

### Musgrave Commission

The Piccolo Committee most proudly announces the additional commissioning of a new work: British composer Thea Musgrave has agreed to write a six-movement piece for piccolo and piano. The New Orleans Convention, therefore, will provide the setting for two new major works for piccolo, one by Marlene Bliss and the other by Musgrave.

### Piccolo Masterclass

We also wish to draw your attention to the 1989 Piccolo Masterclass Competition. This is the first time in recent years an NFA competition has been devoted solely to the piccolo, so we would like to make it a great one! The details of the competition appear on page 11 of the *Flutist Quarterly*, so be sure to look for it.

### Kujala on Alternate Fingering

Our feature article this issue examines the use of some rather unorthodox fingerings to facilitate the performance of various piccolo excerpts. NFA President Walfrid Kujala has drawn on his years of experience as the piccoloist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in presenting this fascinating look at some very special ways to execute some of our most delicate passages.

## Piccolo Mobilo

(with Flauto Intro)

by Walfrid Kujala

I have always been envious of keyboard players, string players, and yes, even percussionists, trombonists, and accordionists (not to mention conductors). They seem so much more mobile and free in the use of their anatomy that we stick-in-the-mud woodwinders, though it's unfortunately true that we sometimes try to compete by pitifully acting out some musically unrelated activity such as conducting, rowing, penduluming (I know it's not a verb), knee-bending, sleeping, frowning, head-shaking (no, no), nodding (yes, yes), foot shuffling or tapping, or waltzing.

But what a thrill it is to watch a great pianist's nimble hands gliding up and down the keyboard, especially when they start at opposite ends, move toward the center, then cross each other so deftly (with no hint of a collision) that you almost expect a follow-through congratulatory self-embrace. Or to watch a cellist's left hand smoothly shifting or glissing on the fingerboard while the right hand guides the bow through a fantastic complexity of motions. That is truly poetry in motion!

So what can a flutist do to create at least a little more sense of freedom with hands and fingers? Well, for starters there's the "right hand shift" which I learned quite by accident years ago when I heard Marcel Moyse demonstrate the most famous exercise from his *De la Sonorite*, the slow, descending chromatic two-note phrases starting with middle B (Example 1). When he was about to go from G to F#, I noticed him shifting his right hand to the left by one key, thus

#### Example 1:



enabling him to play the F# in the most direct and smoothest way possible — with his first finger! Then he continued to the F natural with the second finger, and on to the E with his third finger (properly keeping his pinky on the D# key). When it was time to play the next interval, E to D#, there were of course no fingers left, but while taking a quick breath he neatly shifted his right hand back to its customary position and proceeded normally through the remaining intervals until he reached the low F# and performed his right hand shift again.

I learned a great lesson from his demonstration: smooth, quiet and precise fingering changes are essential for achieving a beautiful legato, and by extension, an even technique. Moysé's right hand shift (MRHS) for F# vividly symbolized that principle for me.

Having always had a penchant for unorthodox techniques, I became very excited at the prospect of applying the MRHS to some problematic passages, especially those in slower tempos that featured E-F# and F#-E, intervals that are too often flawed because of excessive klunkiness in the key motions. The Winter 1989 issue of *The Flutist Quarterly*, page 22, includes a prime example of a passage that is perfect for the MRHS, namely the opening measure of Ravel's *La Flûte enchantée* (Example 2). After landing on the B of the second bar, the right hand should return to its normal position for accommodating the D of the second bar.

**Example 2:**

A few words of caution: when first applying the MRHS, your fingers will feel a little disoriented, not just because they are operating different keys, e.g. the “ribbed” feel of the F# key, but also because the spacing of the keys is a little closer than before, temporarily resulting in your second and third fingers not properly covering the key perforations (no problem, of course, on a closed-hole instrument). You will also need to stretch your fourth finger somewhat in order to keep the D# key open. In addition, if your flute is equipped with a C# trill key, the F# key may be virtually inaccessible due to the overhang of the trill key.

A few more examples of MRHS use: Mozart *D Major Quartet*, opening of second movement (Example 3), Nielsen *Concerto*, first movement, bars 120-121 (Example 4). The slow movement of the Gunther Schuller *Flute/Piccolo*

**Example 3:**

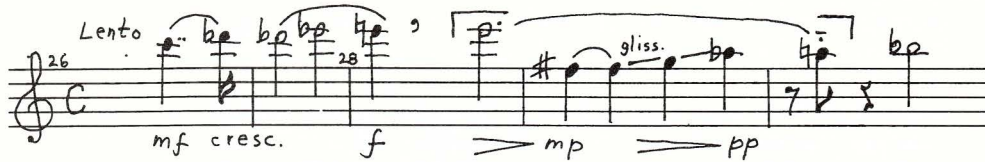
**Example 4:**

*Concerto* features a wide array of finger glissandos (sliding across the key openings while slowly raising or lowering the keys), but two intervals that are not very amenable to that approach are F# to G and G to G# (Example 5). One solution: while taking a breath before high E in bar 28, I do the MRHS in preparation for the high E (minus pinky for better intonation), simultaneously shifting my thumb further left to a position adjacent to the G# tone-hole. When it is time to play the F#, I lift the second and third fingers of my right hand, and while my first finger is depressing the F# key, I lean that finger against the rod, giving me the kind of leverage that allows me to fully control the slow and smooth raising of the F# key. Meanwhile, the right thumb in its new far left position is poised to wedge itself under the G# key and slowly “pry” it off the tone-hole. Result (we hope): two consecutive, almost continuous glissandos.

Now that the right thumb has made its debut as a “key” performer, have some fun trying the following technique for trilling low (or middle) D to Eb: first, turn the foot joint in about half an inch, and while in a sitting position, support the end of the flute on your right thigh. Finger low D, pass the thumb under your three depressed fingers to contact the Eb key (with the thumb nail), then **trill**. After a little practice for evenness you’ll be impressed at how much faster the thumb can

trill compared to your pinky. I have used this fingering successfully many times for the final trill in the first flute part of the Saint-Saëns *Danse Macabre* (Example 6). Since it is preceded and followed by long rests, there is, of course, ample time to get it set up.

Example 5:



Example 6:

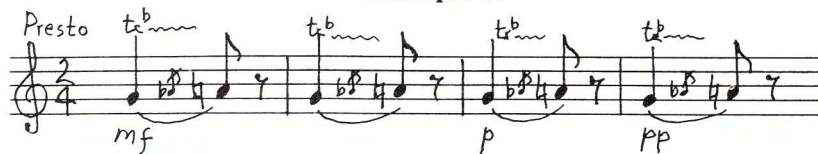


Regrettably, the MRHS doesn't work on the piccolo because the key touch for F overlaps too far to the left to permit direct access to the F# key. But in foregoing that use of the MRHS there are other "free form" possibilities that more than make up for it.

For example, the close proximity of the two hands conveniently permits the occasional "crossing over" of the right hand. I often trill G-Ab, G-A, or high D-E by reaching over with the right hand first finger. This is not so much because of this finger's greater speed, but because it moves more evenly and makes less key noise than the left hand third finger. I always use this fingering for the four-bar final D-E trill in the "Stars and Stripes" solo (in the orchestral key of G).

The following passage from the second movement of the Bartok *Second Piano Concerto* (Example 7) is a good example of the use of the right hand first finger in trilling the G# key. But even more to the piccoloist's advantage, the holding down of the G# key with the right hand first finger at the end of the trill permits the left hand third finger to lift at the precise moment for resolving to the A. The coordination between two hands is much easier than between two adjacent fingers of the same hand.

Example 7:



I am fond of experimenting with various degrees of closure of the end of the piccolo tube by reaching around with my right hand little finger. For the rare occurrences of low Db, I can usually get the note by half-holing the end of the tube while at the same time turning the piccolo in drastically. Though the resulting sound is fairly thin, the pitch is there, and I have found it to be a very reliable solution for the low Db's in the Schoenberg *Wind Quintet*.

For pianissimo high E's in slow phrases I sometimes use this fingering: ●●●●●●●● (end hole completely sealed). This obviously takes careful practice to make sure that it is indeed an airtight seal. To allow for maximum stretching capacity of the pinky, I let my second finger depress both the E key and the second trill key together. If your pinky is not fleshy enough, it may not work. I use this fingering for the opening high E of the pp Stravinsky *Firebird* solo (Example 8),

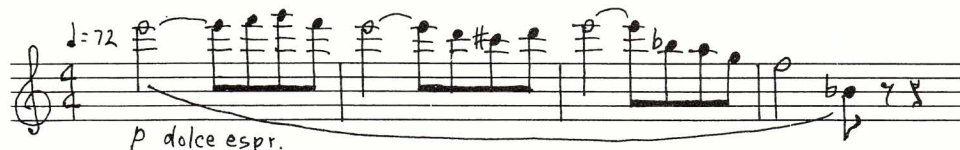
Example 8:



going on to the C with this fingering: ●●●●●●●● (end hole still sealed), then shifting back to normal position and fingerings for the rest of the notes. The cadenza in the final movement of the Schuller *Concerto* has a beautiful cantabile

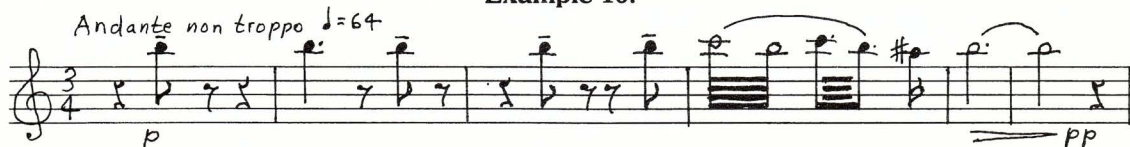
phrase for piccolo marked piano (Example 9): I use the Firebird fingering for all the high E's. The other notes in the first two bars are fingered normally except that the pinky continues to cover the end-hole. There is no adverse effect on those adjacent notes. In fact they sound a little softer than they might otherwise. After the high E of the third bar the pinky resumes its normal position.

Example 9:



Over the years I've experimented with various fingerings for the recurring middle B's in the third movement of the Bartok *Concerto for Orchestra*, especially for the final solo phrase (Example 10). For consistent control of the soft, dolce quality that this phrase demands, especially for the final long diminuendo, I have usually used this quasi-harmonic, vented fingering based on the fundamental low E: ♫, 0 ♫ ♫ ♫ ♫, ♫. But never having been completely satisfied with the purity of its sound, I have further experimented with varying degrees of partial closure of the left hand vent hole with the left hand second finger, finally coming up with a reasonably happy solution that takes the guesswork out of how far to raise (or lower) the second finger.

Example 10:



After cutting a tiny rectangular piece (about 3/8" x 3/16") from an ordinary sheet of paper, I fold it once into a square shape. Depressing the A# key, but leaving the A key up, I insert the paper between the button-shaped touchpiece of the A key and the depressed A# key, then let the A# key up so that the paper is securely wedged between. Thus when I depress the A key, the paper prevents it from closing all the way, creating a subtle "leak" that provides the optimum venting of the previously described quasi-harmonic fingering for B. You may want to experiment with three or even four layers of paper. Different piccolos are apt to give different results.

Later in the Bartok passage, this venting also works well for the C-B trill if it is fingered a twelfth lower (F-E), and for the A# if it is fingered as a low D#. (The A# is likely to be a bit sharp with this fingering but that should enhance its leading-tone character.) In other words, you can finger the entire passage as if it were a twelfth lower. The trill should be played with a slight crescendo and diminuendo, then a quick breath taken before the A#, and the diminuendo on the final B delayed enough so that it doesn't fade out prematurely. I always imagine that it's six beats long rather than five, which gives me a kind of psychological edge toward getting a well-proportioned diminuendo. It's always better to be a little on the longer side rather than too short. A reminder about the paper wedge: One should be very careful not to inadvertently let the paper drop out moments before the first entrance by accidentally depressing the A# key alone and "unwedging" it. There is, of course, plenty of time to prepare during the preceding rests.

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