

Flute Ensembles Across Europe

26–29 January 2023
Aveiro, Portugal



FLUTUA.



Flaustaff Magic Flute.



José-Daniel Castellon and Ricardo Carvalho.



Sophie Duféutrelle, Matthias Ziegler and the Massive Flute Ensemble.

It just happened to chance upon an advert in the November 2022 Pan magazine with information about this event. Having been to all of the British Flute Society Conventions over the years both as a music student, and now as a professional flautist, I was very keen to attend this event and see what the Europeans are doing in their flute playing antics. I am glad to say that I was suitably impressed and inspired. I was able to attend the whole festival which included lectures, musical presentations and concerts and worked in collaboration with the University of Aveiro which seems to have a very vibrant flute department.

The communication of information was a little bit hazy, so arriving at the start time on the Thursday I did feel like I had arrived before it had even started! However, the first session was a suitably inspiring talk by Camilla Hoitenga entitled *Parallel Pieces: Visual Art As Inspiration for Musical Improvisation*. This was quite an interesting lecture followed by an improvisation workshop in the afternoon, inspired by an architectural sculpture which we were asked to look at and then improvise. The students were rather daunted but I had connected with some other European professionals and so we gave them some moral support and led the way in the improvising.

As things began to emerge in the afternoon of the first day, I sat waiting for Cristina Ioan to carry out her talk titled *New Levels of singing and flute playing technique*. She was ready and I was ready in the audience, but the European punctuality left a lot to be desired and after waiting 45 minutes she patiently began her exposition. It was well worth waiting for with some excellent demonstrations of singing and playing. I was suitably wowed by her use of the Robert Dick glissando headjoint to such an extent that I decided that I must have one! I was a little bit disappointed when she was ushered to stop by the organiser after half an hour when her session should have been close to an hour. However, she stood her ground and we were able to enjoy the whole of her demonstration.

PHOTOS: MALCOLM POLLOCK



FLUTUA.



Les Piccolo.



Flaustaff Magic Flute.



Peter Verhoyen & Ruth Medina.



Israel Flute Choir.

There were many events scheduled on the first day but all clashing with each other and it was quite hard to work out where each session was, and so I feel I may have missed workshops that I would have enjoyed. I was unable to attend Rachel Brown's concert on the first evening due to family commitments, but she did a sterling job in true Rachel form on the Friday with a whole morning of coaching the flute students in stylistic ways with Quantz and Bach Arias.

Meanwhile on the Friday I attended a rather strange lecture on *Music Lessons that Plants Teach Me* by Filipe Lopes. As a very keen gardener I thought that I might gain inspiration from this talk, but it was rather unusual in presentation and as this was part of a PhD research project, it felt rather unconvincing in what his conclusions were. Meanwhile due to the insecurity in the scheduling I had actually missed part of a lecture in another venue which had started before it was due to start. However, once I discovered this, I was very engaged in this one: *Creation of new music for flute and other instruments to be used in multidisciplinary contexts and/or for inclusive educational purposes* by Katrina Penman. Katrina is a British flautist who trained at the Royal College of Music but is now working in Spain. This was a very engaging session for me with some excellent examples of collaboration with dancers and painters and I was very inspired in my own work after having attended this session.

Again, it was quite tricky to work out what the sessions were and where they were, but it was the most lovely venue with an amazing concert hall and subsidiary rooms in the Congress Centre of Aveiro. I managed to hear some of the evening recital with Sibel Pensel which was inspiring.

Saturday saw the arrival of our very own Malcom Pollock (co-chair of the European Flute Council and former chair of the British Flute Society) to host the flute ensemble part of the festival. It was most welcome to have another Brit there who seemed to appreciate the importance of time keeping! There were some super ensembles but sadly no representation from Great Britain. It was very interesting to see what the European ensembles feel that the priorities are in their music making.

Highlights for me had to be Les Vents Blancs et Les Piccolos from Switzerland. They were a mix with flute teachers, amateur adult flute players and children between the ages of 6 and 13. The children played from memory and included movement whilst they played and had an excellent costume. Although the

performance had its hitches, I was really struck by how much the children were engaged and enjoying the performance. The musical director was Carole Reuge. I was also taken with the University of Aveiro Flutua who also included movement as part of their performance. This was one of the things that particularly struck me about these performances was how engaging they were with the use of props, acting, costume and dance.

Again, there were delays in the evening concerts starting which resulted in me only seeing part of the performances but there was an enjoyable evening with Camilla Hoitenga, Patrick Gallois and Kazunori Seo.

The final day on Sunday continued with more flute ensembles and the most memorable of the day was Concert Flaustaff. This felt like it wasn't a professional group but secure none the less.

There were some interesting acting moves to fit in with the *Magic Flute* theme and some creative use of props and movements. True to form I was particularly looking forward to some of the repertoire for the final concert but having waited half an hour I had to abandon it in order to catch my flight.

So, my lasting impressions were these: it was lovely to be in the environment of predominantly professional flautists from across Europe. It was wonderful to see what they are being inspired by and how they are including so much dance, acting and interactions in their performances. I was slightly disappointed that more of the British flute world wasn't involved but was inspired by the academic research that is prevalent at the University of Aveiro. A wonderful venue in a wonderful location with the scope for a slightly tighter grip of the overall scheduling.

Well done European Flute Council and the Portuguese Flute Association for organising such a truly wonderful few days. I will definitely be back.

NICOLA GERRARD

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