

RIEN DE REEDE

The School of Blavet

*Flutists in Paris
in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century*

*This book addresses a curious gap in the historiography
of the highly praised flute playing of eighteenth-century France.*

Attention most certainly has been paid to Michel Blavet, who, along with Joachim Quantz, is considered as counting among the greatest eighteenth-century flutists. There is, however, hardly anything known about his two foremost students, Pierre-Évarde Taillart and Félix Rault, whose quality of playing was just as highly praised. Both from the school of Blavet, they were often named as flutists whose playing equalled that of their master. Taillart succeeded his teacher in the Concert spirituel. About him, Marpurg remarked, 'Hr. Taillart, aus der Schule des Hrn. Blavet, nächst welchem er auch seinen Platz hat.' ('M. Taillart, from the school of M. Blavet, whose



Henri Millot,
*Unknown Flute
Player*
(Michel Blavet?)

standing he also matches'). Rault, too, around twenty years younger than Taillart, followed in Blavet's footsteps with his high-profile appointment at the Académie royale de musique and his position at the court of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette. With the composer himself conducting, he premiered Gluck's *Dance of the Blessed Spirits*.



Jacques-Louis
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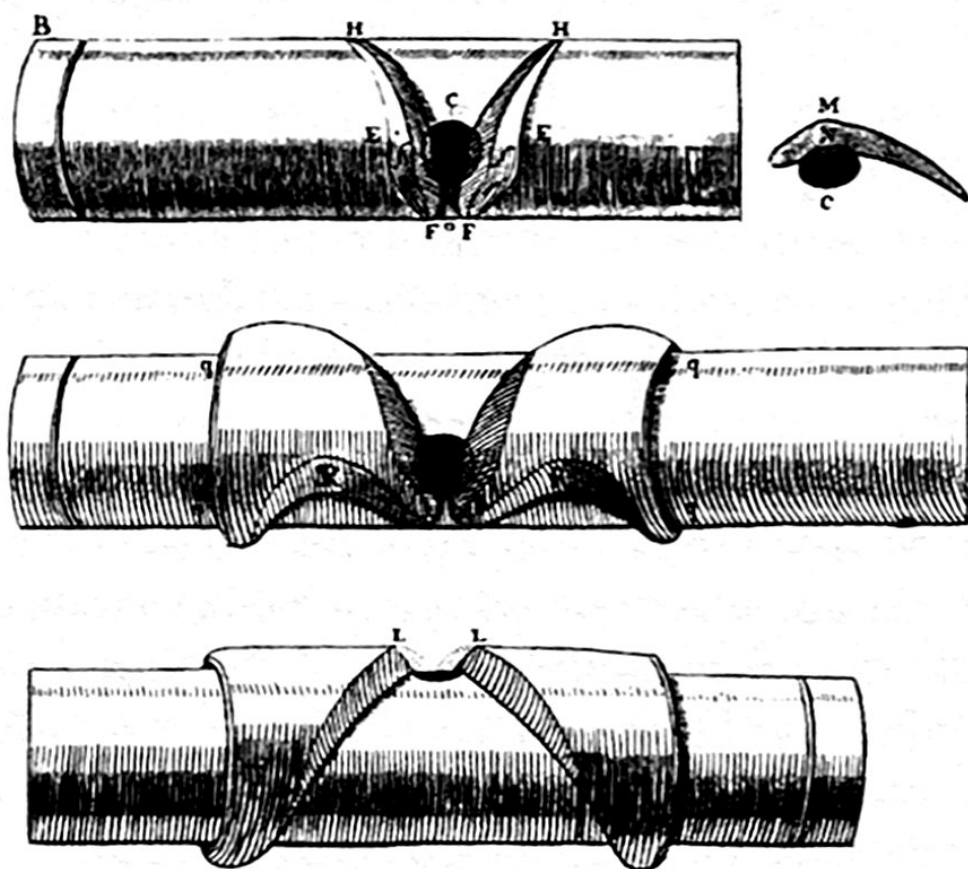
In addition, Taillart and Rault made a name for themselves as composers, but also as teachers. Foreigners even came to Paris for lessons with Taillart.

Rault's students Devienne, Hugot and Wunderlich, as teachers at the conservatoire, passed Blavet's achievements on to subsequent generations, whereby the first French flute school took shape. Through their systematic approach, Hugot and Wunderlich formulated the new norm for flute playing.

This book is the result of a scrutiny of thousands of French newspapers, journals and almanacs, and further presents a Lexicon of more than 125 flutists who were mentioned in the Parisian press between 1750 and 1800. It also tells us about French and foreign flutists who influenced the Parisian concert scene during that period, the repertoire of those times, the pedagogics and flute construction.

Indeed, we can read, "He taught most distinguished amateurs."³⁰ According to *L'Avantcoureur* he even had approaches from foreign students. "He has, so to speak, the art of communicating his talents to his students. One may even see foreigners hastening to come to improve themselves under such a skilled Master."³¹ And, "One knows the superior talent and the taste of M. Taillart, the elder, for the flute, which makes him much sought-after by the Virtuosi and by French enthusiasts and foreigners who wish to improve themselves in playing this instrument, foremost in expressing tenderness and affections."³²

In his guide for travellers to Paris, Nemeitz suggested taking music lessons there. "That gives access to a young man in the big wide world." The harpsichord and the "transverse or German flute." "These days, the French play these instruments



Headjoint from *Découverte de l'embouchure de la flûte allemande*