The Prepared Flute: A Survey of its History, Techniques, and Repertoire

Stacey Russell

Abstract

The current movement of flute playing and flute repertoire has much to do with expanding the flute’s abilities in terms of sound and extended techniques. In an attempt to expand the timbral possibilities of the instrument, contemporary composers are writing for the prepared flute, the addition of objects placed on or inside the flute, or the subtraction of parts of the flute to alter its sound.

This document presents the history of the prepared flute through the examination of ten pieces, and discusses objects commonly used to prepare the instrument. In addition, it provides a commissioned work for prepared flute and prepared piano, previously lacking in the current repertoire of the genre. The preparations for the flute provide new realms of sound possibilities for the instrument, offer new avenues for composing indeterminant music, and inspire a new chamber music genre including prepared instruments. Upon the submission and dissemination of this document, the author expects that more flutists will become aware of this topic, additional performers will aspire to perform these pieces, composers will be inspired to add to the growing repertoire of the prepared flute idiom, and stimulate audience members.