



SPARKING A SENSE OF DISCOVERY IN YOUR FLUTE: LAURA LENTZ WORKSHOP

by Dr. Marjorie Roth

Laura Lentz's early morning workshop was the perfect way to warm up for Fair Day, 2023. Her presentation offered a preview of her exciting new book, *Modal Warm-up: Sound Discovery and Color Palette Expansion* (released on December 1, 2023).

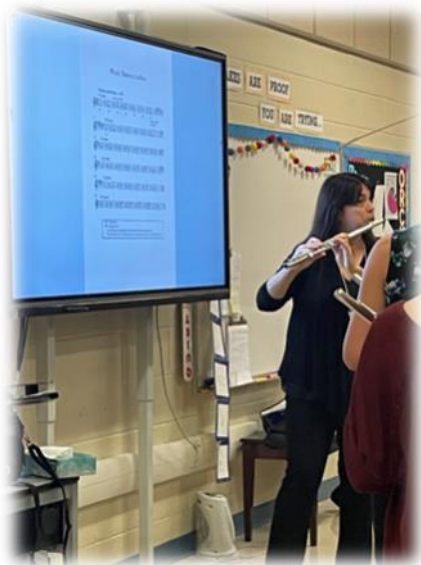
She started the morning with a good stretch and a good question: What does it mean to "discover" something new in our daily practice routines? What might that feel like and how can we do it? A lively group discussion led to Laura's topic for the day—i.e., exploring the potential for new colors in our sound, noticing how we feel as we de-

velop those colors, and connecting those colors to physical and emotional states so that we can be more expressive when we play. Laura was careful to note that the idea of associating different moods with different modes is not new. The concept of modal affect and its power to alter human feeling and behavior began in antiquity and is still an underlying assumption for modern jazz musicians. But the modes are underutilized, both affectively and technically, as a means of developing expressive subtlety by most classical musicians—precisely the deficiency Laura's new book seeks to address.

Over the course of her workshop Laura walked us through on the basic, six-part warm-up exercise found in Chapter 2, which can be applied to any one of the modal scales (Airy Sounds, Harmonics, Modal Patterns, Root Patterns, Noodles, and Melodic Patterns). The segments of the exercise address familiar aspects of embouchure, breathing, air-support, and/or finger technique, etc. But to these standard challenges Laura has added the fresh aural perspective of the modal scale patterns.



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As she walked us through practice examples from her book, the emotional impact of using the modes as a point of departure was immediately apparent, as was the incredible value of the exercise. Almost like magic, so many important but easily overlooked things became abundantly clear, simply by reconfiguring the major and minor steps of a scale! Weakness in pitch perception, consistent breath support, and uneven technique became far more noticeable; but, on the bright side, so did a whole new world of sound colors emerge, revealed by the unexpected and highly individual melodic characters of the modes.

To give just one example, near the end of the workshop we played all the modal scales based on the same root pitch of F, easily accomplished for the eye and the fingers by adding a flat for each repetition of the scale (a new concept to most of us in the room, but a standard practice for jazz musicians). But the sonic and emotional affect was truly startling for the ear and the emotions as we experienced together the multiple personalities of the "F scale".

Laura's presentation provided a fresh inspiration for practice sessions, a new way to experience our individual sounds, and a valuable tool for fine-tuning our awareness of pitch and melodic structure.