On 1 vendémiaire an 12 of the French Republican calendar (24 September 1803), a curious necrology appeared in the Correspondance des amateurs musiciens, a weekly newsletter that reported on concerts, aesthetic debates, musical instruments and publications for sale, and various other items of interest to Parisian music lovers during the turbulent years following the French Revolution.1 The notice reads, “We have just lost in a very short period of time two men who are equally dear to the art of music, to their families, and to their friends.” As two of the leading virtuosi of the day, these men—François Devienne and Antoine Hugot—were especially dear to the flute world.

Devienne and Hugot’s shared death notice belies the remarkable parallels in their lives. Born two years apart (Devienne in 1759, Hugot in 1761), they died less than two weeks apart. Both had established their reputations in the 1780s as composers and soloists at the Concert Spirituel, the most important French public concert series of the eighteenth century.2 In the 1790s, both performed in the renowned orchestra of the Théâtre Monsieur and its successor, the Théâtre Feydeau, with Hugot as principal flutist and Devienne as bassoonist. During the aftermath of the French Revolution, Devienne and Hugot asserted their loyalty to the Republican cause by joining the band of the National Guard; Devienne eventually rose to the rank of sergeant. Both taught in the Free School of Music and its successor, the Institut National de Musique, an institution whose mission was to provide musical accompaniment to patriotic festivals and music lessons to the children of National Guard members. When the Paris Conservatoire was established in 1795 by Bernard Sarrette, a captain in the National Guard, both Hugot and Devienne were engaged as flute professors. That the Conservatoire employed six flute instructors at its inception is a testament to this instrument’s importance to military and state music functions.3 Sadly, Devienne and Hugot suffered from mental illnesses which contributed to their deaths. The obituary notes that Devienne passed away at the Charenton asylum “after a long illness that ended by altering his reason,” leaving behind a widow and five children. Hugot, reportedly afflicted by a fever, stabbed himself several times with a knife before leaping to his death from a fourth-floor window.

Despite their tragically early demises, Devienne and Hugot had a broad and lasting influence on flute pedagogy and technique. Both flutists published treatises which were reprinted, translated and widely circulated during the nineteenth century. Devienne’s Nouvelle Méthode Théorique et Pratique Pour la Flûte was published by Imbault ca. 1794, and reprinted at least 28 times.4 Antoine Hugot’s Méthode de Flûte appeared posthumously in 1804, having been edited and completed by his Conservatoire colleague Johann Georg Wunderlich, and published by the Conservatoire press; it was reprinted at least 12 times, including translations in Italian and German.5 Jane Bowers has suggested that the especially numerous reprintings of Devienne’s method indicate that it was “one of the most influential flute methods of all time.”6 Still, it was Hugot and Wunderlich’s treatise—and not Devienne’s—which became the official Conservatoire teaching method in April 1804. This treatise remained in use there until the 1840s, when it was supplanted by the Méthode de flûte of Jean-Louis Tulou, Wunderlich’s pupil.7

Written during a period of enormous political, cultural and musical change, the Devienne and the Hugot-Wunderlich tutors are of inestimable value to scholars and musicians interested in late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century performance practices. Yet the two treatises present very different approaches to flute playing, a fact that is all the more remarkable considering all three musician-authors were working contemporaneously in the same institution. Foremost among the differences is Devienne’s continued advocacy for the one-keyed flute. In his preliminary discourse, he acknowledges the usefulness of the G-sharp/A-flat and A-sharp/B-flat keys, particularly in slow movements or in sustained passages, but states that “While I do not use them, I approve of them, but only in these cases, because in passagework, they become useless and only serve to add to the difficulty; given that the simplest manner is the best manner in my view, I cannot stress enough to students to put it into practice as much as possible.”8 Devienne’s fingering charts do not include keys other than the usual one for D-sharp/E-flat, and no passages in the exercises and duets appear with indications for them.

By contrast, Hugot and Wunderlich declare a decided preference for the four-
The use of the three [recently-added] keys which we have adopted have been too lightly dismissed by several people who have objected that these additions complicate the mechanism of the instrument. We insist on their use because we consider them to be a very useful improvement; the advantages that one derives from them in terms of intonation, equality and strength in several pitches, the facility that they give in making trills and finally the strength that they add in some of the low notes more than compensate for the light mechanical work which these keys require.9

The Hugot-Wunderlich treatise thus became the first extant treatise published in France to both advocate for—and specifically address—the use of—the four-keyed flute.10 While French musicians were relatively late to employ keyed flutes in comparison to musicians in England and in German-speaking territories,11 the story of their eventual acceptance in the early nineteenth century is closely aligned with the establishment of the Paris Conservatoire and its new approach to music education.

In their Méthode de Flûte, Hugot and Wunderlich not only argued for the adoption of a new instrumental technology and the inclusion of a more up-to-date fingering chart, but they also radically rethought how the flute should be taught and played. Particularly revolutionary were the new pedagogical ideals they espoused: an evenness of articulation and tone production, a more systematic approach to the development of finger dexterity through scale exercises and drills, a greater use of abstract instrumental pieces and practice etudes, and increased attention to the directions of the written score. Thus, in spite of Devienne's Republican credentials, his method continues to reflect the flute playing and instructional methods of the ancien régime. It is Hugot and Wunderlich's Méthode de Flûte that truly exemplifies the new aesthetic and ideological
goals of the Paris Conservatoire: the disciplining of music for civic and military functions, rather than for courtly entertainment.

The Conservatoire’s New Pedagogy

The Paris Conservatoire was the first institution to attempt to standardize music education in France through a centralized, secular state authority. Its mission was to create a national music worthy of the people of the new French Republic. Given its origins in the National Guard and Revolutionary politics, the concepts of military discipline—along with Liberty, Equality and Fraternity—pervade the Conservatoire’s foundational documents and curriculum structure. Four hundred students of both sexes were to be admitted, generally between the ages of eight and thirteen, with equal numbers from each French département. Led by Barnard Sarrette’s directorship, the five inspecteurs-compositeurs (François Joseph Gossec, Étienne Méhul, André-Ernest-Modeste Grétry, Jean-François Lesueur and Luigi Cherubini) were charged with the establishment of a gradated regimen for the acquisition of musical skills and a standardized repertoire for all students. Musical instruction proceeded in three orderly stages or degrees: in the first degree, students were educated in solfège and the principles of music; once admitted to the Conservatoire until 1816.

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Notes:
1 This periodical, published by the Citoyen Cocatrix, appeared weekly from 1802/3 to 1805; it was renamed the Correspondance des professeurs et amateurs de musique in 1804. A facsimile reprint is available (Geneva: Minkoff, 1972). All translations from the French throughout this article are my own unless otherwise indicated.
2 The Concert Spirituel, established by Anne-Charles Henri Philidor, ran continuously from 1725-1790. Originally intended to present sacred choral music during Lent, the Concert Spirituel eventually became primarily a forum for instrumental music and an important vehicle for virtuoso performers. Flutists featured on Concert Spirituel programs included Michel Blavet and Pierre-Gabriel Buffardin, Johann Baptist Wendling, Pietro Grassi Florio and Joseph Tacet. The series also did much to promote orchestral music, and included early performances of symphonies by Johann Stamitz, Haydn and Mozart. See Constant Pierre, Histoire du Concert spirituel 1725-1790 (Paris: Société de Musiciologie, 1974).
3 Loi portant établissement d’un Conservatoire de musique à Paris pour l’enseignement de cet art; 16 thermidor an III (3 August 1795), in Constant Pierre, Le Conservatoire national de musique et de déclamation: Documents historiques et administratifs recueillis ou rencontrés par l’auteur (Paris: Claude Tchou pour la Bibliothèque des intouchables, 2002), 124-5. Of these six instructors, one doubled as oboist. By 1796-97 (an V), this number had been reduced to five (Pierre, 408).
5 David Jenkins, introduction to A. Hugot & J.G. Wunderlich, Méthode de Flûte 1804 (Buren: Fritz Knuf, 1975), xvi-xviii. The latest extant edition dates from 1906. Wunderlich (1755/6-1819), a German, had studied and worked in France since 1776 and was hired as a Professor of the Second Class at the Conservatoire on 22 November 1795. See Nomination du jury du concours d’admission aux emplois de professeurs, 2 brumaire an IV in Pierre, Le Conservatoire national de musique et de déclamation, 128-9. After the deaths of Devienne and Hugot, he became the sole flute professor at the Conservatoire until 1816.
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Over the years, the newsletter has fallen behind in its publication schedule, which accounts for the discrepancy between the masthead date and the events reported herein. We are making progress in catching up, and sincerely appreciate your patience as we continue to work to get on schedule.