

# Harmony in the Flute Alone

By Rebecca Metheny Mason  
“Flute Treasures” at the Mid-Atlantic Flute Convention  
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According to author and music critic Alan Rich from Britannica.com, HARMONY is:

*the sound of two or more notes heard simultaneously. In practice, this broad definition can also include some instances of notes sounded one after the other. If the consecutively sounded notes call to mind the notes of a familiar chord (a group of notes sounded together), the ear creates its own simultaneity in the same way that the eye perceives movement in a motion picture. In such cases **the ear perceives the harmony** that would result if the notes had sounded together.*

\*It is this *perception* of harmony, through the use of a variety of compositional techniques, that can make works for solo instruments rich in layers and texture in the absence of an accompaniment voice.

Several common musical techniques are featured throughout each of these solo flute pieces to outline various chords, emphasize specific intervals, or indicate a changing harmonic structure. These compositional techniques incline the listener’s ear to hear the intended harmony, even when these chords and intervals are not played simultaneously, therefore creating that “perception of harmony.”

These pieces use several techniques to create a perception of harmony, including (but not limited to):

## **Repeated intervals, Arpeggiated chords, Tremolos, Harmonics, Ostinato**

Some of these pieces use all these techniques (and much more), and some center around a few specifically. Below is a small sample of various prevalent compositional techniques the composers use to create the perception of harmony throughout these solo flute pieces.

### **Notable techniques used by Yuko Uebayashi and musical examples in *Le Vent a Travers les Ruines*:**

Repeated intervals of a 3<sup>rd</sup> (Major and Minor) throughout Lento sections



\* The minor 3<sup>rd</sup> interval occurs **almost 40** times throughout the work

\* The Major 3<sup>rd</sup> interval occurs **OVER 30** times throughout the work

Repeated interval of a 4<sup>th</sup> throughout Con Anime section



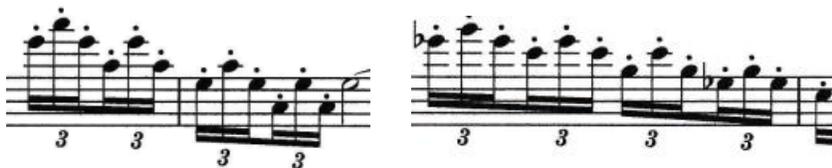
Arpeggiated chords in Poco con moto section



**Techniques used by Cynthia Cozette Lee and musical examples in  
*Nigerian Treasures:***

Repeated Intervals and Arpeggiated chords

Mvt 1



Outlining A-E P5

Outlining C Min chord

Tremolos outlining intervals of a M3, P4, and m6

Mvt 3



Ostinatos with moving "bass" notes to indicate change in harmony

Mvt 1



Mvt 2

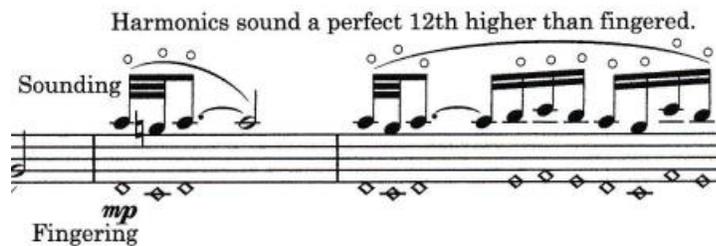


Mvt 3



Harmonics, with audible overtones sounding underneath

Mvt 3



## Techniques used by Adina Izarra and musical examples in *El Amolador*:

Rapid, repeated tremolos and sixteenth notes outlining Perfect 5ths



\* The P5 interval and the inverse, P4 interval, are featured throughout this piece, occurring **over 150** times in this short work and in many instances represent the call of “el amolador,” the knife grinder.

Arpeggiated minor chords



## Program Notes

### ***Le Vent a Travers les Ruines***

Born in Japan, Yuko Uebayashi currently lives in Paris and writes in a style that combines Japanese film music with French impressionism. She often uses imagery in her compositions and finds inspiration through her experiences in everyday life and through her connections with prominent musicians, including many acclaimed flutists. *Le Vent a Travers les Ruines*, which translates to “The Wind Through the Ruins,” was written for the former principal flutist of the Kyoto Symphony Orchestra, Nobutaka Shimizu. Uebayashi wrote the following poem-like program notes at the work’s premiere:

*No one questions why the monastery became a ruin.*

*There may have been someone standing at the remains of the monastery or a cow walking by from somewhere, but no one asks the question why.*

*Clouds move ever so slowly, butterflies fly, and sparking fluff dances in the sunlight. After many years, there still remain reddish brown stone. They just sit there.*

*And the earth exists as if to embrace all matters, while nature repeats her cycle.*

*A breeze floats by.*

*Yes, I have become the wind that breezes through these ruins. I do not ask questions, and everything looks so gentle and glowing...'*

### ***Nigerian Treasures***

Dr. Cynthia Cozette Lee was the first African American and woman to graduate from the University of Pennsylvania with a Masters of Music Degree in Music Composition, and her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Music Composition was earned at Carnegie Mellon University. Dr. Lee has won multiple distinguished awards for her music compositions and her *Nigerian Treasures in 3 Movements for Solo Unaccompanied Flute* was given an award and first public international performance from the College Music Society in Vancouver, Canada in 1985. Dr. Lee’s music will be available (self-published, expected summer 2023) through her website at <https://www.cynthiacozettelee.com>

Publisher’s Notes: *Nigerian Treasures* for unaccompanied flute was composed after the Treasures of Ancient Nigeria Art Exhibit came to the Art Museum of Philadelphia in 1982. Although sick in bed with a cold on the day her family visited the exhibit, Cozette became impressed by what her sister and mother described to her regarding the artworks in the exhibit. She also viewed some of the sculptures from the exhibit on television. As a result, the three-movement work was written by the composer shortly after hearing about this exhibit. Movement II, “The Marketplace,” was named from an actual re-creation of an African marketplace at the museum exhibit. Movement III is titled “The Scar Faced Figure” and was composed after viewing a face sculpture that was on display at the museum. The sculpture was representative of “face scarification,” a practice believed to have been used in some parts of Africa on members of the tribes who were royalty. *Nigerian Treasures* has been performed by the composer on the Mu Phi Epsilon International Convention programs in Chicago, 1989 and in Cincinnati, 2003.

### ***El Amolador***

Adina Izarra was born in Caracas, Venezuela in 1959, and is currently the director of the Postgraduate Programme in Music and the Digital Musical Laboratory at the Simon Bolivar University in Caracas. She earned her PhD from York University in England and is the only woman at the Collegium of Latin American composers. Her works have centered more around consonance versus tonality, and she often uses inspiration from nature’s sounds, particularly birds, as well as street calls, like those still present on Caracas streets that are of Spanish origin. Her solo flute work, *El Amolador*, is a perfect example of Izarra’s use of street calls. The title refers to “the Knife Grinder,” which is a Spanish tradition still common throughout Venezuela and other countries in Latin America, and it refers to a street vendor who walks the streets calling out “amolador” to advertise his knife sharpening services. The knife grinder announces his presence with a harmonic flute, imitated in *El Amolador* throughout. The first part of the work resembles the call of the knife grinder while the second part simulates the sound of the blades sharpening on the grindstone.

<https://youtube.com/@rebeccamethenymason7874>