



THE TOP OCTAVE BOOK

Playing With Artistry

for Flute or Piccolo

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PRESSER

The Top Octave Book

Playing in the top octave is challenging for flutists of all ages and levels of technical proficiency. With analysis and practice strategies, you can play in the top octave with confidence, control, and beauty. Before beginning the study and practice of the top octave, have your flute or piccolo checked by a skilled repair technician. A small leak in a pad creates more problems in the top octave than in the lower octaves.

READING THE NOTES

The notes of the top octave are written using one to six (or more) ledger lines, or the *8va* (ottava) symbol. Most professionals prefer reading ledger lines to reading notes with the *8va* symbol because of the difference in the fingerings from one octave to the next. Reading the top octave notes is a skill learned through repetition. Since the top octave notes are the last register learned, practice them as many times as you have practiced the notes in the lower two registers.

PROTECT YOUR HEARING

Wear ear plugs to protect your hearing while playing these top octave exercises and melodies.

HEARING THE NOTES

Learning to hear well in the top octave is a skill to be practiced. Since the top octave notes are out of singing range, practice the passage in your vocal range to become familiar with the intervallic challenges of the music and to develop a reference point for tuning. Many of the preparatory exercises presented in THE TOP OCTAVE BOOK span three octaves.

GETTING STARTED

Check the placement of the cork assembly in the flute or piccolo headjoint. The line on the cleaning rod should appear in the center of the embouchure hole. If the line is too far from the crown end of the headjoint, turn the crown to the right until it is in the correct position. If the line is too close to the crown end of the headjoint, turn the crown to the left and gently push the crown in toward the tenon of the headjoint. This step may need to be repeated several times in order to get the line in the proper place. If the cork is loose, have a repair technician replace the cork. Professional flutists may replace the cork yearly depending on the climate in which they live. Having a properly fitted and placed cork affects the top octave notes more than other notes. If there is a note in the top octave that does not speak well or is difficult to control at various dynamics, experiment by moving the cork ever so slightly to see if there is any improvement. Sometimes just a turn of the crown to the right, or slightly pushing the cork in a miniscule bit, will improve the response of the note.

ALIGNING THE FLUTE

Align the flute so an imaginary line is constructed from the center of the right-hand keys (D, E, F) through the center of the embouchure hole. Use a yard stick to make this placement. On the modern flute this classic lineup offers the best intonation and tone color. The headjoint is pulled approximately a quarter of an inch from the body of the flute. Once you have successfully aligned the flute, use a felt marker pen to draw several marks around the headjoint and body of the flute so you align the flute the same way each time you play; otherwise, this variable hinders your success in conquering the top octave. When playing, the embouchure hole and the keys should be level, pointed toward the ceiling, and stable in the chin.

The Flute Top Octave Warmup

Piccolo players should warm up on the flute.
Begin daily practice with these exercises.

HARMONIC EXERCISE FOR EMBOUCHURE DEVELOPMENT

Place the right hand on the barrel for the entire exercise. The harmonic note is created by overblowing the printed lower-octave note. Play slowly, with vibrato, concentrating on creating smooth intervals

STACCATO OCTAVES

Use single tonguing. Listen carefully to the C# and B \flat octaves for intonation, and to the F# notes for cracking.

BALANCE OF TRILLS AT THE THIRD HARMONIC PARTIAL

The purpose of this exercise is to practice keeping the flute balanced and still while alternating trilling from the right-hand notes to the left-hand notes. The fingers move at the third knuckle back from the nail. Finger the lower diamond-shaped notes, while overblowing to the written note, by making the aperture (opening in the lips) smaller, directing the air higher on the wall, and perhaps increasing the air speed.

Db Major
ottava

3 3 3 3

3 5 6 7

3 5 6 7

3 3 3 3

3 3

3 3

3 3

3 3

3 3

Andante sostenuto (♩ = 60)

No. 18

p *sf*

6 *sf*

11

16

21 *tr*

25 *tr* *cresc.*

29 *rf* *p*

34 *sf*

39 *sf* *pp*

44 *calando* *rit.* *pp*

THE TOP OCTAVE BOOK

Playing With Artistry

Have you ever said, “I love my top octave?” If you are like most flute and piccolo players, the answer is no. THE TOP OCTAVE BOOK is a methodical approach to playing with control and artistry in the third register. With exercises to develop the embouchure, conquer the fingering combinations, and develop control of the air stream, this book culminates with Barret’s *40 Progressive Melodies* transposed up an octave, along with phrasing suggestions, to develop artistry and fluidity in the top register.

THE TOP OCTAVE BOOK includes:

- Headjoint activities to develop the embouchure and control the angle of the air.
- Overtone exercises to train the embouchure for a ringing sound on third-partial notes.
- 15 preparatory exercises, based on each note from C3 to D4, using chunking techniques to gain facility and control.
- 7 advanced exercises to develop fingering fluency and air control.
- Phrasing tips on building musical interpretation.
- The Barret *40 Progressive Melodies* written out 8va, for practice reading music in the ledger lines. The demands of these melodies develop the ear, the embouchure, lyrical or legato placement of the fingers, and expressive phrasing.
- Discussion of the top octave fingerings and how they evolved.

THE TOP OCTAVE BOOK is designed for advanced high school, college, and professional players. 76 pages, spiral bound to lay flat on the music stand. Also available in digital format.

Other Publications by Patricia George and Phyllis Avidan Louke:

FLUTE 101: Mastering the Basics

FLUTE 101.5: Enrichment

Flute 102: Mastering the Basics

Flute 103: Mastering the Basics

THE FLUTE SCALE BOOK: A Path to Artistry

THE FLUTE VIBRATO BOOK

ADVANCED FLUTE STUDIES: The Art of Chunking

