

‘Music from within’

A MASTERCLASS FOR FLUTE



Paul Cheneour
Flautist/composer/teacher

© Paul Cheneour 2005

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3, Badgers Rise, River,
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Foreword

Neither of us thought all those years ago that it would become what it has turned out to be. When Paul came to me it must have been in 1997 with the idea that he wanted to publish some scores of his and he needed an introduction and would I help him because he'd never written anything, I interviewed him or rather we sat and talked with a tape running and I transcribed the conversations and somehow got his ideas and words to stick to the page. And that really was the beginning of it.

It was a very involving process to witness the retelling of his stories: the stultifying way that music had been taught at his school, the connection that happened when he first picked up a flute, the car crash and his slow recovery involving the complete rebuilding of his playing style from the ground up.

Also I found Paul's philosophy of music really made a lot of sense to me as a writer and a teacher. The evolution of his understanding of the nature of communication from the point of view of playing jazz flute helped me with what I was about. His advice to "play from the listener's point of view," slides so effortlessly into "write from the reader's point of view."

It helped of course that I liked his music. I have my favourite albums of his out of the 29 he has produced to date, but it wouldn't really be fair to say which ones. I was impressed with the range of what he could do stylistically: the pantonal jazz of 'Sweet Kafka', the meditational middle-eastern style of 'Yoga', the intelligent dance of 'Cybajaz' and the free flowing, totally personal style of his signature album, 'The Time Has Come'.

During his four years in Mexico, our contact was minimal. Then when he returned to UK four years later he got back in touch. As well as producing a whole bunch of albums including the brilliant '7Changes', he'd written the text of his "Music from Within" masterclass! From our time working together on his biography and philosophy he'd learned for himself how to get the words and ideas to stick to the page and get them into a sort of order that a reader would find accessible and enjoy. It is the aim of every teacher that the student progresses to a stage at which the teacher becomes redundant. I'd never thought of myself as Paul's teacher in that way but now he could write and express himself well and I was redundant.

The product of those years is this book of words and musical scores. A fascinating weaving together of life, inner journey, and music that has grown out of Paul's radical critique of the way music is taught in our schools and conservatories. That by focusing exclusively on technique we are denying the creative impulse that is our birthright. Through his own process of discovery as player, performer and teacher he has developed not only a solid practical approach to music but also a philosophy that some would describe as spiritual in that it considers the whole person: body, emotions, mind and spirit.

There is so much in this book for both musician and non-musician alike. The technicalities and subtleties of flute playing are an important part of it but not the whole story. There is much here about music in general, about the relationship between composition and the lost art of improvisation. There are anecdotes and observations that will elicit a gasp of realisation or a chuckle.

Knowing and working with Paul has helped me to trust my own creativity. May this book do the same for you.

*Brian Lee
London
October 2005*

INTRODUCTION

“Listen for the sound within the silence and the silence within the sound”

“Quote by Paul Cheneour”

"Everything in the universe is in motion. The fundamental vibration at the root of all life is music. Sound and music can lead us to resonate directly in tune with our selves, environment, mind, body and spirit, unifying us once more. Listen!...be still enough so you can enter the longed for other world and fall into the place where there is only music".

This book or these two books, invites you to embark on a journey into a territory that I'm also continually exploring. I am, if you like, a guide, opening a doorway for you to step through and enter your inner world. A world of your own creativity – something which is so often forgotten in the system of educating the musician both amateur and professional – a world which many see as full of danger – the danger of choice, of not knowing, of failure, or having to trust one's own intuition – the danger of making a fool of oneself. Well, I've visited a great many of those places and have written the book about it.

Book 1 is an account of what goes on in my Masterclasses for flute players, dealing not only with technical stuff about what to do with fingers and embouchures but also the inner processes about finding your own voice and what makes your playing truly yours.

It deals with my approach to music and I mean music in many styles, western classical, jazz, and ethnic styles like Arabic and Indian, covering exotic techniques like circular breathing and giving a tourist's introduction to the philosophy of Indian music in the Sama Veda.

We look at the psychology of performing and recording as well as the real practicalities of the performance situation. There's a section on the teacher/student relationship and advice for those who have taken on the responsibility of teaching. Another section looks at surviving in the music business without losing your sanity or integrity.

However, it's not only for flute players, any musician will gain much from what's written here. And non-musicians will find a lot for them too. There's even an open masterclass that does not even require musical skills, a “Masterclass for Everyone” that explores among other things the process of listening and what you can do with just the untutored voice. (See Appendix 1)

Book 2 describes my personal journey (I thought you might be interested...). How I've done what I've done despite the education system, despite a serious car accident, and despite the perplexities of the music business – taking you up to the album that for me was a watershed, “The Time Has Come.” Telling the story of how it came to be recorded and the stories behind the pieces.

Then there are the scores of the pieces on the album. Essentially transcriptions of the pieces that were “compositions in the moment”. Scores that you can use to play in every detail, to interpret as liberally as possible, to refer to as an aid on your own discovery or to be set aside while you get on and make your own music and other pieces I've written. That is the aim of this book and the point of the journey.

So hopefully you can learn something from my journey of trials and errors and enjoy your own greater discoveries. Do let me know how you get on.

PART 1

BEFORE PLAYING

WHAT MAKES A GREAT ARTIST?

Each of us has the potential to become who we really are. The principal aspect that differentiates the ordinary or average talent from the really great artist is attitude and/or the soul purpose of the person who is willing to listen and plumb the depths of their being. Through their chosen activity, such as playing an instrument, painting, sculpting, horticulture, architecture, films or whatever, they are able to give full expression to their soul, spirit and divine spark! If you have ears and eyes to see, you will recognise it when that quality of expression is placed in front of you!

JUST MAKING SOUND

Many people including musicians suffer from the belief that they cannot use their voices to make music and are often too embarrassed to sing. This usually stems from the first encounter with the musical education system at your first school where without any preparation or explanation, the teacher played a note on an out of tune piano in the corner of small room and asked you to sing the same note. That particular moment defined and determined whether you were musical.

For many, coaxing your larynx to work in this way was a hugely difficult and embarrassing task. No one had ever helped you sing or mentioned anything about this unless you were fortunate to have had musical parents or friends. And, although you really tried to make a beautiful note, the sound that issued forth was usually, for most, an uneven uuuurgh. Then and there tragically, you were consigned, classified and labelled as unmusical, a trauma that so many have carried into adulthood or perhaps you were one of the lucky musical ones, but still with unrealised musicality.

This is the point from which I begin the journey. In a relaxed way I introduce the concept of learning how to breathe out slowly from the diaphragm, then move to being aware of and getting used to making sounds without having to remember anything, simply experiencing and feeling the vibrating larynx membrane using vowels, **A, E, I, O, U, OM** or **AUM** and **HU**. Experiencing this resonance and sound vibration in your physical being is not only very soothing and liberating but also very healing.

This exercise is about making and experiencing sound without worrying about its quality, just feel, enjoy and experiment using your voice. As the exercise progresses, overtones often become audible, these are sound vibrations in geometric patterns meeting other geometric patterns, which appear to dance around the room. These snowflake mathematical patterns are similar to those made when a violin bow, is drawn across the edge of a plate covered with iron filings, rice or sand. They are not just pretty patterns but fundamental building blocks.

THE WORD 'MUSICA' MEANS, "TO PRAISE GOD"

When we, music makers and musicians play or sing alone, in choirs or in groups, we are praising God in a spiritual sense not necessarily in any religious way, although originally music began from religious roots and is still a central element and widely used in services.

Music is truly a powerful force and when the mode or style of music changes society also undergoes changes. It is said that even today, Tibetan monks in ceremonies use sound to levitate stones and huge boulders and in ancient China when a new Emperor came to the throne all the musical scales, weights and measures were recalibrated according to the vibration of the new emperor. (See *Healing Forces of Music* in recommended further reading for more details)

Do you, or can you remember the last time your name was uttered with real loving-kindness? Your name, or the name you choose to use, is your individual sound signature and is the frequency with which your being resonates. More often than not unfortunately, you associate your name, with limiting your behaviour, with being 'bad', with not measuring up, with not trying hard enough, with not achieving enough and the list goes on and on, mostly all negatives. Sadly this began when you were very young and continues even to this day policed by your own inner voice.

To alleviate or negate this negative association and help you feel and be more positive about yourself and your name, we use a 'SOUNDBATH'. The students form a circle and each one takes a turn in the centre having their name sounded, which is then broken down into two or three syllables. Even though there is no set time limit, each person's SOUNDBATH usually lasts from about 10 to 15 minutes. When more people are creating the circle, the effects are multiplied and potentiated the resulting transformations are very often quite extra-ordinary and for some the experience can be very profound, even overwhelming. Therefore, good after care is provided and made available to support the emotional clearing taking place.

TRUST

Elaborating on my opening statement I endeavour to establish a real 'Trust' in the space so the students can make or create any sounds they like with either their voice or instruments and make any so called 'mistakes' without fear of ridicule. They are encouraged to play, have fun and experiment with confidence, knowing that whatever is being produced is fine, OK and acceptable; techniques and refinements to expression are considered in greater depth a little later.

First and foremost, creativity is encouraged and exercised then techniques are explored and discovered to express that creativity (although in reality it usually happens in tandem). The space is so open and secure the students begin unlearning the "learning by fear and punishment" they may have previously been subjected to, we also look at and dispel the notion of competition in all its forms as really one is only in competition with oneself and even that notion is ultimately an illusion.

Have you ever stopped to consider how much information your EARS continually collect?

LISTENING AND HEARING

"Musicians listen but rarely hear, and non-musicians hear but rarely listen."

Perhaps this is a bold statement but often true. Listening, in a meditative state, in a total inclusive sense, being totally open and aware stimulates our creativity, whether interpretative or original idea. Truly listening facilitates an openness allowing one to 'receive', be it music or any other inspiration. However, to become natural and instinctual, this positive listening needs practising.

Constantly rushing around being busy in our world is a veritable distraction for the mind and prevents real listening. Although it might seem difficult, make some space and time for yourself, 'slow down', sit still and observe your mind with all its demanding chattering. Don't try to hold onto your thoughts or images just watch them float by, acknowledge them, let go of them, and just be; exist in the moment. Your thoughts will continue to flow but being still, you're not so attached to them, you're just observing, more aware. These are also the first steps for meditation.

Next, I ask students to focus on the everyday sounds surrounding them and after the listening-meditation, they're asked to pick out and name all the sounds they could identify. Perhaps an aeroplane going overhead, a car horn, doors opening or closing, the central heating or cooling system, the clock ticking, tyres screeching, children squealing, workmen shouting, the roar of a motor bike, people talking, the telephone ringing, rain, wind, thunder, sea, birds singing, animals, insects, somebody coughing, laughing, farting, stomach rumblings, anything external to them.

As this exercise unfolds the scale of activity and the amount of information the brain receives via the ears becomes apparent and you begin to realise your entire world, safety and security are determined firstly by hearing, and secondly by sight. Following a two week recording session recording an album using only my ears to make all decisions I had a peculiar experience. When driving home it was difficult using my eyes to judge distances or anything else and was very strange fortunately, it didn't last very long but made driving quite fraught for a little while.

For the second part of this exercise, we enter the same listening-meditative state, but this time students are, asked to block their external hearing and to focus only on the inside, concentrating on their interior pathways. The human being is a huge universe just waiting to be explored and when asked, "What did you hear?" They often say "The heartbeat", which is quite curious, as it is not exactly audible. What they are doing is feeling the rhythm of it, being aware of the pulse, and alluding to that as hearing on the inside. The air breathed in and out, blood and other fluids circulating deep in the body emit interesting sounds and there might be a ringing sound in the inner ear that seems like tinnitus. Then there is the subject of thought, some say they can 'hear' thought as a sound and I ask, "Can you hear your thinking?" Perhaps you will notice as you read this you are hearing the words in your head, but ask yourself, are the sounds audible and where and how do you hear them? Do you think it's the same process when you read a musical score? Do you hear the sound in your head first before actually making a sound?

This type of hearing I call the 'third ear'. It is being aware of a finer vibration, the vibrations experienced are an electro-magnetic impulse, which can be understood or interpreted as hearing. My own shorthand way for saying "I understand this electrical impulse" is "I hear it" and is what I refer to when I say, "I hear the rocks or ground singing or environment humming".

I grew up in Cornwall and the west country of England and the environment around me seemed to be alive. I can only describe this 'humming-tingling-sound-feeling' as an internal singing. I used to watch the wind dance on the sea, and the sea dance in the wind, listening to them both jabber to each other, engrossed in their spiral dances. Standing on those ancient rocks it was easy to be absorbed in their conversations for hours.

This 'universal humming' can be experienced and deciphered in many different ways. Some express it in colour, shapes, writing, ideas, film, architecture, design, fashion, or prayer. Others use many other forms. I 'hear' it inside; melodies, always changing, constantly moving and each note has a colour. I didn't really understand what it was when I was very young; it was just something there, known and very comforting.

It is worth spending a moment here to consider that if music were inconsequential and had no power, neither the church, the military nor the state would pay any attention to it. As it is, music has a tremendous power in so many different ways. From its vital healing essences on humans, animals and plants, in the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual realms, sympathetic vibrations, rousing warrior trance like effects on humans, levitational –anti-gravity effects used by Tibetans to raise huge rocks. To its amazing destructiveness; amongst many other examples, Ella Fitzgerald breaking a wine glass by singing a note at the same frequency, the Biblical account of bringing down the walls of Jericho and the alleged destruction of a harbour in the South of France while testing a new secret sound weapon, the idea later abandoned, as it was uncontrollable.

Anecdotally, if you want to start a war with your friends and neighbours then play your choice of music at a party. Have you noticed throughout history that before any society changes its basic ideas and attitudes the music usually changes first, as with the 60's and subsequently with each generation and more recently as many try to define their group identities using different styles of music. Another example of the physical power of music is, when soldiers are marching and encounter a bridge they're ordered to break step, to defuse any standing wave they would create. If they continued to march in step, the standing wave would cause the bridge to collapse.

A similar effect happened when the footbridge, linking St Paul's Cathedral with Tate Modern across the Thames in London first opened, it began shaking violently when the public walked across, and they were walking out of step. To illustrate music's financial power, which is another form of power and energy, the music industry in the UK is the 4th largest tax revenue earner, following closely behind whiskey and armament sales, despite little or no central investment.

DIRECT DEED

There is a Japanese visual art, in which the artist must be spontaneous, which translates into English as "Direct Deed". He/She must paint on a thin stretched parchment with a special brush using only black water paint in such a way that any unnatural or interrupted stroke will destroy the line or break the parchment. No modification rethinking or changes are to be made.

These artists practice a particular discipline, that of allowing the idea or inspiration to express itself in direct communication with the hand in such a way that deliberation or consideration does not interfere. It is said that the resulting pictures lack the complex composition and textures of considered painting, but it is also said that for those who can see they will find something very special captured which defies explanation

I think I have always created spontaneous intuitive music from this point of view and the process can be likened to going through a doorway. Whether it happened by accident or design is still open to question, but since '94, I have consciously played from the 'Direct Deed' perspective either in spontaneous, improvised or written music and it is the most fulfilling way of playing both solo or in collaboration. However, before you can combine the elements of composition and spontaneous performance it is essential to be completely still and empty.

Finding an empty space and stillness within requires a good deal of preparation. It should not be hurried. Develop a space that enables you to rise above the day-to-day hustle, bustle and turmoil and reach the stillness. Having reached that place of silence (which can be almost deafening) the ego, the 'Me, Me, and Me!' must stand aside.

Quieten the part of you that inhibits the flow of music, become so empty that the music enters your being like water being poured into a cup. When I pick up the flute, I am the flute; fully aware that sound is already happening. All I am is the vehicle making the sound manifest, it just comes through me, and the music that flows from this space is surprisingly organised and profound, it is not mindless unstructured noodling or doodling. It is effortless music without the mind interfering. I am just being, observing the music and the physical me doing the activity. When I physically stop playing, I know the music continues.

ABOUT PLAYING

SKILLS FOR FLUTE PLAYING

Having discussed how important it is to listen and let the music flow naturally, I now turn to the discipline of practising. I am often asked, "As you're making music in this intuitive way, why do you think it's important to practise?" and I must answer, "to make every element of playing - embouchure, breathing, dexterity, articulation, dynamics, vibrato, stamina, phrasing and posture - an instinct, a muscle memory; 'maximum efficiency with minimum effort' as in the martial arts."

When progressing towards playing instinctually (and this process does take a while) there is no need to worry about getting the notes 'wrong'. The point and purpose of mindful repetition is to have the technical elements or skills firmly in your grasp and understood, it helps you to solve technical and musical problems very easily and quickly. However, just concentrating on technique alone, will prevent you from exercising and developing that vitally important creativity.

During practice, I deal with any technical or tricky aspects that arise, and if something needs attention, it's usually because I have been trying too hard. When performing in concert or the studio, I'm only interested in the music. I have also noticed that some people often have difficulties with their attitude towards practising; here are two examples:

- 1) Amateurs practise to play the right notes.
- 2) Professionals practise so they won't play the wrong notes.

They're quite subtle but contain hugely different attitudes and approaches, well worth digesting.

Good practising breeds confidence and freedom but practice without attention to quality is just a mindless repetitive muscle exercise. How long can one focus in this positive way? For most, in the beginning and even later on, it will be in short-ish moments. Always be mindful when practising, don't fall into the trap that just because your friend or so and so practises for eight hours a day, you should also do the same. They are and you, if you copy them, will only be emphasising and practising mistakes, creating all sorts of problems for the future. It is far better to play in an aware, focused frame of mind for short periods and remain fresh. When you feel your mind wandering put the instrument down and take a break, then refreshed, play again. Gradually you will be able to develop longer periods of focused practice but if it's forced, you will sound forced in performance, which is uncomfortable to hear for both you and the audience.

HAND POSITIONS

How you hold the flute will determine the ease or not of most of the following aspects of playing. You will need to find the most natural point of balance that allows the fingers to move freely in all the fingerings and cross fingerings needed. Very early in my jazz playing I realised the need to play efficiently and effectively in all tempos. Therefore, I experimented and found the 3 most comfortable balance points.



Balance point 1 - the flute resting on the 3rd joint of the index finger on the left hand that enables the index finger to move without holding the flute and the thumb playing the B and Bb from the joint rather than the pad thus allowing faster, more even, trills to be played.

Balance point 2 - the thumb on the right hand under the F key holding the flute in a comfortable position.



Balance point 3 - the centre of the bottom lip, the only contact between the person and the instrument that remains constant and unchanged, all else is in a state of flux.

My fingers then rest just above the keys slightly bent and pushing to close the key, when needed, from the knuckle, similar to the action of a piano key, relaxed, ready to move at a moment's notice. The right hand also has to contend with multiple movement combinations from any note to C#, C, B and back to D and Eb, plus the C# to C, C to B and C# to B trills. I would also suggest the most economic movement here is to push slightly from the knuckle when going towards the notes and then pull back when moving back to D and Eb. Your fingers only need to move the distance the keys move, up or down, any other extraneous movement is wasted effort and is inefficient.