

HISTORICAL FLUTES

A Guided Tour through Four Centuries of Historical Flutes

A Lecture Recital - Gesprächskonzert - Concert-conférence

Elizabeth Walker

Principal Flute & Recorder, Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra

Duration: 90 minutes • Format: Lecture Recital • Audience: Students, Professionals, General Public

Concept

What can historical flutes teach us about music that modern instruments cannot? This lecture recital offers audiences a rare opportunity to hear, compare, and understand four distinct instruments, the Renaissance flute, the Baroque flute, the Classical eight-keyed flute, and the Romantic-era conical flute, played in live performance alongside a guided exploration of their historical context, technical characteristics, and expressive possibilities.

By considering the characteristics of each instrument on its own terms, we discover a diversity of tone, articulation, and interpretative freedom that naturally releases the music. This is not merely a historical survey: it is an argument for why the past still speaks directly to performers today.

Programme Overview

Each of the four instruments is introduced with a brief discussion of its construction, pitch, historical sources, and expressive language, followed by a live solo performance. The journey moves chronologically, tracing the evolution of the instrument over nearly four centuries.

Era	Instrument	Composer	Work
Renaissance c. 1500s	One-keyed Renaissance Flute	Jacob van Eyck (1590–1657)	Amarilli mia Bella
Baroque c. 1700s	Baroque Traverso (one keyed)	G.P. Telemann (1681–1767)	Fantasia No. 1 in A major
Classical c. 1800	Eight-keyed Classical Flute	F. Kuhlau (1786–1832)	Capriccio
Romantic c. 1850–1900	JM Bürger Conical, ring keyed wooden flute	J. Donjon (1839–1912)	Elégie-Étude
Boehm	cylindrical silver flute	Claude Debussy (1862 - 1918)	Syrinx

The Five Instruments

1. The Renaissance Flute

The simplest of the four, and in many ways the most demanding: no keys, a cylindrical bore, and an expressive language governed entirely by breath and embouchure. Elizabeth plays a Filadelfio Puglisi instrument designed after originals surviving in the Biblioteca Capitolare of Verona, at a=440.

Instrument	Filadelfio Puglisi — after originals in the Biblioteca Capitolare, Verona
Pitch	a = 440 Hz
Sources	Martin Agricola, Musica instrumentalis deudsch (1529/1545); Philibert Jambe de Fer, Epitome musicale (1556). Ornaments: Sylvestro Ganassi, La Fontegara; Jacob van Eyck, Der Fluyten Lust-hof
Recordings	The Attaignant Consort (Gatti, Clark, Chauvet, Langlois); The Modena Consort (The Hague) the instruments used were made by consort member Boaz Berney after originals in the Musée Instrumentale in Brussels; Zephyrus Flutes (Hadden, Walker, Sainte-Marie, Hatcher) - instruments by Martin Wenner after originals in the Accademia Filarmonica, Verona, a=408
Live Performance	<i>Jacob van Eyck (1590–1657) — Amarilli mia Bella</i>

2. The Baroque Flute

The one-keyed traverso is the instrument of Bach, Telemann, Quantz, and the French court. Its conical bore, unequal temperament, and rich palette of unequal note colours demand a fundamentally different technique and interpretative approach from the modern flute. Elizabeth plays a Martin Wenner flute after Carlo Palanca.

Instrument	Martin Wenner after Palanca
Pitch	a = 415 Hz
Sources	Hotteterre, Principes de la flute traversière (1707); J.J. Quantz, Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen (1752); C.P.E. Bach, Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen (1753). Ornaments: French and Italian styles
Recordings	MCO. EBS, ORR, OAE, Orkest 18th Century. Soloists: Barthold Kuijken, Wilbert Hazelzet, Rachel Brown
Live Performance	<i>G.P. Telemann (1681–1767) — Fantasia No. 1 in A major</i>

3. The Classical Eight-Keyed Flute

The eight-keyed flute bridges the gap between the Baroque traverso and the modern instrument: more chromatic, more powerful, yet retaining the tonal warmth and flexibility of its predecessor. Elizabeth plays a R. Tutz flute modelled on an A. Grenser original.

Instrument	R. Tutz after A. Grenser
Pitch	a = 430 Hz
Sources	Johann George Tromlitz, The Keyed Flute (1791)
Recordings	EBS, ORR, OAE, Orkest 18th Century, Harnoncourt
Live Performance	<i>Friedrich Kuhlau (1786–1832) — Capriccio</i>

4. The Romantic Conical Flute

Before Boehm's cylindrical redesign became universal, the conical flute reigned in the great orchestras and salons of Europe. Elizabeth performs on a rare original J.M. Bürger flute, a conical, ring keyed wooden flute from the late nineteenth century. The Burger flute was popular in the 1950's when Jean-Pierre Rampal and other renowned flautists such as William Bennett, were rediscovering baroque pieces and choosing to record this repertoire on original historic flutes.

Instrument	J.M.Bürger, conical, ring keyed wooden flute, late 19th century
Pitch	a = 435 Hz
Sources	Ardal Powell, The Flute; Robert Bigio, Readings in the History of the Flute; Michael Lynn - Originalflutes.com . Pre-owned by William Bennett
Recordings	This flute will be recorded, played by EW in ORR this September in a live recording of Rossini's Petite Messe Solennelle
Live Performance	<i>Johannes Donjon (1839-1912) — Élégie</i>

5. Böhm

Louis Lot no. 5572 a cylindrical silver flute with Dorus G sharp mechanism, representing a high point of nineteenth-century French flute making. Made in 1893.

Instrument	Louis Lot No. 5572 (original) - cylindrical, with Dorus G sharp.
Pitch	a = 440 Hz
Sources	Tula Giannini, Great Flute Makers of France: The Lot and Godfroy Families 1650–1900
Recordings	YouTube Undine by Carl Reinecke Elisabeth Walker with Steven Devine
Live Performance	<i>Claude Debussy (1862 - 1918) — Syrinx</i>

Educational Dimension

This lecture recital is conceived as an integrated performance and learning experience. Discussion between each section will address:

- The acoustical and mechanical differences between instruments, and what these mean for tone, intonation and technique
- How to read and apply original treatises in performance
- How period recordings and scholarship can inform the modern flutist's approach, even when playing on a Boehm instrument
- The repertoire landscape of each era, and signposts for further study

Elizabeth's two NFA Award-winning publications, *Baroque Flute Studies* (Best Flute Method 2015) and *Baroque Studies for Modern Flute* (Best Flute Method 2017), emerged from this area of work as part of a broader ongoing engagement with historical performance practice. Her most recent book, *Melodies for Baroque Tone and Interpretation* (2025), extends the same pedagogical approach. Audience members will leave with concrete tools and resources to continue their own exploration.

About the Artist

Vision of excellence, knowledge transfer, and the lasting prominence of the flute.

Bio: ELIZABETH WALKER - Flutist (historical & modern), Educator & Author

Elizabeth Walker is a flutist of exceptional breadth, equally at home across the full historical spectrum of the instrument - from renaissance flute and recorder to baroque, classical, and modern flute. Since 2024 she has held the position of Principal Flute and Recorder with the Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra and its associated ensembles, the English Baroque Soloists and the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, working at the highest level of historically informed performance under conductors of international renown.

Her playing has been praised by critics across Europe. The Guardian described her recorder playing as "simply exquisite," while Operalogue singled her out among "outstanding players of the English Baroque Soloists" for responding to Christophe Rousset's direction "with appropriate festive verve."

Elizabeth's training spans the full range of historical and modern flutes. She studied at the Royal College of Music, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and at postgraduate level at the Koninklijk Conservatorium in The Hague, working with Nancy Hadden (renaissance flute), Stephen Preston and Wilbert Hazelzet (baroque and eight-keyed classical flute), Kathryn Lukas and Margaret Ogonovsky (modern flute), and Philip Pickett and Ricardo Kanji (recorder).

As a recording artist, her solo album of the Telemann 12 Fantasias, earned widespread acclaim, described by the British Flute Society as "as perfect a demonstration of the modern wooden flute's capabilities as one could wish to hear." She is an Artist for Pearl Flute, Europe.

Elizabeth's commitment to education is equally distinguished. Her study books *Baroque Flute Studies* and *Baroque Studies for Modern Flute* each won the NFA Award for Best Flute Method (2015 and 2017 respectively), and her most recent publication, *Melodies for Baroque Tone and Interpretation* (2025), continues this work. She has also arranged and published music for flute and piano, including her widely performed *Four Strauss Songs* (Alry Publications).

Since 2016, Elizabeth has directed *Flutes in Tuscany*, an international residential course that has attracted participants from around the world and grown consistently year on year. She also taught for many years at Wells Cathedral Specialist Music School.

Elizabeth Walker brings to the Golden Flute Classic a rare combination: performance at the international summit of the profession, deep scholarly engagement with historical performance practice, and a proven record as an inspiring educator and author. Her work speaks directly to the festival's vision of excellence, knowledge transfer, and the enduring centrality of the flute.

Website: www.lizwalker.co.uk

Playlist: [Historical flutes](#)