

Can Expression be Taught?

The Pedagogy of Alain Marion, in his own voice.

Lecture, transcriptions and translations* by

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Alain Marion (1938-1998)

Born on Christmas day, 1938 in Marseille, France, Alain Marion studied flute with Joseph and Jean-Pierre Rampal, who went on to become Marion's mentor and life-long friend. In 1961 he won the Geneva Competition and subsequently held solo flute positions in the Paris Orchestra, Orchestra of Radio France, French National Orchestra, and Pierre Boulez's Ensemble Intercontemporain. He traveled the world giving concerts and masterclasses and from 1977 until his death taught at the Paris Conservatory. With Rampal, he spent summers teaching at the renowned Summer Music Academy in Nice, France and his former students are among the most celebrated flutists today.

Highlights of Alain's "Expressive Teaching"

- Opening the floodgates
- Doing and listening
- Expression was priority #1
- Sensual, emotional interpretations of repertoire
- Transference of energy
- Technique is expressive, practice is expressive

For more information on this topic please see:

Cohen, Sheryl. *Bel Canto Flute: The Rampal School*. Winzer Press, 2003.

Perlove, Nina. "Expressive Teaching: The Legacy of Alain Marion." *Pan Magazine*, forthcoming September or December, 2008.

Perlove, Nina. "Expressive Teaching: The Legacy of Alain Marion...in his own voice." <http://www.bfs.org.uk/pan.htm>, forthcoming.

Perlove, Nina. "*L'Esprit Français: The Mysterious Workings of The French Flute School.*" *Windplayer Magazine*, #60.

Perlove, Nina. *The Alain Marion Project*, www.REALFLUTEproject.com.

I will be adding more extensive lesson audio files to my website.



Photo: Pryor Dodge. Alain with "Bigi," 1970.
<http://users.aol.com/PryorDodge/index.html>

*Thank you to Tamara Cohen for looking over my translations and making corrections where needed.

LESSON TRANSCRIPTS
Alain Marion, teacher
Nina Perlove, pupil
Recorded 1995-1997 in Paris, France.

EXAMPLE 1:

Robert Schumann (1810-1856), Three Romances Op. 94 #1. Nicht Schnell (moderato)

Flute Lesson Transcript
Alain Marion, teacher
Nina Perlove, student

WHAT THIS LESSON DEMONSTRATES

Alain's priority on expression.

Alain's views on the personal nature of expression (not copying), and his ability to "open the floodgates" for a student.

Alain's emotive demonstrations.

Alain's priority on an open sound.

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Original</u>	<u>English translation when necessary</u>
		<i>Nina plays</i>
Alain:	Ça aussi, il faut que ce soit... expressive, tu fais...	This too, it must be...be expressive. You play...
		<i>Alain plays a few notes, then how he wants it</i>
		<i>Alain sings</i>
Alain:	Pas...	Not...
		<i>Sings again as he does not want it</i>
		<i>Nina plays two notes</i>

Alain: Tu vois, tu fais... You see, you play...

Alain plays, then as he wants it

Nina plays

Alain: Voilà, c'est ça, tu vois. Nina, n'oublie jamais ça. C'est ça qui fait la différence. Sinon, il y a dix mille flutistes qui jouent comme ça, et il y'en aura un qui jouent comme [unclear]

There it is, that's it, you see! Nina, never forget that. That is what makes the difference. If not, there are 10,000 flutists who play like that, and there will be one who plays like [unclear].

Nina: Okay.

Alain: Tous le monde joue, fais... Everyone plays...

Alain plays, then as he wants it

C'est ta personnalité, c'est vraiment personnel, l'émotion. C'est ton émotion.

It is your personality. Emotion is truly personal. It is your emotion.

Nina: Oui. Yes.

Nina plays two notes

Alain: Tu sais, il faut bien comprendre que ou tu mets ton émotion, ou tu ne mets pas d'émotion. On ne peut pas mettre de l'émotion dans quelques notes.

You know, you really have to understand that either you do inject your emotion or you don't. You can not inject emotions on just a few notes.

It is impossible to put emotion from someone else. It is your one [emotion], or nothing.

Nina: Oui. Yes.

Alain: You know, in the sound, beautiful sound, the music written, is still written...without emotion.

Nina: Oui.

Alain: You know. It's not the problem to copy someone.
It's your one. Only you can do it.

Nina: Oui.

Alain: Only you can, but put it.

Nina: Okay.

Alain: Or is nothing, or your one, huh? Put it.

Nina plays

Cry!

Portamento, eh oui, tu comprends?

Portamento, yes, you understand?

Alain plays

It's in there [pointing to his, or my, heart].

EXAMPLE 2

François Devienne, Sonata in D major, Allegro con spirito

WHAT THIS LESSON DEMONSTRATES:

- The way Alain spoke about and used expression as the primary reference point in his teaching.
- Alain's method of using the breath as the source of a beautiful, expressive sound.
- Alain teaching a beautiful, expressive sound by having the student play with an open vocal cavity.
- Alain's use of positive reinforcement to give immediate feedback to the student.
- Alain's expressive demonstrations.

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Original</u>	<u>English translation where necessary</u>
		<i>Nina plays</i>
Alain:	Il faut que ce soit expressif. Il faut faire un détaché qui soit droit...	You must make an accurate détaché, but, it must be expressive.
		<i>Alain plays</i>
	Toujours ça. Que ce soit legato, staccato, c'est toujours, hah. C'est la respiration, c'est toujours...émouvante, emotionnelle!	Always that way. Be it legato, staccato, it is always, hah. It is the breath, it is always...be moving, emotional!
		<i>Nina plays</i>
	Voilà! Ouvre. Parfait. Tu vois, this is perfect.	There it is! Open. Perfect. You see, this is perfect.
Nina:	Ah oui, j'entends.	Yes, I hear.
Alain:	Ah oui, ça ça fait, tu fais...	Ah yes, you play...
		<i>Alain plays, then as he wants it.</i>
	Nina, c'est toujours chanté la musique.	Nina, music always sings.

Nina: Oui. Yes.

Alain: [unclear] [unclear]

Nina plays

C'est parfait, parfait. It is perfect, perfect.
Tu vois, c'est parfait comme ça. You see, it is perfect like that.
Si non, c'est (*il chante*) If not, it is (*sings the wrong way*)
Même les gammes, tout ça comme ça. Even scales, all of it like that.

Nina: Okay. Okay.

Alain: Après. Next.

Nina plays

Expressive. Expressive.
Parfait. Perfect.
C'est bien mieux là. That is much better.
Voilà, ça c'est bien. Tu entends la difference? There it is, that is good. You hear the difference?

Nina: Oui, beaucoup. Yes, very much.

Alain Il faut toujours penser à ça, il faut ouvrir la bouche Always think of that, open the mouth
et puis, la respiration! and then, the breath!

EXAMPLE 3

Albert Roussel, Joueurs de Flûte, Krishna

WHAT THIS LESSON DEMONSTRATES:

- Alain's expressive interpretations and descriptions of repertoire to evoke emotional associations.
- Alain's interest in a sound that is open and full of life/emotion, not empty.
- Alain's expressive demonstrations
- Alain's use of positive feedback to let the student know when she is playing well.

Nina plays

Alain: It's like rain, like smoke.

Alain plays

Smell of opium, you should smell it, huh.

Alain plays

Nina plays

You have, sound, not empty. You play...

Alain plays, then as he wants it.

Open it up, you know.

Nina plays

Now its good.

Now its good, Nina

Don't do that...

Yes, keep open. This is very good. Keep open!

EXAMPLE 4

Katherine Hoover, *Medieval Suite*, Demon's Dance

WHAT THIS LESSON DEMONSTRATES:

- Alain's use and transference of internal pulse and rhythm as a source of energy.
- Alain's discussion of playing expressively from the diaphragm.
- Alain's expressive demonstrations.
- Alain's priority on using expression and emotion.
- Alain demonstrating an internal sense of subdivision on short notes.

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Original</u>	<u>English translation where necessary</u>
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Nina plays

Alain: Voilà, yeah, this is good now.

Nina: Oui, oui, oui. Avant, j'ai pensé ici
c'était trop bas, et c'est mieux. Yes, yes, yes. Before, I thought here,
it was too low, and [now] it is better.

Alain: Si tu fais cela... If you do that...

Nina: Oui.

Nina plays, Alain sings and stomps

Alain: C'est ça, voilà, c'est ça, pas trop vite. That's it, there it is, that's it, not too fast.
One, two.
Jazz.

Nina plays

Alain: C'est ça, tu vois. That's it, you see.

Alain: Il faut que ça [augment?] plus,
et ça tu le fais pas trop.

It must [swell?] more,
and you are not really doing that.

Alain plays

Alain: But not...

Alain plays, demonstrating expressive swells on the held notes

Alain: C'est ça, "Demon's Dance."

That's it, "Demon's Dance."

Nina plays

Alain: Aussi, plus de rythme. Ce n'est pas vibrato,
c'est rythme.

Also, more rhythm. It isn't vibrato,
it is rhythm.

Nina plays

Alain: Tu fais...

You play...

Alain plays, then as he wants it.

Nina plays

Alain: Et changes de vitesse. Tu fais, c'est [unclear].
C'est ça.
Like jazz.

And change [air] speed. You play, it is [unclear].
That's it.
Like jazz.

That is good now.

Nina plays

Alain: Not too fast.

Nina plays

Nina: The sound doesn't...

Alain: No, it sounds good.

Nina plays

Alain: Good.
You did practice a lot of diaphragm.

Nina: Yeah.

Alain: It is obvious, sounds good.

Nina: I haven't even played this piece [since the last lesson].
I just practiced the diaphragm.

Alain: This is better, yeah, but it is good, you know.

Nina: I practiced Taffanel [Taffanel and Gaubert *Daily Exercises*].

Nina plays

Alain: Because the sound is like that, the sound
should be vibrating very shortly [quickly].
This is the spirit of the sound, the rhythm of the sound, not...

Alain plays

Alain: This is the difference. You know, it is the same note
But it is different, it is coming from the diaphragm.
That's good. That's why I wanted to listen
[to Nina play this piece] more. I was sure you were
going to do something different [since the last lesson].
Now, in the top [register], don't push so much. The sound is good
in the bottom. You know, it is also better in the bottom because,
diaphragm!

Give me *Carmen* now.

Je suis un peu en retard, je suis toujours en retard,
toujours en retard.

I'm a little late, I'm always late,
always late.

EXAMPLE 5:

Otar Taktakishvili, Sonata for Flute and Piano, Allegro scherzando

WHAT THIS LESSON DEMONSTRATES:

- Alain using expressive demonstration rather than lengthy discussion, including a back and forth between student and teacher to get the student to imitate the quality he is showing.
- Alain letting the student play with little interruption when he is happy with what the student is doing.
- Alain's belief that technique, especially articulation, is expressive when played well, even calling articulation "spiritual."

Nina plays
Alain sings
Nina plays
Alain sings
Alain plays

Alain: Just do it. Do it like this.

Alain plays/Nina plays
Nina plays

Alain: Yes.

Nina: Oh, it's *piano*.

Nina plays

Alain: Good. You know, staccato is so much better.

Nina: Is it? Oh good.

Alain: Yes, it's very good. Now it's spiritual, it's very good inside.

Nina: Okay.

Alain: It's very good.

Nina: Thanks.

Alain: No. When staccato sounds good, it's expressive, everything is good.