

THE HISTORY OF THE FLUTE IN ROMANIA

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SUMMARY. There are various moments in the evolution of the musical instruments along history and a variety of versions until reaching the shape they have today. The flute, an instrument belonging to the woodwind category of instruments, can be found in Romania in two forms and with two different names: the archaic one of Pipe, used in the folkloric area, with multiple versions and names, and the one of Flute, used in the symphonic, cultured music. Based on the archaeological discoveries on the Romanian territory and of documented historical writings, we can say that the flute has been present in our country even since the Upper Palaeolithic, but in a primitive form. Although the name of flute appears together with the one of pipe ever since the ancient times, the side-blown (transversal) flute used in the cultured music was brought into our country from Europe by the professional musicians who came in the 16th century, when the cultured music became more and more important and developed in the musical institutions (during the 19th century). Nowadays, the presence of the flute in concerts and in the musical institutions rises to European standards.

Keywords: history, evolution, instruments, flute, pipe, aerophone, Romania.

All the instruments have known a larger or a smaller variety of versions in their evolution and development along history. The evolution has always taken place within certain categories or groups of instruments much like a family tree. There are various moments in the evolution of the musical instruments along history and sometimes they even change their names. Thus, we find the same instrument in different geographical areas, with different or similar names.

This is why we will begin a journey along the history, starting from the earliest times, in order to reach the most distant relatives of the flute. We do this, by presenting the documents that prove its presence on the Romanian land.

We will start with the etymology of the word flute, which comes from the way the sound is produced when blowing into the instrument². Therefore, the flute belongs to one of the most important groups of instruments withstanding time that is the aero phone or wind instruments.

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² The word comes from the onomatopoeia of the act of whistling (with the lips), especially by **f** and **l** connected in speech.

The main characteristic of these instruments resides in the way the sound is produced, by causing the body of air introduced by the performer to vibrate.

The name of the flute is attributed to a large family of wind instruments with a cylindrical or conical tube, with or without holes, according to the geographical area and the moment in evolution.

In Romania, the correspondent of the *flute* is the *pipe (flurier)*, just as in the ancient Greece it was the *aulos*.

Although in the specialized treatises both names can be found, we notice the present tendency to associate the name of *flute* with the instrument present in the symphonic orchestra, while the *pipe* mostly belongs to folklore. We have thus a clear distinction between the functionality of each instrument.

Several types of flute are known ever since the oldest times, but the end-blown flutes (*pipes*) are the oldest and the most prevalent, dating from prehistoric times. The best example is the reed, which becomes a tube by hollowing out its heart and, when a few holes are added, it becomes a pipe (flute).

The category of instruments including the flute has two types of instruments:

- the end-blown flutes;
- the side-blown flutes (transverse).

In order to prove how old these instruments are, their very vast area of circulation and their many versions, we will mention that over sixty (60) names of end-blown flutes (pipes) and over forty (40) names of side-blown flutes (pipes) are known.

The side-blown flute (It.-*flauto* (Fl.); Fr.-*flûte, grand flûte* (Gr. Fl.); Germ. - *Flöte* (Fl.); Eng.-*flute* (Fl.); Russ.-*fluta* (Fl.); Lat.-*Flatus* = breath, breeze) belongs to the category of wooden aerophone instruments, with lateral embouchure.

The side-blown flute was and is present on all continents, with different names, although organologists and musicologists are not really sure what country it originates from. This is because the category of instruments it belongs to is very old and the materials used in their making are very simple and diverse, indicating a rudimentary technique and hence the possibility that they appeared in the oldest times.

There are numerous archaeological vestiges, Chinese documents, murals, Egyptian bas-reliefs, representations on old amphorae or on Etruscan tombs, which prove the archaic presence of the flute in the world.

Moreover, there are the versions presented by the popular organology in different regions of the world, many of them still existing today with different peoples and primitive ethnic groups, which help in the investigation of the origins of this instrument.

If we research the musical terminology from the first Romanian manuscripts up to the times of Anton Pann (the beginning of the 19th century), we can observe the evolution in the terminology of musical instruments and in certain terms of musical technique, forms of influences and lexical loans from other languages.

Although from the etymological point of view, most musical terms in the main vocabulary of the Romanian language are of Latin or Slavic origin, the word *fluir*³ (pipe) has unknown origins. In late feudalism, we find in the chronicles, in the registers from the kings' courts and in other writings names of Turkish influence:

- caval s.n. = wooden pipe approx. 80 cm long, with 6 holes

- nei s.n. = reed pipe with the length of the caval, mostly known in the Orient („...sort of a flute made of reed from India, which produces a sound so sweet”. CANTEMIR, ap. T. Burada, C., pag. 14).⁴ As we previously mentioned when referring to the stage of the evolution, the historical period and the are of origin of the instrument, it can be found in different stages of evolution, determined by the historical period and by the area of origin.

Presently, in our country we have both the archaic forms of pipes used in the folkloric areas and the Boehm flute used mostly in the symphonic orchestra.

The oldest instruments in this category found on our territory date back to the Upper Palaeolithic, from the Aurignacian and Solutrean periods, more precisely the last stage, in our country from 70.000 - 8.000 BC. The oldest archaeological document is represented by a tubular, cylindrical bone, open at both ends, with a lateral hole at one end, approximately 30 cm long, called a pipe because of the documents attesting its belonging to the aerophone instruments.

A very rich source of research of the Romanian musical culture coming from the following historical period – the Antiquity – is represented by the writings of the old Greek authors, who make numerous descriptions or comments on the Thracian music.

During the first millennium BC the culture of the Northern Thrace is formed, where the Geto - Dacians would be prevalent and they are the ancestors of the Romanian people. A small pipe, supposed to have been a toy because of its small dimensions (6, 6 cm) with the diameter of 5 mm and three holes, found in Callatis, dates back to these times⁵.

³ Although in the Slavic-Romanian lexicons the word *fluir* is mentioned, the verb is not translated.

⁴ Ghenea, Cristian, *Din trecutul culturii muzicale românești (From the past of the Romanian musical culture)*, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 1965, p. 60

⁵ *Idem*, p. 17

In the 7th century BC, because of several Greek citadels on the shores of the Black Sea, the Greek culture entered in our country. The Scythians have also played an important part in the development of the Romanian musical culture, as well as the Celts, beginning with the 3rd century BC⁶. In the diggings made at Histria a different pipe, made of bone, with three tubes tied together was discovered. The interesting element is the way in which the three tubes are tied together, as it is the same method used today in some regions of our country.

Known for his mastery in charming the nature and taming the wild beasts by his playing the lyre, Orpheus would start an archaic period (the 14th-7th centuries BC), bringing together with mythical heroes elements of Thracian music and Greek culture⁷. This is when numerous interpenetrations of the elements specific for different musical cultures happen, for example the incoming of all of the wind instruments: the aulos, the syrinx, the kalamos, the simple or double pipe etc., from the Phrygian musicians into the Greek culture and music. A series of connections between the Thracian and the Greek music can be established, even in the area of the musical instruments. In the researched documents, we often find both the pipe and the flute.⁸

Due to the yet empirical stage in the construction of the instrument in those times, it seems that these names rather designate the area of origin of the instrument in terms of musical genre: the lute corresponds to the Greek, elaborate, cultured art, while the pipe is associated with the Thracian, archaic genres, corresponding, according to many authors, to a primitive, barbarian form of art.

In the ancient times, the syrinx designated the double flute, but also the pan flute. When the pipe was made of reed (at the Thracians), it was called kalamos. In the Etruscan culture, we find this double pipe with reed, by the name of tibia or kalamos⁹.

The ancient writer Xenophon describes a new form of art at the Daco-Thracians, taken from the Greeks: the pantomime, used in the soldiers' dance called Kolavrismos, where the instrument is mentioned:

„After the libation was made and the pean was played, first a few Thracians stood up and, fully armed, they danced on the melody of the flute”¹⁰. In another soldiers' dance the image of the dancer is described as follows: „...he made all these movements on the measure and sound of the flute.”¹¹

⁶ Ghircoiașiu, Romeo, *Contribuții la istoria muzicii românești (Contributions to the history of the Romanian music)*, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 1963, p. 18

⁷ *Idem*, p. 21

⁸ The instrument is called **fluier (pipe)** in some documents, in others **flaut (flute)**, without any differences in evolution or construction being made. See: Romeo Ghircoiașiu, *Op. cit.*, p. 27

⁹ Bărbuceanu, Valeriu, *Op. cit.*, p. 250

¹⁰ Ghircoiașiu, Romeo, *Op.cit.*, p. 27-28

¹¹ *Idem*, p. 28

In painting, the picture of the primitive celebrations of the Thracians called Bendidias and Cotyttias (after the names of the goddesses Bendis and Kotys, whom they celebrated), Strabo mentions, among other instruments, the flute.

The Roman occupation in Dacia has brought new musical elements, renewing the art of the local population. Among the pastoral musical instruments, the pipe, the pan flute and the bagpipe are mentioned.¹² The rulers of Dacia were obliged by the law to organize shows of gladiators and theatre performances celebrating the gods where music played a very important part. They had hired flute players (tibicines)¹³ called to contribute to the public festivities, processions, banquets or performances. The gladiator shows were accompanied by the sounds of trumpets and flutes. At the celebration of the goddess Cybele, together with festive processions, sacrifices, feasts and orations in her honour, girls' and boys' choirs accompanied by flutes were also present.

The laments in the funeral repertoire of the Geto - Dacians were also accompanied by wind instruments: the flute, the pipe, the bucium (a type of Alpenhorn used by the mountain dwellers in Romania – n.tr.). Many of the Romanian laments even nowadays are accompanied by a pipe.

The existence of the vocal-instrumental ensembles is mentioned in a document from the wedding of the Thracian king Cotys, where the flute player Antigenes performed, together with the guitar player Cephisodotus and the singer Arges.¹⁴

From the ancient times, we have the names of several flute players, as the performers and the composers were honoured in those times. Among them, we have the flute player Ismenias, a Thracian prisoner, musician at the court of the Scythian king Ateas, as well as the Thracians Seuthes and Ronax, considered the inventors of the pan flute.

The presence of the women in the musical life of those times is mentioned by Charon of Lampsacus, who informs us about a female flute player who performed for the Bisaltae Thracians during an attack against the town of Cardia.

Although the period of Thracian music was dominated by the string instruments, many Greek and Latin (classical) documents frequently mention the wind instruments: flutes, tibias, horns, bagpipes and others.

In the 2nd century BC a differentiation of music and of the groups of musical instruments takes place according to the preferences of the social classes. Therefore, while the string instruments were used by the more cultured Thracians, the wind instruments were used by the lower classes in everyday life.

¹² Cosma, Viorel, *Două milenii de muzică pe pământul României (Two millenniums of music on the Romanian land)*, Editura Ion Creangă, Bucharest, 1977, p.17

¹³ The pipe was known in the Greek-Roman antiquity by the name of *aulos* or *tibia*. See: Ghenea, Cristian C., *Op. cit.*, p. 17

¹⁴ Ghircoiașiu, Romeo, *Op.cit.*, p. 43

Climbing on a new step of social development, during Feudalism we notice that the ample process of social transformation taking place here would influence the further role and development of art and culture. In those times, we find several phenomenons, which have influenced the future development of the Romanian society and culture. One of them is the process of formation of the Romanian language, when the Slavic people settled in the north of the Danube (the 7th century), where this process will be finalized. Another phenomenon was the Latin Christianity, which spread in Dacia during the 4th century AD.

Among the migratory peoples, the Slavic peoples had a particular influence on the development of culture in the Carpathian - Danubian area, as their culture mixed with the culture of the Romanised Thracians.

Although in the Europe of those times the string instruments were predominant, some brought to us by the Slavic peoples, there are documented proofs that the wind instruments were also used. In the territory north of Dobrogea, wind instruments of the type of the flute, belonging to folk culture and dating back to the 10th-12th centuries have been discovered. The most important piece is a bone pipe, 115 cm long, with four holes on one side and one on the opposite side, the distance between the first three holes being of exactly 16 mm.¹⁵

Our culture during the Feudal period was dominated by various types of pipes; the most used being the one with six holes. We find a separation of instruments based on social class in this period also. On the one hand, there was the folk, non-religious music and on the other the religious Slavic, Byzantine music, representing thus two types of culture: a progressive one and a retrograde one. In parallel, we also notice an acceptance of the foreign European, cultured music, preferred by the nobility.

Together with this type of music, new musical instruments entered the country and, although the keyboard instruments were fashionable, the wind instruments appear.

During the 16th century, the dignitaries would surround themselves with virtuoso performers. King Mathias Corvinus was the first to spread this trend among the Transylvanian nobles.

When the first professional musicians were brought in from abroad (during the first half of the 18th century), the spreading of the cultured European music among the bourgeoisie determined the need to find a method to assimilate it. First, the public was educated through concerts, then by private lessons for the children of the bourgeoisie. Afterwards, National Music Schools were founded, with the purpose of educating local musicians and performers. Therefore, the names of professional musicians who came to Romania appear

¹⁵ *Idem*, p. 104-105

in the historic documents. Among them there are also the names of several flute players: the flute player Satza was among the performers hired by Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf for the chapel of Oradea in 1764.¹⁶ From the music teacher Gabriel Reilich (1610 -1677) we have left an immense library; among its scores, there is also a piece for violin and flute, and his collection of musical instruments includes a flute. Among the manuscripts and scores printed in the 19th century we find a Serenade for flute and guitar (1818) belonging to Leonard de Call.

After 1848, the chronicles mention more and more frequent musical performances, projects to establish music schools etc. Such a project is the one initiated by Louis Wiest and the Nitesti brothers and among the instruments used for studying; we find the flute to be also mentioned. The interest in cultured music and in the cultivation of instrumental music in our country is thus documented.¹⁷

As it has multiple technical possibilities and it can easily play simple melodies, the flute has been successfully used by many musicians. The folklorist Dimitrie Vulpian has also studied the flute at the Conservatory in Iasi, as well as another Romanian musical critic from the end of the 19th century, Constantin Cordoneanu and, for a while, even Ion Vidu used it in his activity as a musician.

The musical critic and folklorist Nicolae Filimon, known for his novel *Ciocoii vechi și noi* (*The old and the new boyars*), has shown a special interest and even a passion for this instrument. He was a student of the School of vocal and instrumental music, founded on 23 March 1835 in Bucharest and, before he was a chronicle writer, he was a flute player.

He studied with professor Ferlendis¹⁸ (Ion Andrei Wachmann) and music theory with Ludwig Wiest, who would help him after 1842 to play the flute in the orchestra of the Italian Opera House in Bucharest.

During 1836-1840, he attends in parallel the classes of the Saint Sava College and those of the music school where Ludwig Wiest helped him get in. It is worthy to mention the fact that the flute was considered an important instrument among the classes at the School of vocal and instrumental music. In 1840 he completed his musical studies, starting a teacher's career in 1841 until 1842, in 1845 he became a performer and in 1857 a musical critic.

The first flute player of the Italian Opera House, Michael Folz, who would be Nicolae Filimon's flute teacher, was among the virtuosos of the orchestra. Nicolae Filimon has studied for quite a while with him.¹⁹

¹⁶ Lazăr-Cosma, Octavian, *Hronicul muzicii românești* (*The chronicle of the Romanian music*), vol. II, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 1973, p. 405-406

¹⁷ The publications of the time: reviews, specialized articles, chronicles.

¹⁸ Cosma, Viorel, *Nicolae Filimon - critic muzical și folclorist* (*Nicolae Filimon – musical critic and folklorist*), Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 1966, p. 89

¹⁹ *Idem*, p. 25

The names of other flute players are also mentioned: Guslav Wagner, who taught flute and other four instruments at the Conservatory in Iasi in 1868-1870 and in 1900-1901, Petre Elinescu is mentioned as a flute teacher at the Conservatory in Bucharest. These first names appear in the documents of the time when the flute began to be promoted in our country. With the passage of time, the list grew longer and nowadays we can say that the flute is as popular in Romania as in any other European country. Moreover, the flute has a leading place among the other instruments of the symphonic orchestra, being acknowledged and loved for its qualities.

Local instruments from the category of the Romanian flute

The flute is an **aerophone** instrument and we will try to define this category of instruments by going back in time in search for their possible ancestors. In our country, the aerophone instruments are very well represented as they are closely connected with the life and activities of our people.

As shepherding is one of the oldest Romanian occupations, most aerophone instruments are directly connected to that specific lifestyle. In the shepherds' world an instrumental music was created in connection with particular moments and aspects of their life; signals from the *bucium*, songs for travelling, songs for shepherding, *doinas* and dances played with different types of pipes.

Man has known the aerophone instruments (together with other instruments) ever since the oldest times and he first made them from what came in handy: reed, bones with holes in them, and he called them *pipes*.

The pipe accompanies the Romanian man and woman in all daily activities:

- at work;
- when milking the sheep;
- when cheese is made;
- when milk is made;
- at gatherings and celebrations;
- in the lonely moments, as the closest friend;
- in the moments of leisure;
- when expressing joy or sadness;
- when suffering or even dying;
- during the funeral ritual the sound of the pipe accompanies the laments.

According to the most recent musicological researches, we know nowadays:

- five types of *bucium*, which differ in the shape of the tube,
- five types of bagpipes, which differ in the structure of the melodic pipe,
- a family of pipes made up of seventeen (17) members.

The pipe is one of the oldest instruments in our country still existing today. Pastoral instrument, close to the heart of the peasant, accompanying his daily life, in the mountains or in the plains, the pipe remained his best friend in joy and in sorrow. The folk songs and legends are proof of that. There are various legends on the origins of the pipe as it is one of the most used instruments in our country, although the folk instruments usually differ from one another according to the region they come from. The most famous legend and with the most versions is the *Miorita*. In the end of the legend, the shepherd gives instructions on what should happen with his pipe after his death and wishes for it to be trusted into the ground so that the wind could blow into its holes and gather the sheep to mourn him at his tomb.

In certain old Christmas carols God is pictured as an old man with white hair, shepherding a flock of sheep and playing the pipe. The old popular belief is that the pipe has divine origins, hence the saying that God made the pipe and the sheep and the devil made the bagpipe (violin) and the goat.²⁰ Even the old legend of Prometheus gave birth to the story telling about God and Saint Peter stealing a burning coal from the fire controlled by the devil in the beginning and bringing it to the humans in a pipe.

Moreover, there are musical stories performed by the flute:

1. The story of the shepherd who lost his sheep is known in many regions of the country without a poetic text²¹, the plot being suggested by the sequence of melodies: lament - dance – lament - dance. The plot is simple: the shepherd looks for his lost sheep lamenting (usually playing a doina). Suddenly, as he thinks he sees his sheep in the distance, the lament changes into a lively dance, according to his state of mind. Realizing he was wrong and mistook some white stones for sheep, he turns back to lamenting. He finally finds his sheep and the story ends with a lively melody (dance), which musically describes the joy of the shepherd.

2. The musical story of the shepherd who, having lost his pipe, made one from the shaft of the plough, which changed his name into Shaft.

3. The story of the shepherd who passed away on the top of the mountain missing his lost sheep.

On New Year's Eve, the pipe accompanies the Plugușor and the show with animal masks: stags, goats, or bears.

Despite of its soloist character and because of its vivacity, the pipe is very useful in folk dances. As previously mentioned, there is a large variety of folk pipes with different peculiarities. According to these peculiarities, the folk organology treatises present the following structure²²:

²⁰ In some versions we find the bagpipe and the goat, in others the violin and the goat.

²¹ The melody is better known, not always under the same name as the text, sometimes being called *Șireagul* (*The string*), *Porneala oilor* (*The pasture of the sheep*) or *Când și-a pierdut ciobanul oile* (*When the shepherd lost his sheep*).

²² After Alexandru, Tiberiu, *Instrumentele muzicale ale poporului român* (*Musical instruments of the Romanian people*), Editura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, Bucharest, 1856, p. 154.

Name	Holes for the fingers	Dimension	Name	Material
1. The pan flute	–	Small, medium, big		Bamboo, reed, wood
End-blown pipes				
a. without block (semi transverse)				
2. The tilinca	–	Big		wood
3. The Moldavian pipe	6	{ Small Big	The Moldavian small pipe The Moldavian big pipe	Wood, metal
4. The pipe from Dobrogea	7 (the 7 th in the back)	{ Small Medium		{ Wood Reed
5. The kaval from Dobrogea (Bulgarian)	8 (the 8 th in the back)	Big (made up of 3 parts)		Wood tied together with a bone
b. with block				
6. The tilinca with plug	–	Big		Wood (very rarely metal or bone)
7. The kaval	5	Big		
8. The pipe	6	Small Medium Big	{ The small pipe (Trișca) The pipe The big pipe (Fluieroiul)	
9. The double pipe (with even pipes)	6 –	Small Medium		
10. The double pipe (with even pipes)	7 (the 7 th on the drone pipe)	Small Medium		
11. The double pipe (with uneven pipes)	6	Small Medium		
12. The pipe (with 7 holes)	7 (the 7 th in the back)	Small		
Side-blown pipes (transverse)				
13. The ocarina	9 (the 9 th in the back)	Small, Medium, Big		Burned clay, terracotta, porcelain, metal
14. The folk pipe	6	Small Big	The folk piculina	
15. The folk pipe	7 (all in the front)	Big		

Just as the primitive man made his own pipe himself, all types of pipes nowadays are manufactured by the performers, each performer only playing his own pipe.

That is an interesting observation, as, although the flute players nowadays buy their instruments in music stores, they do not have recitals or concerts with a new instrument until after months of accommodation.

The exact dimensions, the temperate tuning and the precision of the construction of the flutes due to the high production technology cannot be compared with the empirical measuring systems (the fingers, a piece of string or an old pipe) used by the pipe manufacturers.

Nowadays we have, in different environments and used differently, the *Boehm flute* as well as the pipe – its ancestor, in versions that are more modern.

As related instruments, the flute and the pipe still preserve general common characteristics:

- technical aspects having to do with the emission of sound,
- the astuteness, which remained a characteristic of the flute, even if it is more evolved,
- the harmonic sounds, characteristic for the performance on the simplest of pipes and on the flageolets used at the flute,
- the throaty drone common in certain folkloric genres performed with a pipe and the same method used lately in contemporary works for flute, and others.

The differences between the two instruments are due to the different environments in which they are used and, consequently, to the musical genres: *the pipe* is used in the old folkloric genres and *the flute*, in various types of music appreciated in the urban areas, such as the promenade music, or the classical, cultured music.

Considering the evolution in the technique of production and in the possibilities of the flute, all in all we can say that, along the centuries, the flute has undergone numerous changes and is now in a superior stage of evolution, attracting large audiences both from among the composers and professional performers and from among the average public attracted by its mysterious and magical sound.

(Translated from Romanian by Roxana Huza)

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