



The New York Flute Club

NEWSLETTER

November 2013

Gergely Ittzés: Extending the Circles

Interview by Greg Pattillo

I first met Gergely Ittzés in Manchester when he was blowing minds at the British Flute Society convention six years ago. Since then I have immensely enjoyed following him on YouTube, and was pleased to get the chance to bear him perform his commissioned work for the National Flute Association Young Artist Competition (Totem) last year in Las Vegas. So what a pleasure it was to find out that he was to be playing for the NYFC this coming November. When asked if I might be interested in running an email interview with him, I was delighted to take this opportunity to pick the mind of one of our generation's master flutists!

GREG PATTILLO: So, how did you get into the flute, and have you always had a fascination with both performing and composition? Do you consider yourself primarily a flutist, or a composer?

GERGELY ITTZÉS: It may sound a bit immodest, but I consider myself primarily a musician. To play a wind instrument was my parents' idea, since my elder brother started on the violin and they wanted me to do something else. After studying the recorder, I switched to flute because my lips were not proper for the oboe (my first teacher's actual instrument). When I decided to become a musician at age 11, it was not because of my unquenchable love of the flute, with which I was struggling a lot (and I am still), but because of an inner call to devote my life to music. But to answer the question more directly, as a musician I am first of all a flutist, then a teacher, and finally a little bit of a composer, too.

GP: Who were some notable teachers and influences on your flute playing/compositions? What about non-flutist influences?

(Cont'd on page 4)



In Concert

Gergely Ittzés, flute

Sunday, **November 10, 2013**, 5:30 pm

Engelman Recital Hall, Baruch Performing Arts Center, 55 Lexington Avenue
(entrance on East 25th Street between Lexington and Third Avenues)

Preconcert presentation on Franz Doppler's Fantaisie Pastorale Hongroise at 4:00 pm.

Sonata in C Minor, BWV 1017
Sonata in E Minor, KV 304
Caprice No. 24
Sonata in G Minor
Two pieces for flute solo
Partita
Totem
Sonata

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)
Nicolò Paganini (1782–1840)
Claude Debussy (1862–1918)
László Lajtha (1892–1963)
Anthony Newman (b. 1941)
Gergely Ittzés (b. 1969)
Willem Pijper (1894–1947)

Program subject to change

A reception will follow the concert.

Gergely Ittzés's appearance is made possible in part by the Balassi Institute, Hungarian Cultural Center of New York.



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Nicole Camacho, NYFC Publicity Chair

Interview (Cont'd from page 1)

GI: The first name I have to mention is the flutist ideal of my youth, István Matuz, also a Hungarian flutist who has composed experimental works for himself. He is mostly known for his knowledge about the acoustics of the flute and his experiments in extended techniques, but his performances of Bach or romantic music could be superbly spiritual as well. (If you want to hear something really special you should order the CD *Matuz 60* at fontrademusic.hu. This is a selection from his legendary live performances. If you try not to listen to him with preconceived notions about what a flute should sound like, you will understand that he is far beyond this poor instrument. I have never been István's official student but followed him and learned from him everything I could.)

I was lucky enough to meet and have masterclasses with Aurèle Nicolet who guided me from a more classical, still not conventional, point of view. He helped me a lot with developing my sound technique and improving my musical culture. I also had four very intense years with the world famous Hungarian composer György Kurtág (a legendary chamber music teacher as well), who taught at the Liszt Academy while I was there. I learned that no note may be played without intention and emotional intensity. However, it is Ferenc Rados, the pianist and chamber music teacher, who I consider my real master in music. His musical vision is one of the deepest and most incorrupt I have ever encountered, where I use the word incorrupt to mean not determined by any habit, taste, convention, or instrumental comfort. Almost everyone on the Hungarian music scene who counts has studied with him and Kurtág. These old masters preserve something from the great Hungarian tradition, starting with Liszt, Dohnányi, Bartók, Leó Weiner; the great conductors like Reiner, Ormandy, Szell, and others;

string players like Flesch, Szigeti, Starker, and many more; and, of course, a lot of great pianists. Still, Rados is very much up-to-date, too. I learned from him for the first time to see early music from a historical point of view.

GP: Tell us more about your program for the upcoming concert here in NYC. What can we expect?

GI: I like constructing my concert programs with a certain clear conception. The guidelines are chronology, showing as much of my musical and instrumental skills as possible, and to introduce lesser known works to the public. I find the generally-played flute repertoire very narrow. I know that we don't have many masterpieces but there are a lot of works which are at least as interesting as the ones which became popular. It is the ones of this type that I try to smuggle into our programs. Some of them are real masterpieces. Many others are just enjoyable music, but at least fresh for our ears. Since, of course, I also prefer masterworks and I have a special attraction to violin, I love playing violin works. Anyway, when playing the flute I often just hear violin sound in my head or feel bowings while working with the air and tongue. The first half of the concert is supposed to present this idea. In addition to major violin sonatas from three different epochs, it includes a Paganini Capriccio (in a version that uses my extended technique skills). The second half starts with the Deux Pièces pour flute seule by László Lajtha. Lajtha was a Hungarian composer and ethnomusicologist whose importance rivaled that of Bartók and Kodály. Born in 1892, he composed the most imaginative, sensitive, and brilliant chamber music, combining French musical culture with the rich heritage of Hungary. It is worth getting to know his oeuvre; for us, his most important work is the fantastic Sonata en concert, a piece which should become part of our basic repertoire; in addition to this, he has composed especially attractive trios and quintets for flute, harp and strings. The concert continues with a piece composed for me by my great friend, the New York-based composer and keyboardist Anthony Newman. His Partita, an idiosyncratic neo-baroque composition, will contrast a bit with my own work *Totem*, composed for the NFA's 2012 Young Artist Competition, which applies most of the unusual sounds I cultivate. The last piece, again a sonata with piano, was written by the Dutch composer Willem Pijper in 1925. It is a unique and exciting

mixture of classic impressionism and new compositional devices like polymetry. My pianist partner will be Hiroko Sasaki from NY, another good friend whom I first met in Hungary; we played together there, and later here a few times, too, and understand each other's musicality very well.

GP: You are incredible at playing the most delicate and well-honed extended techniques, such as multiphonics and circular breathing, to name a couple. I know from personal experience how frustrating it can be to learn new skills, especially to a level where you are comfortable using them on stage. How do you go about conquering all the amazing sounds you make? Can you recommend some sort of "extended techniques" warm-up?

GI: The point is to know what is theoretically possible and to believe that we ourselves can realize it. For this, some theoretical knowledge and/or a convincing good example is necessary. Once you experience a sound for a short moment you know it is there. While trying to get it again and to stabilize it you have to keep the required result alive in your imagination and stay flexible and reactive to follow your body's intentions. (I guess, I am describing now what we have to do generally for improving no matter if it is about classical technique or new sounds.) Well, when you start playing the flute, to distinguish the lower register from the middle one is just as challenging, on a more advanced level, as selecting and maintaining two of the possible partials resulted by a weird fingering. Nicolet used to say, "The body is intelligent." He meant that it will find the way itself to realize your idea once you know exactly what you want. Of course, it is helpful, to a certain extent, to know logical tendencies and make conscious decisions. But above a certain level, things change very delicately, almost invisibly, and you feel that you control the result only with your feelings and imagination. At that point you can experience what Creation means. Probably this is the message I would like to share the most.

Since extended techniques need more refined sensations than classical sounds, learning those techniques can greatly benefit one's classical playing. Any exercise is good (overtones, double-stops, whistle tones, horn embouchure, etc.) if made with intense concentration, active but elastic muscles, and, most of all, open ears.



Ittész plays Ittész on the 2008 CD *Extended Circles*.

GP: The idea and role of the modern instrumental musician is increasingly in flux, especially thanks to the decline in traditional mediums (orchestras and the classical arts) and the rise in worldwide interconnectivity and technology (Internet and digital recording techniques). Can you give some fresh advice to those of us looking for ways to transition to a professional life in music in these modern times? As a professor yourself, have you noticed a need to teach additional skill sets beyond mastering the flute in order to succeed these days?

GI: I am afraid I am not up-to-date enough to follow these tendencies. There are two extremes in this situation. One preserves the sanctity of music, the purity of different musical languages and cultures, and may become a musical hermit; the other prefers to salvage the essence of our heritage accommodating to the new conditions. The first one cannot make much direct effect on the world; the second may, but will lose a lot of the original values. I am trying to do both at the same time which is impossible, of course, just like being conservative and liberal at once. In this situation to create new music for our days would be the best idea. The question is if we, performers, composers and audience, are up-to-date enough to feel what art could really say about and to our age. Conventions, habits, and prejudices limit our imagination; commercial and bourgeois considerations poison our sensitive and fresh spiritual activity. I know it is not very practical but I can't do more than speak about these ideas to my students if the subject pops up.

Of course, I am familiar with the digital technology. I often edit my own recordings, and I can use the computer to write music with unusual notations. However, although I consider many non-musical things as part of my teaching, I suppose this kind of technical knowledge does not belong to my subject, I suppose. If I could learn these things by myself, for them it should be even easier. To speak to my students about improvisation and non-classical musical idioms would be more important. But unfortunately we don't often get that far.

GP: Will you take some time to tell us about the amazing resource you call Flouble? What is it, and how did it come about?

GI: Flouble summarizes the results of my long term work on the field of multiphonic flute playing. After I understood the principles of the flute

acoustics during the lectures held by István Matuz in the late '80s, I started to calculate the fingerings for all the double-stops, i.e., two-sound combinations, mathematically possible in the twelve-tone system. I worked on it on and off during my student years. I wanted to turn the theory to apparent practical use and to save myself and others from having to do this work again and again for each composition. The first version of my "Chart of Double-Stops" was a big printed paper with some explanation and included about 400 intervals in a system of coordinates. The digital form is based on the same idea but the data is refreshed and expanded and the software offers many more options. The most important is that you can hear the recording of each double-sound played by myself. (I speak about double-stops because two pitches of the whole spectrum are dominating but, just like in a normal sound, many other partials complete these complex acoustic phenomena. (See figure on p. 6.) Two hours of recorded video films and some other extras complete the DVD-ROM. My goal is to offer a useful device to all of those who want to discover this dimension of the flute. However, while the tool is easy to use, serious devotion and time are required to realize its full benefits.

The point is to know what is theoretically possible and to believe that we ourselves can realize it.

GP: Can you recommend some must-play works that use extended techniques, especially for those of us who want to learn more about these sounds, but don't know where to begin?

GI: Good question. There is a lack of "easy" experimental pieces. This is, first of all, because these techniques are usually demanding. And also because we flutist-composers like to compose for ourselves on the level where we are with these skills. Anyway, it is stressful to play risky modern sounds in the context of a musical piece on the stage. So, for a start, it can provide enough joy and benefit just to practice these techniques separately and improvise with them. Flouble is a good device for that. Still, there are some composers who have written directly for the beginners. Most of these warmly recommendable pieces are good for opening one's ears and

expanding one's taste. Nevertheless, the technical tasks in them don't go beyond the effective but comfortable tricks. I am planning to write simple and short studies of this educative type, but with a bit more concrete didactical intention and as a preparation for the musical languages of the recent decades. I hope to find energy and inspiration for this project in the near future.

GP: Of all the pieces you have written, which is your favorite?

GI: When a professional composer writes piece after piece, he can get away from his own works easily. After a while he might lose the contact with them completely. He also can judge his pieces more objectively from a certain distance in time. When I, a performer-composer, write a piece I have to face the problem that I probably will play it many times so if it does not really match my taste and interest I will get bored with or frustrated by it. So I really have to accept my own works again and again. I have a good relationship with most of them. They are my children and, although some are more exciting than the others, I don't want to name any of them a favorite. Time might decide if any of them will survive at all. Still, if I had to burn all of them except for one I probably would save the *Doppler Effect*, a multiphonic fantasy in the style of a romantic salon piece. This one is the most connected with tradition, but represents a modern approach, utilizes extended techniques comprehensively, has irony, and includes obvious and hidden musical gags. It is on my CD *Extended Circles* (along with six other solo works and my five "Just a Tube" etudes).

GP: And what about your "four hand on one flute" variations on Carnival of Venice seen on YouTube? It is also quite a surprising thing. How is it possible?

GI: Again, I have to mention István Matuz. About 30 years ago he played, as an encore, a Hungarian children's song in canon on one flute with his son, about eight at that time. Needless to say, the audience was shocked. Of course, I wanted to know immediately how it was possible. The idea is simple and based on acoustic knowledge. The sound wave does not propagate much beyond the last closed key so if the tube reaches longer or not, does not matter. Consequently, we can use the rest of the tube to create another independent resonating air column, we just have to leave one or two holes open between the two sections.

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Interview (Cont'd from page 5)

When I decided to compose a more complicated piece for this idea I had to make a chart for myself how to share the tube without disturbing each other. The second player blows the flute in an asymmetric way just the way one plays the Arabic ney or Bulgarian kaval. Any simple tube can be made to sound in this way.

GP: Where can we find out more about what you are up to? Do you Tweet?

GI: I have my website (not always updated though): www.itzesgergely.hu. Somehow I have never felt like doing any of the social networks like Twitter or Facebook, as it is easy enough to contact and find information about me on the web with a simple search. I know this works, as it often happens that I am contacted by unknown colleagues from all around the world. Although I prefer my CD recordings, I have posted many things on YouTube, too, mostly live performances.

GP: What do you make sure is always on your iPod?

GI: Strangely enough, not much classical music. What I have with me always is mostly jazz—Chick Corea (especially with Steve Kujala on flute), saxophonist Jan Garbarek, Ralph Towner's Oregon group, for example—along with something with the amazing Indian flute player Hariprassad Chaurasia. (I prefer attending live concerts for classical music, though I often listen to it on the radio.)

GP: What else are you looking forward to doing on this visit to the US?

GI: I have been to NYC many, many times and love it. This time I'll spend about five weeks in North America, only a few days of which will be in the Big Apple, where I will appear at the Manhattan School of Music and Stony Brook. I was also asked to do a class before the NYFC concert on the music of the Doppler brothers; the idea probably came about because of my Gypsy band rendition of the *Hungarian Pastoral Fantasy* on YouTube. I want to speak a little about the social and artistic circumstances in which the Dopplers worked while staying in Hungary. It is an exciting topic which might influence the performances, too.

I will also be one of the professors substituting for Thomas Robertello at Indiana University while he is on sabbatical, visit some other universities in Iowa, Boston, and Baltimore for short

masterclasses and concerts, and possibly spend a few days in Canada, too.

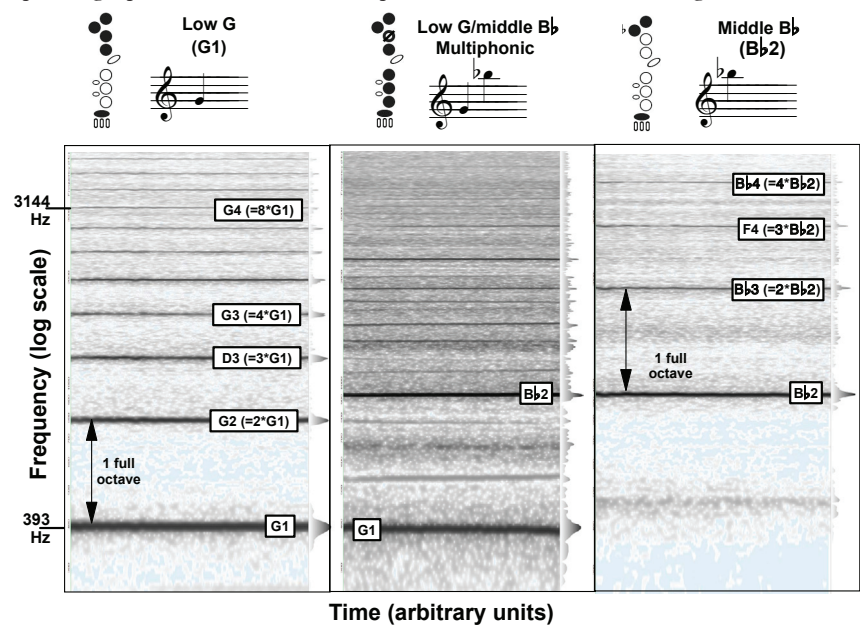
GP: Thanks so much! We are really looking forward to your NYFC pre-concert class and concert.

Greg Pattillo beatboxes on his flute, and plays full-time with the PROJECT Trio. Based in Brooklyn, NY, he has travelled the world as an educator and performer, trying to spread the joy of flute performance.

About Flouble by Katherine Saenger

Flouble (www.flouble.com) is Gergely Ittész's electronic treatise on two-tone multiphonics. (For the back story on how I found out about it, read Wendy Stern's p. 2 "From the President.") The name Flouble (rhymes with "double") combines two words: flute and double, the latter representing the string players' term double-stop, meaning two notes at once.

After reading Leonard Garrison's *Flutist Quarterly* review posted on the Flouble site, I downloaded the free introductory version (again, from flouble.com), and then paid \$30 to get a DVD-ROM of the "deluxe" version, complete with the full complement of fingerings, mp3 sound clips, sheet music compositions, and instructional videos. As an enthusiast of spectral analysis (and sometime exhibitor of the technique at Club events), I was particularly interested taking a look at his mp3 files for the individual multiphonics. Spectrographs of three Flouble mp3 files can be seen in the figure.



Spectrographs (frequency vs. time) and fingerings for three mp3 sound files from Gergely Ittész's Flouble: a standard low G, the low G/middle Bb multiphonic, and a standard middle Bb. The vertical bar to the right of the 3-second-long spectrographs shows the relative intensity of the spectral peaks towards the end of the time sample. The dark horizontal lines indicate frequencies that are strongly present in the sound. In the pure tones, the strong frequencies are integral multiples of the fundamental (lowest) frequency; in the multiphonic, the frequencies present include the fundamentals of the two pure flute tones as well as numerous weaker combination peaks derived from the sum and difference of the two flute tone fundamentals.

Unlike the Virtual Flute (another flute multiphonics resource, available from phys.unsw.edu.au/music), Flouble fingerings include those in which open-hole keys are closed but incompletely covered. Consequently, Flouble is able to provide fingerings for many two-tone multiphonics that are completely missing from the Virtual Flute. Flouble and Virtual Flute also differ in how selective they are in listing a fingering: Flouble limits the fingerings presented to the best one or two, whereas Virtual Flute lists them all, regardless of playability. However, it is the presence of the sound samples that makes Flouble so useful. For a player struggling to produce one of Gergely's multiphonics, there is nothing like one of the Flouble sound clips for an existence proof that the difficult is not impossible. This player (your Newsletter editor) also found spectral analysis helpful for providing a visual comparison of her real-time attempts to a reference spectrum from Gergely's mp3s—perhaps an integrated add-on to hope for in future Flouble versions!