the sound of the flute. Lindsay sometimes expects extreme dynamics and accents, especially in National Melodies; these too are intimately dependent on the increased dynamic range of the period's flutes.

Unlike many authors of flute methods of the time, Lindsay does not seem to have been known as a public performer. This may be an advantage to us because he offers a synthesis and survey of the works of a variety of other authors, both English and French—a survey that one would not expect from a virtuoso's instructions. Lindsay's eclectic approach earned praise at the time, for example in the first two paragraphs of a review of Part I of *The Elements* that appeared in the 1829 issue of *The Harmonicon*.

> *THIS is really a very comprehensive treatise, and an extremely clever book. The author is evidently a man who has thought much and deeply on the subject, and to a good purpose. His here reprinting Gunn's essay on Musical Sound in relation to the Flute, shews that he is sensible of the importance of studying an art philosophically; and his own remarks dispersed throughout the work, prove that he himself has so studied it.*
>
> *It appears by the Preface, that Mr. Lindsay has freely profited by former publications on the subject, and with becoming candour and manliness he avows his obligations. "Thus," he says, "the elaborate Méthodes de Flute of BERBIGUIER, and of DROUET; the well-known treatise of DEVIENNE; the celebrated méthode of HUGOT and WUNDERLICH, adopted by the Conservatoire at Paris; the philosophical, and, in many respects, admirable Treatise of the late Mr. GUNN; the practical works of Mr. NICHOLSON, Mr. MONZANI and Mr. WEISS, besides other authorities, have been all freely consulted."*

Lindsay laments the "paucity of explanatory and preceptive matter, which … has hitherto characterized much of the treatises in our language…", and what he perceives as the lack of really good books to teach from. He is "[c]onvinced that an art must always be best taught when inculcated on true philosophical principles", and his efforts to be systematic—to explain and give lists of rules and hints—are extraordinary, even in a book of instructions. Though he strongly recommends that his work be used in conjunction with a teacher, he does not hesitate to assert that "to students residing in the country, or abroad, (who ... are precluded from availing themselves of the services of a good master,) the course of instruction inculcated in these Elements will prove of great value." He might well have said "to students residing in the country, or abroad, *or far in the future...*".

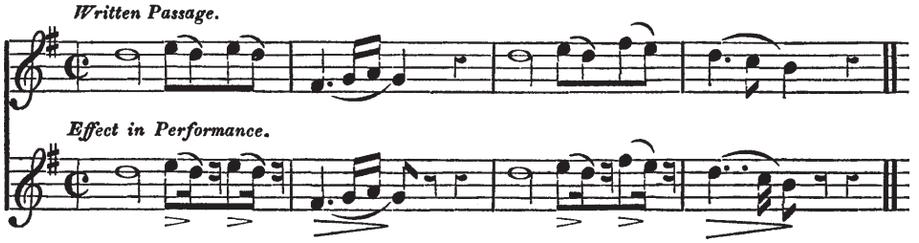
The Elements represents one of the performance styles of early nineteenth-century Europe. We may be sure that, just as Lindsay's language differs so greatly from that in use today, the sound and style of London flutists of his time was greatly different from ours. (We might be tremendously moved, could we hear these flutists today, or we might think their mannerisms overdone.) But for many of Lindsay's modern readers, the value of the *Elements* will lie not in learning an *old* performance style, but rather in how his presentation might suggest *new* (to us) ideas and musical insights to incorporate into playing and teaching.

RMW

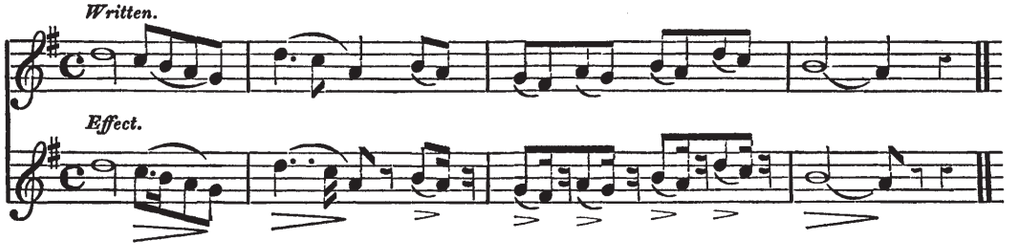
RULE VI. A Slur placed over two notes, indicates that the accent must be given to the first: a slightly increased value, both in power and duration, is thus thrown into the first note, whilst the second must be played proportionately short, much in the same manner as if a Staccato dot had been placed over it.

It is no easy matter to explain the precise effect of the Slur thus applied, because, since it should vary with the sentiment of the music and the passion intended to be expressed, it will require to be more strikingly marked in some passages than in others; but, it is presumed, the practical illustration we have given of its use, in the two Examples below, will prove sufficient for the guidance of every intelligent reader. At some future time, we may attempt a further illustration.

Ex. 12.



Ex. 13.



Now, trifling as the object of the last Rule may appear, the learner is assured that much of what is called *style*, depends upon the qualified application of this very simple principle.

With respect to the PATHETIC, or *impassioned accent*, it is less easy to direct its application, than the GRAMMATICAL, already discussed; because this accent is not confined to any particular situation in the measure, but changes place to suit the expression of the music. Nor can any rules be given to determine the degree of force or energy with which it should be expressed, since the power to be thrown into it, in performance, will equally depend upon the nature of the movement, and the quality of passion which the sentence introducing it is intended to express: it must, however, always be superior in force to the Melodic or Grammatical Accent. Indeed so powerful is its effect in musical expression, that composers often make it the vehicle of indicating the most intense feelings, whether it be the gentler passion of grief, or melancholy, or those of a more turbulent and ungovernable nature,—for it is alike applicable to the violence of anger, the fury of rage, and the impetuosity of despair.

This accent, therefore, marks the most prominent features of a performance, and, when properly introduced and well delivered, may be said to develope, better than any other, the true character of a musical piece.

The remarks on EMPHASIS and SYNCOPATION will throw some additional light upon this subject.

Whilst on the subject of ACCENTUATION, a great deal more might be said; but the additional observations we have to make will, perhaps, be better classed under the head of STYLE and EXPRESSION. The introductory portion of our work, however, having already exceeded its intended limits, we are compelled, by want of room, to reserve ourselves, on these interesting topics, for a future publication.

Mr. BACON, in his eloquent essay on *Vocal Ornament*, speaking of those DECORATIONS, or EMBELLISHMENTS, which the best Singers are in the habit of introducing extemporaneously, thus expresses himself: "An ornament composed of *descending notes* is, perhaps, the simplest, the most frequently used, and capable of the most varied expression; and, when ascending and descending notes are combined, the expression is derived from the latter. When executed slowly, and with a dragging tone, such an ornament, trickling like tears, as it were, conveys sorrow, tenderness, despair. When rapidly, but lightly, or staccato, it conveys gaiety; when quickly, but smoothly, it images gaiety softened by tenderness; when uttered with dignity and firmness, it bestows an expression of majesty; when with great rapidity and force, of vengeance, courage, and despair, even to frenzy. In this latter mode of execution CATALANI particularly excelled; to the first BILLINGTON appears to have most frequently applied herself. *Triplets* generally convey lightness and gaiety; but when they are executed slowly, and particularly when they descend by close intervals, they may be applied to passages of tenderness. In almost all cases, close intervals express the softer emotions; wide intervals can rarely be applied, except to the more vehement expression of passion."

We shall conclude our remarks on this difficult, but interesting subject, by offering to the Student's notice the following

PRACTICAL HINTS ON STYLE AND EXPRESSION.

I. The art of PHRASING being of the greatest importance to Expression, the Student should make it his particular study—see page 101. Our observations on the nature and office of the APPOGGIATURA, at page 85, are also highly deserving his notice, for the same reason.

II. Let the *piano*, the *dolce*, and the *forte*, be strictly attended to; and be equally careful that the *forzando*, the *rinforzando*, the *crescendo*, and the *diminuendo*, the *calando*, the *ritardando*, &c., have likewise given to them their proper effects. All are absolutely indispensable to a proper appreciation of the composer's intention.

III. In Concert-playing, when the inner or lower part is intended as an accompaniment only, be careful to adopt such a tone and manner that it may never predominate over the leading subject, or solo, which the accompaniment is only intended to sustain. The accompanist should always be subordinate and subservient to the principal performer.

IV. In quick movements, such as the *Allegro*, *Allegretto*, and *Presto*, articulation properly requires a more energetic action of the tongue than would be desirable in slow movements—such as the *Adagio*, *Larghetto*, and *Andante;* the latter requiring a smoother style of delivery, and, consequently, a less decided action of the organ. To the former movements, the *tonguing* may be more frequently applied than to the latter, in which the Slur should generally prevail—the *Staccato* being here reserved to give occasional spirit, or contrast, to the higher beauties of the *Legato*.

V. The strength should be increased in all ascending, and diminished in all descending passages. This may almost be considered to apply universally.

VI. In passages of excitement or rising passion, (which are generally of the ascending series,) requiring animation and energy, the time should be rather accelerated; and in those of subdued feeling, or depression, (which are usually of the descending series,) the time should be correspondingly retarded.

VII. The intention of DISCORDS being to produce effects, by the contrasts which they afford with the softer parts of Harmony, they should generally be given *with force*.

VIII. In passing from the harmony of the *Dominant Seventh* to that of the *Tonic*, and in the resolution of *Discords*, generally, the first note is to be struck with marked emphasis, and the second slurred into it, rather softly, and somewhat shortened of its value. The same effect is intended where the slur and mark of emphasis are applied to two notes.

IX. Of the different movements of the CONCERTO, M. DROUET has thus written (vide his *Méthode*, page 72):—"The ALLEGRO requires majesty, boldness, decision; the ADAGIO, a noble simplicity, grace, sweetness, and pathos; the RONDO, freedom, gaiety, and brilliance. Each movement of the Concerto should be distinguished by a different character, otherwise the whole performance will be monotonous. Coldness, or want of energy, in the Allegro, will send an audience to sleep; the absence of sentiment will ruin the Adagio; whilst a slow, dragging delivery of the Rondo must be intolerable. Above all things, avoid the unpardonable fault of making vulgar flourishes, whilst employed in pourtraying soft and tender emotions; and, in passages of animation, equally guard yourself against that cold and heartless mannerism that would freeze even the most glowing composition."

X. There is perhaps no movement more attractive and exhilarating than that of the Polonoise, or Polacca. To give it its proper character, the second quaver in the bar should generally be delivered with marked emphasis.

XI. In the ALLEGRO, learners are very apt to *hurry the time* in passages of execution; be careful to avoid this, by deliberately counting the beats in each bar, and occasionally marking the accented note. The effect of singing, or melodic passages, which occur in the ALLEGRO, will often be heightened by observing some little relaxation in the time; but this deviation must neither be too striking nor too frequently indulged in, or the unity of the whole movement will suffer.

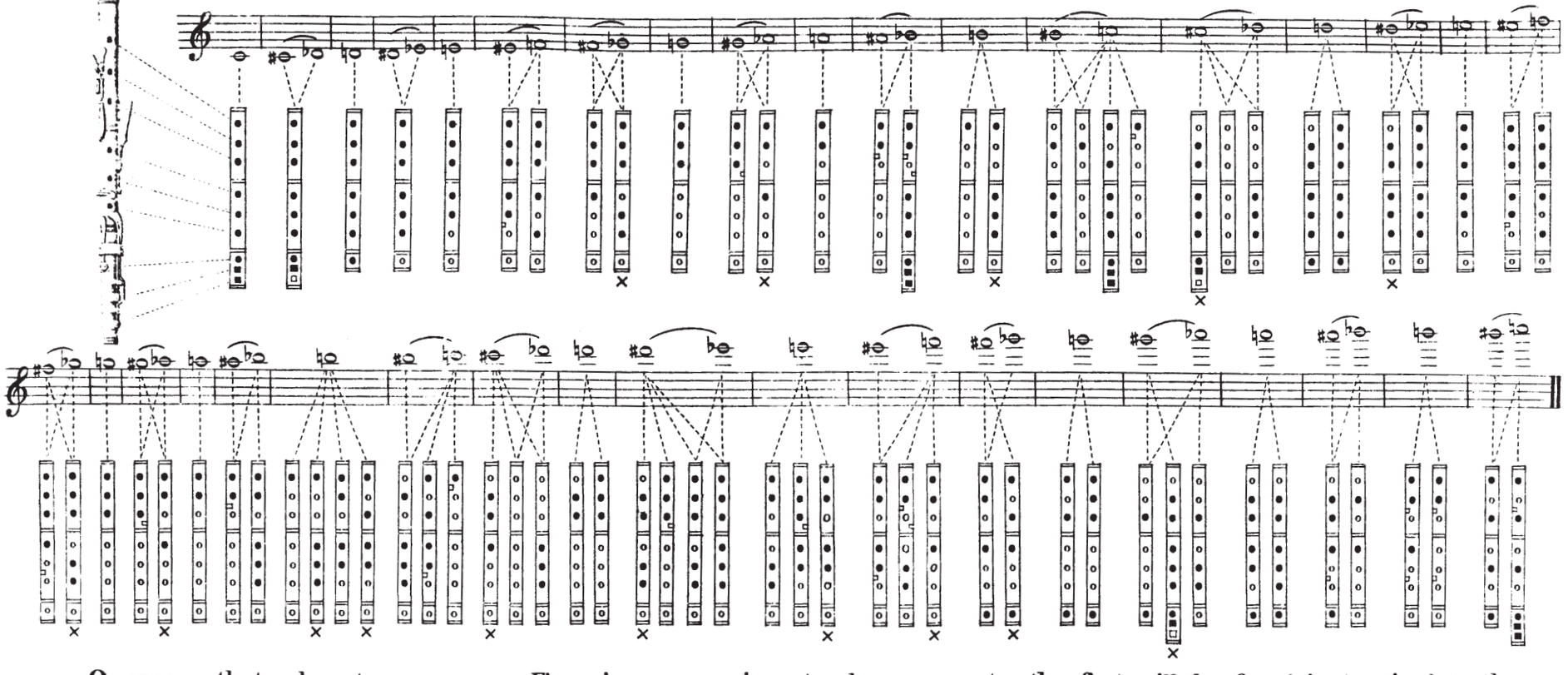
XII. "The style of the ADAGIO," says the celebrated HUMMEL, "is in a manner opposed to that of the *Allegro;* for here, the notes must be much more sustained, more closely connected, and, as it were, rendered vocal, by a tender, *Cantabile* style of delivery. The embellishments introduced into the ADAGIO must, for the most part, be played with more effusion and tenderness than in the *Allegro;* they must attract the hearer rather than hurry him onwards, and awaken feelings rather of pleasure than of surprise."

GENERAL SCALE OF ALL THE NOTES,

with the best Fingerings;

intended for Occasional reference.

The square marks, which represent the additional keys, are only introduced when those keys are actually used.



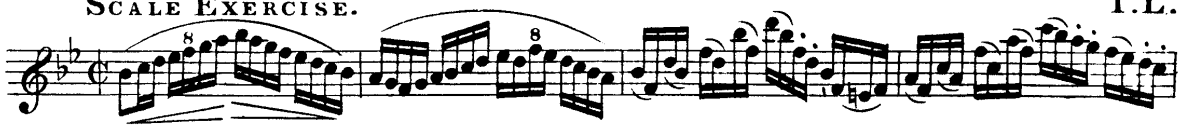
OBSERVE, that when two, or more Fingerings are given to the same note, the first will be found best suited to the generality of passages: those distinguished by a small cross, (×), produce the sharpest notes, and are often desirable when any note, so marked, happens to be the Sharp Seventh, or Sensible-note of the Key.

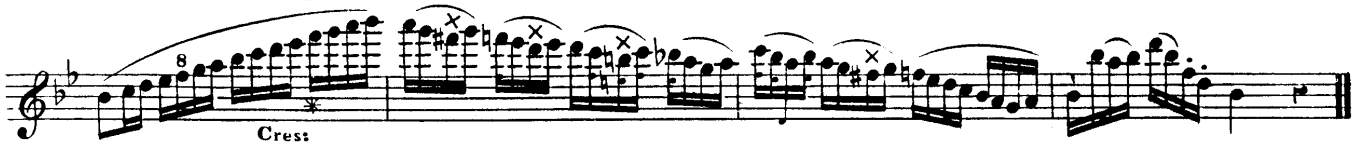
Common Chord.

Ex: 172.

SCALE EXERCISE. T.L.

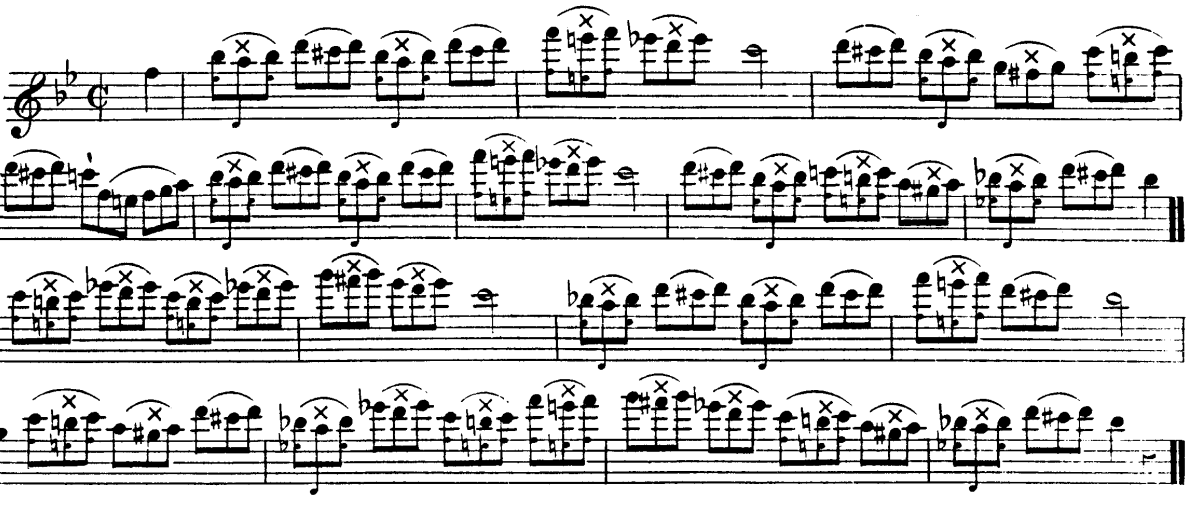
Ex: 173.





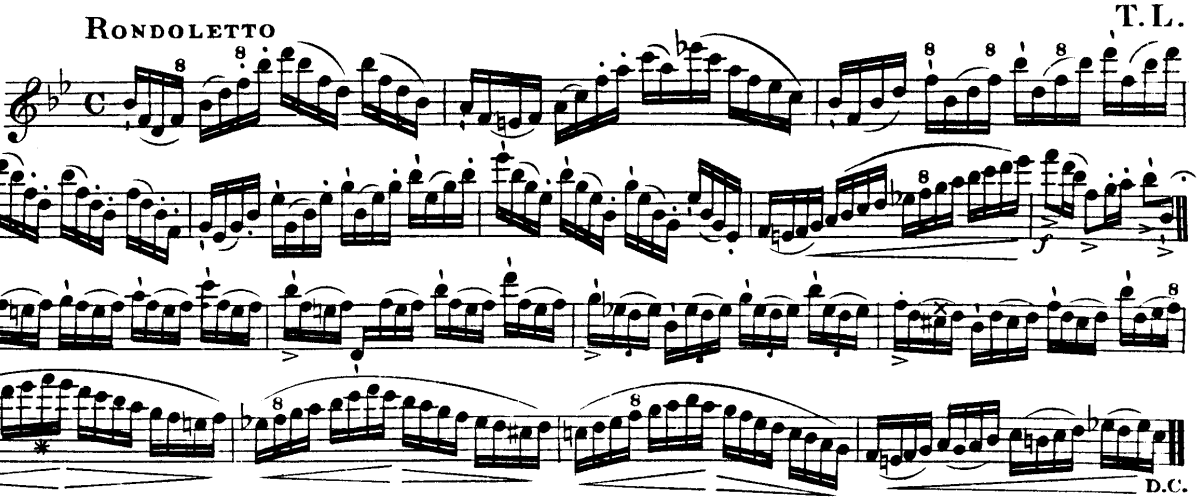
The following Lesson, partly abridged from BERBIGUIER, is an excellent study for the augmented Semitones; it also shews how extensively the altered *Harmonic Fingerings* may be employed, and the facilities which they afford.

Ex: 174.



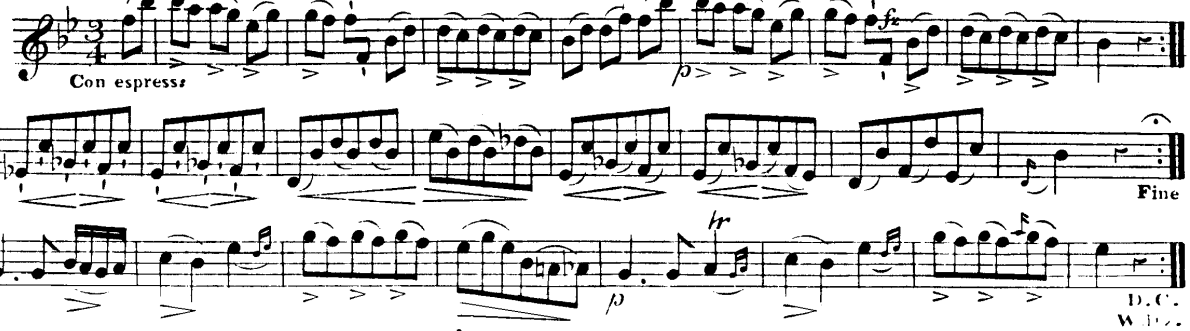
RONDOLETTO T.L.

Ex: 175.



Admired WALTZ, said to have been the last composed by the lamented C.M.von WEBER.

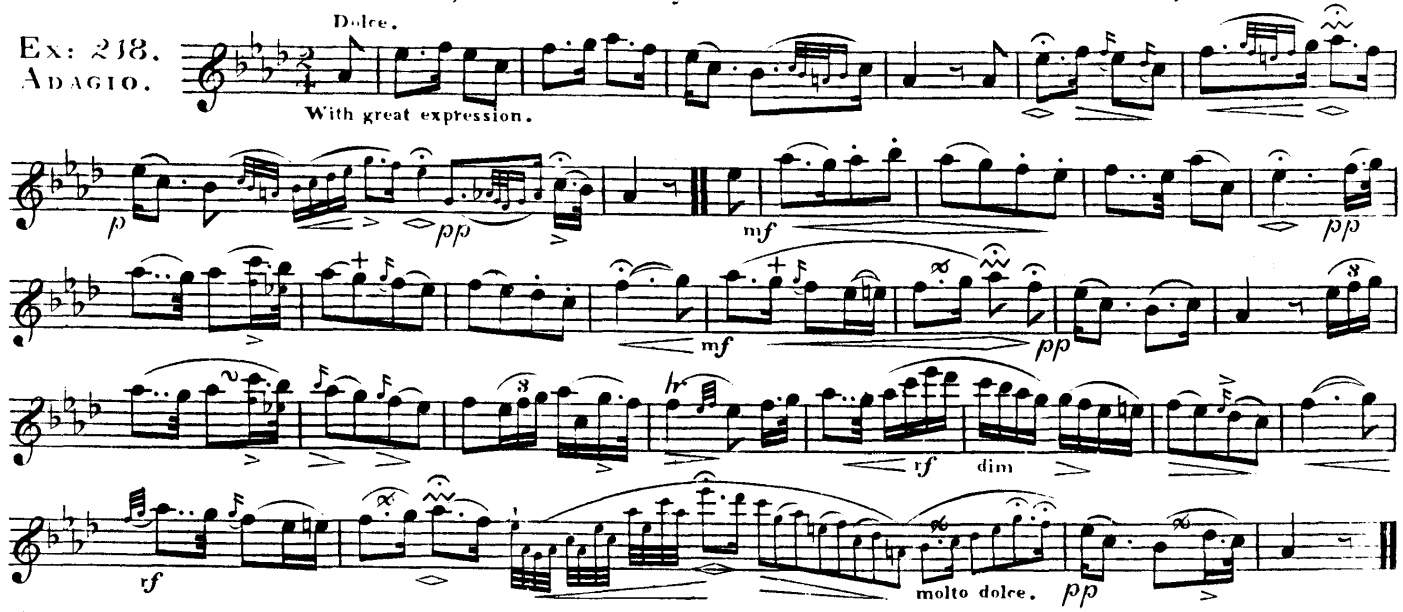
Ex: 176.



Gramachree; Irish Melody.

Arrd by T. Lindsay.

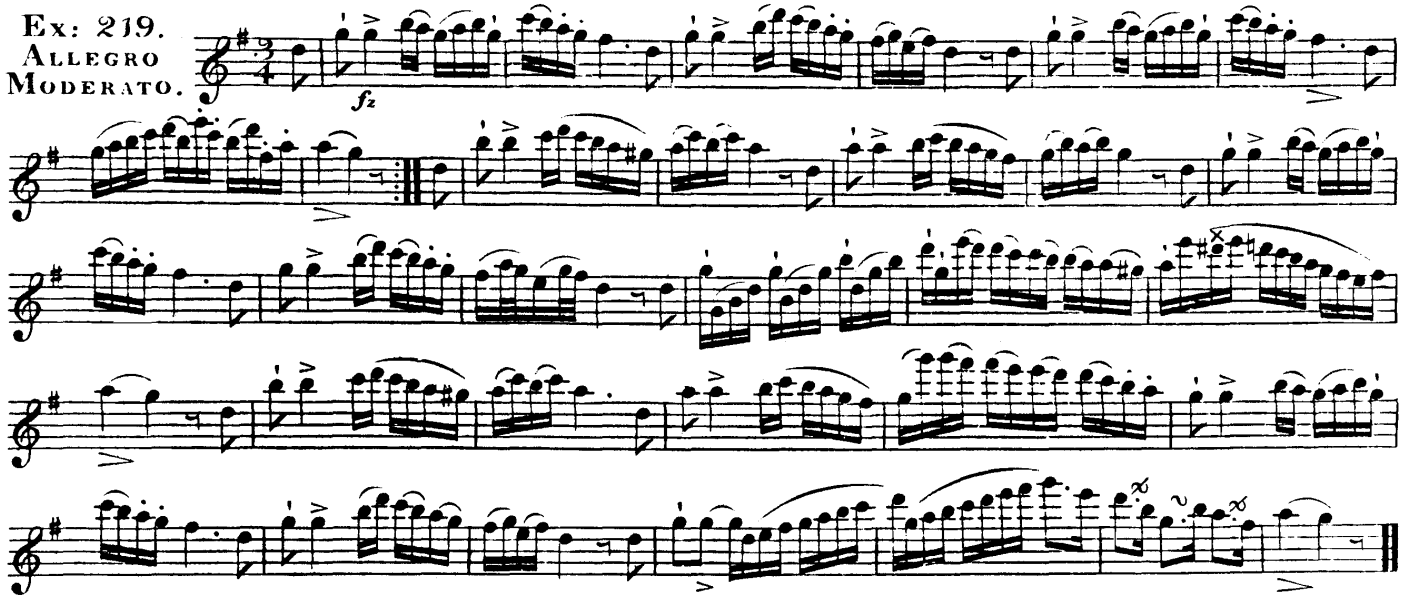
Ex: 218.
Adagio.



A Favourite Polacca of Martini.

Arrd by T. Lindsay.

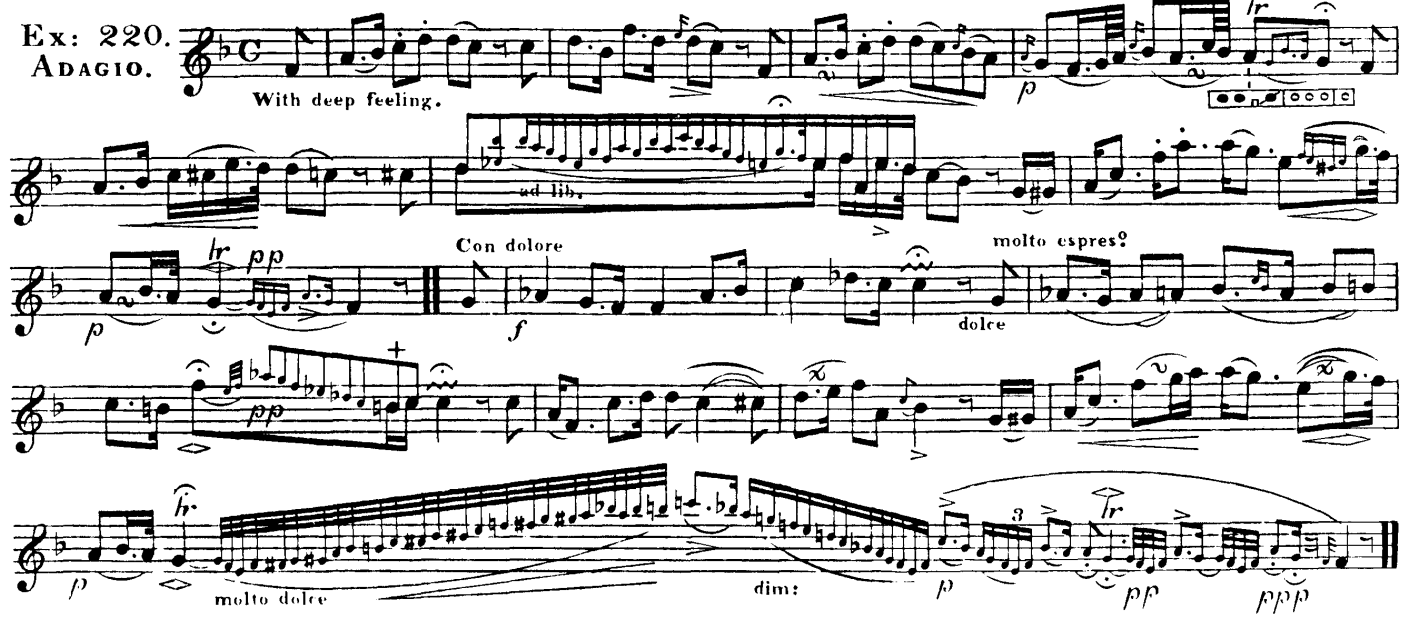
Ex: 219.
Allegro
Moderato.



Scotch Air, "Auld Robin Gray."

Arrd by T. Lindsay.

Ex: 220.
Adagio.



inequality lends a personality to each note and a character to each scale.

Lindsay gives the range of the flute, in his fingering chart, as c' to c'''', chromatically. The notes a''' and b'''♭ appear regularly in the symphonic repertoire of Lindsay's time, though the b'''♭ is avoided in some contexts. Notes higher than that were the territory of the virtuosi. The b'''♭'s in Lindsay appear only near the end of Part II; there is only one b''', at the top of a B major scale, and no c'''' in the musical examples in the method.

b. The simple system compared with the Boehm system.

Theobald Boehm (1794–1881) was a virtuoso flutist, a goldsmith, and an engineer who, in two major steps, in 1832 and 1847, created a new flute design. The latter model, with modifications in details, is the cylindrical Boehm flute, the modern flute used all over the world today. While Boehm incorporated many ideas in the air at the time, he was the only one with the courage to throw out the old system completely and the engineering know-how to make a flute on his new, "scientific" system that actually worked. (The simple-system flute is often referred to as the "pre-Boehm" flute, but this can be misleading, since this system remained common and was played by many professional players into the twentieth century, especially outside of Britain and France.)

At the time of his *Elements*, Lindsay could have had no idea of the new and controversial developments in flute design that would occur by mid-century. He could not have known that his elaborate and carefully thought out system of fingering, and much of his style, would be rendered moot by the Boehm flute and many systems designed in reaction to its introduction. In England, new systems would be introduced under the names of e.g. Siccama, Carte, Ward, Clinton, Radcliff, and Pratten, starting in the 1840s. None of these, save some of the simple Pratten models, preserved the six unencumbered holes of the simple-system flute, or its subtle fingering. This is a fascinating period in this history of the flute in Britain, though Fitzgibbon gives 1850 as the start of a decline in popularity of the flute.[8]

Boehm opened a workshop in Munich in 1828 and at first manufactured simple-system flutes in association with Rudolph Greve (from 1829). His flutes featured easy high notes, and his early compositions before 1832, rather than showing any limitations of the early flute, prove just how capable the simple-system flute can be when in its element.

As the nineteenth century progressed, musical instruments tended to change so as to be louder and more tonally even. Boehm addressed these requirements by means of additional mechanization, but attempted to keep the system of keys as simple as possible subject to his other aims. He designed his flute for equal temperament and with the idea that each note should have basically only one fingering. He sought to equalize tone and make all scales equally easy (or equally difficult) with respect to fingering.

Volume was an important criterion for Boehm. When touring London in 1831, his tone was compared unfavorably to that of Charles Nicholson, and in an oft-quoted excerpt from a letter to W. S. Broadwood dated 1871, Boehm explains that "…I could not match Nicholson in power of tone, wherefore I set to work to remodel my flute. Had I not heard him, probably the Boehm flute would never have been made."

The Boehm flute, with its large holes, has, in general, more potential power than the simple-system flute. The highest notes in the third octave can be more easily produced, and more trill fingerings are available for these high notes. It has a large tonal and dynamic flexibility, and an approximately uniform timbre over its range.

Now that the Boehm flute is widespread and celebrated, certain misunderstandings persist about the simple-system flute.

Its tone has been compared unfavorably to that of the Boehm flute in some modern books and articles. The simple-system flute can be and was criticized for many reasons, but those who knew both the old flute and the Boehm flute, as played by masters of their respective instruments, never denigrated the overall tone or sound of the earlier design. For example, Fitzgibbon, in 1914, the author of a book extolling the Boehm flute and its inventor, would say in a section where he describes and praises flute tone that "The old flute had undoubtedly more of this characteristic mellifluous sound than the modern Böhm."[9]

One can also read that the pre-Boehm flute "clearly could not fulfill the requirements of the nineteenth century". This is a modern conceit. The difficulty on the simple-system instrument of certain high passages in nineteenth-century music, for example, has been misjudged by some modern authors, who have misunderstood the fingerings (and alternate fingerings) of the old flute. R. S. Rockstro, who knew both the old and new systems intimately, could write in 1890 that "The old flute, with eight keys and upwards, possesses certain facilities in the fingering of the third octave which are not afforded by any flutes on the open-keyed system [e.g. the Boehm flute] ..."[10]

Most Boehm-flute players can exceed the loudness of simple-system players, especially in the highest notes, but the large-holed English flutes can be quite loud with the proper embouchure. We may imagine that Nicholson could play louder, on the whole, than most flutists today.

The simple system has great charm, much character, and a huge range of effects … after it is mastered. However, there is no getting around the fact that the mature simple-system flute is very difficult to master, much more difficult than the modern Boehm flute—and much more difficult than the one-key flute—because its intonation is sometimes hard to control and its fingering technique is sometimes complex.

A barrier for potential simple-system players today is the difficulty in finding high quality historical instruments in working order—and they, as well as modern reproductions, can be expensive. The mass-produced simple-system instruments made circa 1900, often German exports, that are found in flea markets, estate sales, and for sale on the web today cannot give an accurate idea of the better flutes from Lindsay's time.