

Baroque ornamentation

Introduction to flattement

An ornament in common use in the Baroque period and beyond, finger vibrato is the only type of wind instrument vibrato documented in the years 1690-1750



WRITTEN BY MICHAEL LYNN

Michael Lynn performed at the Inaugural Luncheon for President Obama's first term and has played throughout the U.S., Canada, Taiwan and Japan with Apollo's Fire, Mercury Baroque, ARTEK, Oberlin Baroque Ensemble, Smithsonian

Chamber Players, Tafelmusik, American Baroque Ensemble, Handel & Haydn Orchestra, Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Houston Symphony, Cleveland Opera, Santa Fe Pro Musica, and many other ensembles. Lynn serves on the faculty of Oberlin Conservatory as Professor of Recorder and Baroque Flute, and teaches each year at the Oberlin Baroque Performance Institute. He writes regularly for flute magazines around the world and is noted for his presentations and videos on History and Development of the Flute. A noted collector of flutes, he has a web site where you can view them at: www.originalflutes.com. His music and videos are posted at: www.soundcloud.com/mloberlin and www.youtube.com/MichaelLynnFlute.

One of the most expressive ornaments available for the Baroque recorder, Baroque flute and other Baroque wind instruments is flattement. It is also known as "finger vibrato," and was an important ornament from at least the 17th century through the 19th. It was very popular in the heyday of the Baroque recorder.

Like other ornaments, its use and performance practice changed over time—we will concern ourselves with the period of 1690-1750. The most detailed early descriptions come from Jacques Martin Hotteterre's *Principes de la Flute Traversiere, ou Flute d'Allemagne* (1707). Flattement is discussed in treatises from England, France and Germany throughout the 18th century and into the 19th century. In other words, it was an ornament in common use.

The flattement is the only type of wind instrument vibrato documented in our study period. There are no examples of breath vibrato—some references to flattement indicate to me that they didn't use breath vibrato at all.

One of the reasons people are not likely to know about flattement is that it has no modern cognate, except perhaps in contemporary music. It is not like modern vibrato, which is usually used as a part of tone production. Well into the 19th century, vibrato was added to individual notes, not part of the basic sound, even when breath vibrato came into fashion.

How does flattement differ from a trill?

The idea of the finger vibrato is that you use a finger on the side of an open hole, usually one hole down the

This article is the third in a series of articles covering ornaments that we might expect to encounter in Baroque music for the recorder.

PART 1: "An Introduction to the Trill and Appoggiatura"

/ AR Fall 2020 First, we explored signs that Baroque composers used to indicate the appoggiatura, long trill and short trill, with examples of how these might be played in actual music of the period.

PART 2: "An Introduction to the Mordent/Battelement"

/ AR Winter 2020 Building on the first installment, the numerous symbols and names associated with the mordent were added to our musical vocabulary. In examples of music, we learned how to play the mordent and to combine its use with the appoggiatura and trill—all great ways to add a little spice to the musical experience.

instrument. This is similar to what you would do in making a trill—but your finger does not cover the entire hole. When playing a second octave C on an alto, ♯123 --- -, we would

Suzuki Recorder Teacher Training

Make a difference in the lives of children and families



Photo by Andrew Waldo

For more information visit:
suzukiassociation.org/teachrec

 Suzuki Association
of the Americas



Country Dance & Song Society

Miss the magic?

We'll bring you together,
one way or another! (Or several!)

Visit cdss.org/em
for info about Early Music Week
at Pinewoods and other CDSS
camps and online programs,
and to join our email list.



cdss.org/em • camp@cdss.org • 413-203-5467 x101

make the motion of a trill along the edge of the hole 4, with the tip of the finger.

The treatises often remind the player that the flattement ends with the finger up—unlike a trill, which usually ends with the finger down. This produces a vibrato with the special characteristic that it only goes down from the main note, less than a half-step variation in pitch. The main note is intended to stay perfectly in tune. In this way it is quite different from a breath vibrato that usually oscillates both above and below the note.

The connection to the trill is important, as we are told to start the flattement slowly, as we would a trill, and to speed up in a way that depends on the length of the note and the character of the movement. Hotteterre tells us, “You should observe that it is necessary to make flattement on almost all long notes, and to do them (as well as tremblement [trills] and battements [mordents], slower or quicker, according to the tempo and character of the piece.” Later sources warn against overusing the flattement.

Figuring out how much is correct is one of the reasons a source from Pierre Philidor (1681-1731) is so valuable, as he tells us exactly where he wants ornaments—and it is not on all long notes. We have already encountered this source, and will turn to it again later in this installment.

Most fingerings for flattement follow the rule of using the next hole down, but that often doesn't work well for left-hand-only notes. For those, we use a finger lower down on the recorder's body, and sometimes directly on the hole rather than just a partial covering. Using the entire hole leaves out the possibility of shaping a long note by changing the amount of the hole that is covered, as the speed and energy increases. This will be clearer as demonstrated on my video.

Play a flattement on several notes, using an alto

Let's try a few basic notes. We will start with an alto recorder's second octave C—fingering $\text{F}123$ --- -.

1. First, just play the C with a nice clear and full sound. Try to have no vibrato or shaking in your air-stream. Any breath vibrato will ruin the effect of the flattement—it is important to remind yourself of this.
 2. Now we will do a fake trill down from C: finger $\text{F}123$ --- - and trill with finger 4, as if trilling on a long note. This isn't a real trill fingering, but that doesn't matter for our purposes. Just do a steady, fairly fast trill to start.
 3. In the next step we will play our trill in a more stylistic fashion, by starting it slowly and speeding up. Try to spread out your speed so you put off reaching maximum velocity until you are near the end of the note.
 4. Now we will execute a flattement using those same fingerings. Instead of completely covering the hole with finger 4, use the tip of your finger to cover just the edge of the hole. We want to be able to hear the pitch change, but we don't want it to sound like a different note—just a downward wavering of the pitch. Try this first without changing the speed, to find the right place for the finger. Once you can do that well, do the same thing, but start slowly and speed up as we did in step 3.
- Once you feel secure with this process on C, and the sound it produces, try some other notes. Start on second octave B^b, $\text{F}123$ 4 - 6 -, and use finger 5 to produce the flattement. Make sure to place your finger just on the edge of the hole.
- Using second octave A, $\text{F}123$ 45 - -, produce the flattement by moving finger 6 on the side of the G[#] hole.
- I'm not going to go through all the fingerings—but let's see what hap-

pens with left-hand notes. Start with a first octave D, T12- --- - . It is often difficult to use other left-hand fingers to do flattement on notes played only with the left hand, so for this D try using finger 4 to create the flattement from your right hand. In this case you can put your finger entirely on the hole rather than on the edge.

For another example, try the second octave G, -2- --- -; you could use finger 1 or 3, but either of those is difficult. A good choice is to use fingers 4 and 5, again placed on their holes. You can experiment with different fingerings to see what works best.

What happens if we want to play a low F? There is no hole below F to cover, so the solution given by Hotteterre and others is to cover all the holes and shake the end of the instrument. This creates a rather subtle effect, which is probably enhanced by the visual element. I also see this

as clear proof that no one at the time who used this particular musical language used breath vibrato. They could easily have said, “for the bottom note, you must vibrate your wind,” or some such thing—but that is not the case.

Historical references, and music with flattement notated

Quite a few treatises give fingering charts for producing flattement on the flute. On the recorder the first good description is from Hotteterre. He gives a chart for the flute, but only describes in words how to do this effect on the recorder. I often invent the fingerings as needed: in some cases, we may want a mild effect; in others, a strong one. A flattement can be very slight and soft, or it can allow you to put more stress on a particular note than virtually any other technique.

If it was so common, why do we not hear it more often? Although we

know that flattement was regularly used in the Baroque, it is not something that composers would notate except in some special cases. For instance, Hotteterre—who describes the fingerings and gives comments on how it should be used, including “on all long notes”—never notates the ornament in any of his scores.

The best example of notated flattement appears in the flute suites of Pierre Philidor (*Deuxième Oeuvre Contenant II Suites a 2 Flûtes-Traversières seul avec II autre Suites Des-sus et Basse*). He uses a long squiggle starting with a hook. *Note:* I also cited examples from Philidor’s suites in my previous articles and videos covering the trill and the mordent.

Pierre Philidor notates ornaments in his suites quite extensively—trills, appoggiatura, battement and flattement—thus giving us a wonderful source for learning how to use these



Join us **ONLINE** for our
summer workshops!

Join us for three months of virtual classes from our Baroque, Classical, Medieval/Renaissance, and Recorder Workshops!

Starting in May, sharpen your early music skills with our patented mix of playing, scholarship and community.

Learn more at sfems.org

Sfems
THE SAN FRANCISCO EARLY MUSIC SOCIETY

ornaments and to phrase.

Because composers generally didn't notate flattement, we need to identify the best places to use it. Pierre Philidor published 12 suites, six for two flutes and six for flute and basso continuo. These are spread out into three books, published in 1717 and 1718. Interestingly, he notates considerably more flattement in the two books from 1718.

At right are some examples, which can help us understand where to use flattement. I have transcribed these and transposed them into the proper keys for recorder.

It is very common to find flattement on longer dotted or tied notes, which is demonstrated very clearly in the Sarabanda from *Suite 7* by Pierre Philidor (*example 1*). Here we see the half notes often being notated with a mordent or trill, and the dotted half notes with the flattement. Note that the tempo of this movement would be quite slow, so there is plenty of time to put in the flattement. In a Sarabanda such as this, the dotted half is virtually always a very important note on which one could put a slight swell.

We also commonly see flattement added to syncopated notes, as in the Allemande from the same suite by Pierre Philidor (*example 2*). These are notes we would want to stress, and the flattement helps us do that. The tempo of this excerpt is quite slow, marked *Lentement*. If the tempo were quick, it is doubtful that flattement would be used.

In the Sarabande from Pierre Philidor's *Suite 10* (*example 3*), we see something that is rare to find: a flattement on the last note. Using flattement on a final note is a good example of how the character of the flattement needs to be changed based on context. In the earlier examples, flattement is employed to stress and help shape the note in a forward-moving direction. A last note, however, is a point of rest in Baroque music, especially in a slow movement like a Sarabande. We therefore want to play the flattement placed at the end of the phrase in a manner different from our approach to the other two places in the line. I would play an opposite shape from normal: the flattement would slow down through the note, and end on the note being held without any vibration.

Adding flattement in French music where it is not notated

Armed with these examples from Pierre Philidor, let's see how we might add flattement to music in which it is not notated. One of the few early French sonatas written specifically for the recorder is the *Sonate Pour la Flûte à bec* by Anne Danican Philidor (1681-1728), a relative of Pierre who lived at almost the exact same time. It should be clear from the other examples that we should play flattement on the two half/dotted-half tied notes. We could also deploy it on other long notes. In this excerpt from a *Lentement* (*example 4*), all of the



1. **Pierre Philidor**, Sarabanda - Très proprement, from Suite 7.
2. **Pierre Philidor**, Allemande - Lentement, from Suite 7.
3. **Pierre Philidor**, Sarabande - Lentement, et très proprement, from Suite 10.
4. **Anne Danican Philidor**, Lentement, from Sonate pour la Flûte à bec.
5. **Anne Danican Philidor**, Fugue, from Sonate pour la Flûte à bec.
6. **George Frideric Handel**, Larghetto, from Sonata in F Major, Op. 1, No. 11, HWV369. All trills, flattement and phrase marks are my additions.

ornaments are in the original, except the flattement, which I added.

In this style of music, the line from the Fugue (*example 5*) is a relatively quick movement. It is unusual to add flattement in a fast movement, but there are exceptions that apply to a long note in any tempo. In this case, we see a wavy line in the notation. This isn't a "normal" notation for a flattement, but context indicates that it must be what is meant here. We have a very long note, where the composer wants us to increase the energy on the note, starting with a flattement and turning it into a trill

RESOURCES AND LINKS OF INTEREST:

- Michael Lynn's videos demonstrating this series of articles: www.youtube.com/americanrecordermag
- Previous articles in this series on ornamentation: https://americanrecorder.org/american_recorder_magazine_ex.php
- Hotteterre quote from Jacques Hotteterre le Romain, *Principles of the Flute, Recorder, and Oboe* (1707) in translation by David Lasocki (Praeger Publishers)
- Flute suites of Pierre Danican Philidor: [https://imslp.org/wiki/12_Suites%2C_Opp.1-3_\(Philidor%2C_Pierre_Danican\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/12_Suites%2C_Opp.1-3_(Philidor%2C_Pierre_Danican))
- Music of Anne Danican Philidor: [https://imslp.org/wiki/Premier_livre_de_pi%C3%A8ces_\(Philidor%2C_Anne_Danican\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Premier_livre_de_pi%C3%A8ces_(Philidor%2C_Anne_Danican))

1

Musical notation for exercise 1, measures 1-8. The piece is in 3/8 time and B-flat major. The melody features various ornaments including grace notes, mordents, and trills. The bass line provides harmonic support with chords and single notes.

2

Musical notation for exercise 2, measures 1-8. The piece is in 4/4 time and B-flat major. The melody is characterized by frequent mordents and grace notes. The bass line consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

3

Musical notation for exercise 3, measures 1-8. The piece is in 3/4 time and B-flat major. The melody includes grace notes and trills. The bass line is a simple harmonic accompaniment.

4

Musical notation for exercise 4, measures 1-8. The piece is in 6/8 time and B-flat major. The melody features grace notes and trills. The bass line is a simple harmonic accompaniment.

5

Musical notation for exercise 5, measures 1-8. The piece is in 6/8 time and B-flat major. The melody includes grace notes and trills. The bass line is a simple harmonic accompaniment.

6

Musical notation for exercise 6, measures 1-8. The piece is in 3/4 time and B-flat major. The melody features grace notes and trills. The bass line is a simple harmonic accompaniment.

Musical notation for exercise 6, measures 13-24. The melody continues with grace notes and trills. The bass line is a simple harmonic accompaniment.

Musical notation for exercise 6, measures 25-35. The melody continues with grace notes and trills. The bass line is a simple harmonic accompaniment.

Musical notation for exercise 6, measures 36-48. The melody concludes with grace notes and trills. The bass line is a simple harmonic accompaniment.

by the end—a crescendo of activity.

Adding flattement in music from England by Handel

As mentioned earlier, the flattement was not just an ornament used in France. Let's look at a familiar movement (*example 6*) from *Sonata in F Major, Op. 1, No. 11*, by G.F. Handel (1685-1759) and see if there are places where flattement might be used. The original has no ornaments, so I have added flattement, trills and also phrase markings.

Flattement used with crescendo

There is one final special technique that can be applied to flattement. This creates a crescendo, which is not possible to achieve any other way on the recorder. This technique is not described by Hotteterre in his brief remarks, but is discussed by others in many subsequent treatises.

The idea is to start the flattement with the finger just on the edge of the hole. As you increase speed, you also increase how much of the hole you cover *and* you increase your air. It is a lot to coordinate, but it makes the flattement very powerful and matches the musical idea of types of tied and dotted notes where we would normally use the ornament. This is covered in greater detail on my video.

I still remember the first time I heard flattement played by Frans Brügger, used on the Anne Danican Philidor sonata—I thought it sounded extremely strange. I was a high school student at the time. I didn't dislike it, but I also didn't really understand what it was all about.

Over the years I have learned that flattement is a uniquely expressive ornament, and how enjoyable it is to use. You may have a similar experience—as you become more familiar with it, I hope you will find it to be a valuable asset in your expressive techniques on the recorder. ❁

Music

Something old, something new

- | | | |
|-----------|---|---------------------------|
| 01 | 31 Bicinien for Two Instruments by Johannes Ockeghem | ed. Johannes Geiger |
| 02 | Zwei Szenen (Two Scenes) | by Manuel Lipstein |
| 03 | Nothing is Enough! (for John Turner) | by Alan Gibbs |
| 04 | Easy Concert Pieces for Descant (Soprano) Recorder and Piano, Volumes 1, 2 and 3 | ed. Elizabeth Kretschmann |

KEY: rec=recorder; S'o=sopranino; S=soprano; A=alto; T=tenor; B=bass; gB=great bass; cB=contra bass; Tr=treble; qrt=quartet; pf=piano; fwd=foreword; opt=optional; perc=percussion; pp=pages; sc=score; pt(s)=part(s); kbd=keyboard; bc=basso continuo; hc=harpsichord; P&H=postage/handling.

01 **31 Bicinien for Two Instruments by Johannes Ockeghem**
 edited by Johannes Geiger
Edition Walhall EW448, 2019.
Sc 35 pp. Abt. \$20.25.
www.edition-walhall.de/en/woodwind-/23-recorders/ockeghem-johannes-1420-1497-31-bicinien.html

REVIEWED BY:

Beverly R. Lomer

In this nicely presented edition, there are excerpts from a number of masses

by Johannes Ockeghem, plus several other short works. The masses from which the selections are taken include the *Missa Sine nomine*, *Missa De plus en plus*, *Missa Ecce ancilla Domini*, *Missa L'homme armè*, *Missa Ma maistresse*, *Missa Mi-mi*, *Missa prolationum* and *Missa Caput*.

Ockeghem's birth date is not certain (between 1410 and 1425 are proposed); he died in 1497, one of the most famous composers of the Franco-Flemish school of the late-15th century. Little is known of his early life. He was born in what is now