

Principles of Elocution

Jonathan Sokol

Performance Notes

Durations

I. Articulation: 0:50"

II. Inflection: 1'40"

III. Accent & Emphasis: 0:30"

IV. The Voice: 1'20"

V. Gesture: 1'45"

Total: approx. 6'05"

Accidentals apply only to the notes in which they proceed.

Preface

Speak the definitions of the movement titles before performing each movement (they are written in the score). Since these definitions will not appear in the program notes, the interaction between the player and the listener is imperative. Elocution is, after all, proper speaking (with attention to pronunciation, grammar, style and tone).

Though most of the following ideas are expressed in the score, they are expanded upon in these performance notes for further clarity.

I. Articulation

All articulations, dynamics and durations should be exaggerated to their furthest extremes. For instance, the first rest after the opening note, a written suggestion of four seconds, is the longest silent duration in the movement and should therefore be treated as such. This does not mean that it must be four seconds exactly, but only that it should be longer in comparison with the following silences. The same idea applies to the loudness and softness of the dynamics, and the differing lengths of the articulations.

Additionally, the grouping of C#'s near the beginning (the slow to fast collection) should not be limited to the seven written notes, but should instead include as many as the individual performer wishes to play (this idea also applies to the similar event in the final movement).

Notes that have syllables above them (i.e.: **Ta**, **Ka**, **Ch**) should be played by pronouncing those syllables at the onset of the attack.

The overall character of the movement is quick and light, but the fast passage-work should not be a temptation to rush over the long silences and prolonged notes.

II. Inflection

Inflection, in addition to the definition given on page 2 of this manuscript, is a potent musical concept, whereby notes of resolution (i.e., cadential notes) may change while the overall collection of notes or 'tonality' remains unvaried. Since this piece does not rely on tonal centers or "keys", the performer must convey this idea with clarity.

Notice that each small grouping of notes (anywhere from two to five notes) begins and ends in completely different ways. While the final resolution note may have

occurred previously in the movement, the approach to it is different each time; the same can be said of each phrase's beginning (phrases are clearly identified with a breath mark).

Be deliberate with each successive note change by almost dwelling on the change to the next resolution. The tempo indication of **Slowly** only reflects the idea that each phrase should be expansive; in addition, when a phrase ends with a *fermata* over the resolved note, that note is to be held as long as the performer's remaining breath allows.

III. Accent & Emphasis

The two opposing forces of *Accent & Emphasis* are Key Clicks and Residual Tones, the latter being a deliberate un-focusing of the sound. This is produced by holding the flute at a 35° - 40° angle downward from normal playing position; it can also be described as the position in which one plays when one wants to hear the result of their practicing but does not want to play loud enough for others in proximity to hear.

The Key Clicks are notated with "x" note-heads. Normal note-heads are to be played as Residual Tones unless otherwise denoted as *full tone*. The indication to perform them is signified by the large beaming connections. This, of course, demands control over the positioning of the flute as these two oppositions alternate.

A further addition to these two techniques is the speed at which they are played. The Residual Tones should be played as fast as possible; the Key Clicks, though almost always written as sixteenth notes, should be performed with the quarter-note near 72 to allow space for the "notes" to speak. (The marking *in time* near the center of the movement also refers to the quarter at 72).

IV. The Voice

As explained in the preamble (spoken part) to this movement, the natural pitch of the speaking voice involves a keynote (the pitch that the voice most readily returns to when it is tired). This is emulated musically with G#4, the center for the small range of this movement. If viewed as a spoken statement, it becomes obvious that G# serves as a "tonal center" for *The Voice*.

The main musical force behind *The Voice* is the act of blowing air through the flute. This is notated with diamond shaped note-heads, those conventionally used to notate harmonics in string music (any other technical instructions are explained clearly in the score).

Several ideas from previous movements apply to *The Voice*: *fermatas* should be held as long as possible, suggested durations can be altered so long as they balance with the remaining ones and the tempo indication only implies a general character for the movement. Syllabic pronunciations are taken further in this movement but are to be performed in the same way.

V. Gesture

This movement is divided into seven small phrases, clearly identified with either a rest or a breath mark. Each phrase is to be played as long as possible, as long as breath can be supported. If needed, one can stagger extra breaths; they are marked as (‘).

Although the material in *Gesture* is technically less difficult than the preceding movements and contains little to no extended techniques, it is the communicative properties that provide the challenge. Preparing breath distribution beforehand is essential to successfully communicating the seven phrases of *Gesture*.

As with *Articulation*, the grouping of E’s in the third phrase (fast to slow) are not limited to the seven written notes, but should instead include as many as the performer’s remaining breath allows. In addition, these notes alternate between natural and harmonic fingerings, marked as n and o.

Program Notes

Principles of Elocution was heavily influenced by the teachings and writings of William H. McGuffey (1800 – 1873). McGuffey, a minister, teacher, lecturer and former president of both Ohio University and Woodward College (Cincinnati), is accredited with the creation of the first schoolroom textbooks, *The McGuffey Readers*.

In the Introduction to the sixth of these readers, the subject of elocution is introduced and detailed, and is later supported with excerpts from the literary canon. The Introduction is outlined into six categories, and all but one of those categories finds a musical counterpoint in *Principles of Elocution: Articulation, Inflection, Accent and Emphasis, The Voice and Gesture* (the category not used, incidentally, is called *Instructions on Reading Verse*).

In writing *Principles of Elocution*, I made a conscious effort to transcribe McGuffey’s teachings of vocal speaking into musical terms. For clarity of this transcription, the performer reads McGuffey’s literal definition of each term before each movement is played. The resulting interaction between performer and listener emphasizes the concept of elocution as public speaking, but the gesture, vocal tone and delivery of the subject through musical interpretations expand the idea.

For Erin Hunt

Principles of Elocution

for flute alone

Jonathan Sokol (2006)

I. Articulation

Speak before playing:

Articulation is the utterance of the elementary sounds of a language, and of their combinations.

Paced

fp sf ff pp mp pp sfz

(slow to fast)

molto

As fast as possible

f fp ff sfz mf pp ppp f mp f

Slowly

ta - ka ch

start slow; quick accel. to *

deliberately

mf f ff mf

(fl.)

sf sf sf ff

veloce!

(fl.)

short

sfz ff sfz fp f p sub. f n.

molto

LH Th (Bb), 2
RH 2(tr), 3(tr)

II. Inflection**Speak before playing:**

Inflection is a bending or sliding of the voice either *upward* or *downward*.

Slowly

feel the weight of each resolution

bend *bend*

n. *f* *mf* *n.* *p* *mf* *sub. pp* *pp* *mp* *f* *pp* *n.* *f* *pp*

separate, defined

mf *n.* *mf* *pp* *pp possible* *n.* *sf* *p* *f*

bend *bend* *bend*

p *n.* *mf* *pp* *p* *pp* *mp* *p* *n.*

III. Accent and Emphasis

Speak before playing:

The syllable in a word which is uttered more forcibly than the others, is said to be *accented*. Emphasis consists of uttering a word or phrase in such a manner as to give it force and energy, and to draw the attention of the hearer particularly to the idea expressed.

For ♩, ♩ = 72

♩ = Residual Tones - as fast as possible;
flute held at downward angle: ↘

The musical score consists of seven staves of music for a flute. The first staff begins with a 'short hold' on a quarter note, followed by a series of eighth notes with various dynamics: *ff*, *n.*, *sf*, and *pp*. The second staff continues with eighth notes and includes dynamics *f*, *p*, and *f*. The third staff features a 'full tone' in time (♩ = 72) and includes dynamics *p*, *f*, *p*, and *f*. The fourth staff shows a dynamic progression from *mp* to *f*, *mf*, *ff*, and *sub. pp*. The fifth staff is marked 'full tone' and includes dynamics *f*, *p*, and *f*. The sixth staff is marked '(fl.)' and includes dynamics *ff*, *p*, *f*, *p*, and *f*. The seventh staff includes a 'full tone (on D, F, F#)' and a 'short' section, with dynamics *p*, *f*, *p*, *f*, *f*, and *p*. The final section is marked 'as fast as possible'.

IV. The Voice

Speak before playing:

The **natural pitch** of the voice is its keynote, or governing note. It is that on which the voice usually dwells, and to which it most frequently returns when wearied. It is also the pitch used in conversation, and the one which a reader or speaker naturally adopts - when he reads or speaks - most easily and agreeably. The **compass** of the voice is its range above and below this pitch. To avoid monotony in reading or speaking, the voice should rise above or fall below this keynote, but always with reference to the sense or character of that which is read or spoken. The proper natural pitch is that above and below which there is most room for variation.

Slow until next indication

blow air through flute;
finger G#; no tone
at least 5" 3" - 4"

lyrical; slowly gradually dim.
into just air

blow air through flute
bend

Excitedly
As fast as possible,
with full tone

1/2 speed; play lower stems;
echo hum upper stems

Excitedly

lyrical; slowly

as fast as possible

(fl.) (♩ = 84)

air to full to air

V. Gesture

Speak before playing:

Gesture is that part of the speaker's manner which pertains to his attitude, to the use and carriage of his person, and the movement of his limbs in delivery.

Slowly, Drawn out

treat all tenutos affetuoso

alternate between normal and harmonics

The musical notation for 'Slowly, Drawn out' consists of two staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features a long, drawn-out note with a slur underneath, marked *molto ten.* and *mf*. This is followed by a rest, then a note marked *pp* with a slur underneath, and another note marked *f* with a slur underneath. The staff concludes with a note marked *p* with a slur underneath, followed by a note marked *mp* with a slur underneath, and finally a note marked *pp* with a slur underneath. The second staff continues with a note marked *pp* with a slur underneath, followed by a triplet of notes marked *p* with a slur underneath, a note marked *mf* with a slur underneath, a note marked *sub. mf* with a slur underneath, a note marked *n.* with a slur underneath, and a note marked *mp* with a slur underneath. The notation includes various dynamics, slurs, and articulation marks such as accents and breath marks.

Quickly, Sporadically

Slowly, as beginning

The musical notation for 'Quickly, Sporadically' and 'Slowly, as beginning' consists of two staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features a series of notes with slurs underneath, marked *mf*, *p*, *mf*, *p*, *fp*, *sf*, and *f*. The second staff continues with a note marked *sfz* with a slur underneath, followed by a note marked *molto dim.!* with a slur underneath, and finally a note marked *n.* with a slur underneath. The notation includes various dynamics, slurs, and articulation marks such as accents and breath marks.