

Articulating the Invisible: Metaphors in Flute Performance and Pedagogy

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Mastering the flute requires control of bodily processes that cannot be directly observed, such as breath support, vibrato, articulation, and the shaping of the vocal tract. Because these processes are largely invisible, they can be difficult both to perform and to teach. Flute teachers often use metaphors to communicate technical and artistic concepts, but these are typically developed intuitively.

This presentation draws on a study in which Ann Elkjär invited flute students to participate in an artistic research laboratory exploring the use of metaphors in flute performance. Through experimentation and reflection, participants investigated how metaphorical thinking can support technical development and artistic expression.

The findings suggest that effective metaphors can help performers navigate complex bodily processes and overcome instrument-specific challenges. By making the invisible more accessible, metaphors may enable musicians to focus more fully on their primary goal: expressing music.