

Finger dexterity (part II)

by Niall O’Riordan

September has always been a time when I gather my intentions for the coming year. It’s a time to reflect on my playing and begin a new journey in my flute playing. The summer season is often a time when the hard work of the year blossoms: we take exams; we go to conventions and flute courses and often give more recitals this time of year. The autumn and winter months can be the time where we gather necessary ‘nutrients’ for good flute playing, one of which is improving our scales and finger technique. The autumn seems like clean slate and I take full advantage of this.

In the December 2013 issue of *PAN* we explored methods and strategies to cultivate a good finger technique which focused on the Taffanel and Gaubert *Exercises Journaliers* EJ1 and EJ2 and Trevor Wye’s variations on them. Taking our journey towards virtuosity a little bit further I would now like to expand on these concepts.

Quintuplets variation on EJ1

One way of developing these exercises is by adding an extra note. If you look at the last line of the following example you will notice that this exercise is inspired by the Taffanel and Gaubert five-note pattern. It is not very often that we work in quintuplets; it can be a challenge at first, but stick with it and strive for evenness of touch on the keys, rhythm and tone. This exercise actually repeats the same movements of the fingers over

Quintuplet variation

The musical score consists of six staves of music, each containing a quintuplet of eighth notes. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor) and the time signature is 4/4. The staves are numbered 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, and 16 at the beginning of each line. Each quintuplet is marked with a '5' above and below the notes. The notes in each quintuplet are: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5. The first staff ends with a whole rest, and the subsequent staves also end with whole rests. The final staff ends with a double bar line.

and over again but from different perspectives when starting on each different line. We are all the time working within the range of a sixth.

Sextuplet variation on EJ1

When this feels comfortable you can explore the next exercise which is based on the same principles this time working within the range of a seventh. After that, if you wish, you can extend the range further again. F major is the easiest key to begin with but the exercise should be played in all keys and explore different registers. For most people it is not possible to play this exercise in every key each day. I recommend that you have a set length of time to practise these exercises and make a note of which keys you cover each day, going through the cycle of fifths so that you can continue where you left off in the following practice session.

Points to Remember

- Always play with your best tone
- Keep your fingers close to the keys
- Started at a speed that feels comfortable and eliminate unnecessary effort before increasing the speed
- Take regular rests
- Be more interested in the process than a goal and be open to surprises!

Sextuplet variation

A musical score for a sextuplet variation exercise, consisting of seven staves of music. Each staff begins with a measure number (4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19) and contains a series of sixteenth notes grouped into sextuplets, indicated by a '6' above and below the notes. The music is written in a single treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. The exercise concludes with a double bar line on the seventh staff.



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