

# MISREPRESENTATIONS

## A Comparative Analysis of the Altès *Méthode* and Subsequent Reinterpretations

### ABSTRACT

The *Méthode pour flûte systém Boehm* by Joseph Henri Altès is a perfect example of a musical compilation that has been destroyed by a stream of editorial reconfigurations that do not adhere to the objectives set out by the composer. This paper asserts that subsequent editions of the Altès *Méthode* misrepresent the original intent of the work as a pedagogical tool that, by our own modern educational standards, promotes a systematic and intrinsically rewarding approach to flute study. These misrepresentations have allowed an inaccurate portrayal of the composer as a second rate artist in efforts to promote the hidden agendas of other artists and scholars.

Chapter I outlines the life and work of Joseph Henri Altès and identifies the original objectives of the *Méthode* as depicted in the 1880 Millereau edition. These objectives are illustrated using a systematic approach that presents new concepts step by step, reference charts in each section that progressively address elements of technique, easy to follow descriptions that give an overview of the primary goal for each etude, and a continuous duet structure that allows the teacher to serve as a model for the student while simultaneously addressing ensemble skills and rhythmic stability.

Chapter II compares the 1918 abridged edition of the *Méthode*, as compiled by Altès' former pupil, George Barrère, to the original 1880 edition. Through his own silence Barrère removes the voice of Altès from the *Méthode* and instead sheds a light on the problematic relationship and clashing artistic philosophies between teacher and protégé.

In Chapter III, the four remaining modern editions of the *Methodé* presently available in the United States are compared to the 1880 Millereau edition through a discussion on the manner in which each publication misrepresents the original work. The 1918 Fischer edition, for example, misrepresents these overarching principles through the addition of recycled theory lessons by Fischer editors, a lack of distinction between passages written by the composer and those added by the editors and the reworking of visual references. The 1979 Rampal-Marion edition, on the other hand, misrepresents the pedagogical device through the exclusion and reworking of key theoretical lessons. The 1956 Caratgé edition further misrepresents the original *Methodé* through unexplained rearrangements of introductory exercises and the addition of footnotes that are inaccurate by modern advancements of the instrument. Finally, the 2002 Clardy edition represents for the first time a misrepresentation of a misrepresentation through the omission of critical introductory exercises that aid in the execution of the Daily Studies, the removal of the original practice guidelines suggested at the conclusion of Part IV, and subtle references to the earlier 1956 Caratgé edition without proper citations.

In Chapter IV, *Modern Implications*, the original pedagogical objectives in the 1880 publication of the *Methodé* are discussed in relation to contemporary concerns within the field of music education. Using an overarching systematic structure, a duet configuration that promotes teacher modeling, and specific practice guidelines for the student to adhere to during and after formal studies, the work therefore conforms to modern interpretations of an effective educational device.

The conclusion of the paper insists that an "edition" by nature does not indicate that the reinterpretation is somehow less relevant than the original or does not have something valuable to contribute to the performance of the work. It is our responsibility as performers, however, to determine whether the originality of the editor appropriately conveys a compromise between the basic intent of the composer and the need to outline something new within the music.