



Music Reviews: Rodolfo Halffter's Flute Pieces

Reviewed by GPFS Member Rebecca Olson

I find the music to be quite expressive, calming, and altogether lovely. Like a good book or movie, they get better with study, practice, and hearing! If you are looking for something a bit out of the ordinary, these works are definitely worth checking out.

As I was scanning through the 947 titles in our [Greater Portland Flute Society's library](#), I came across a composer I was unfamiliar with. There were two pieces listed by the composer, so I decided to be adventuresome and borrow the music to find out about them!

I recommend these pieces. You can check them out from the GPFS Music Library by clicking on the above link!

Background on the Composer

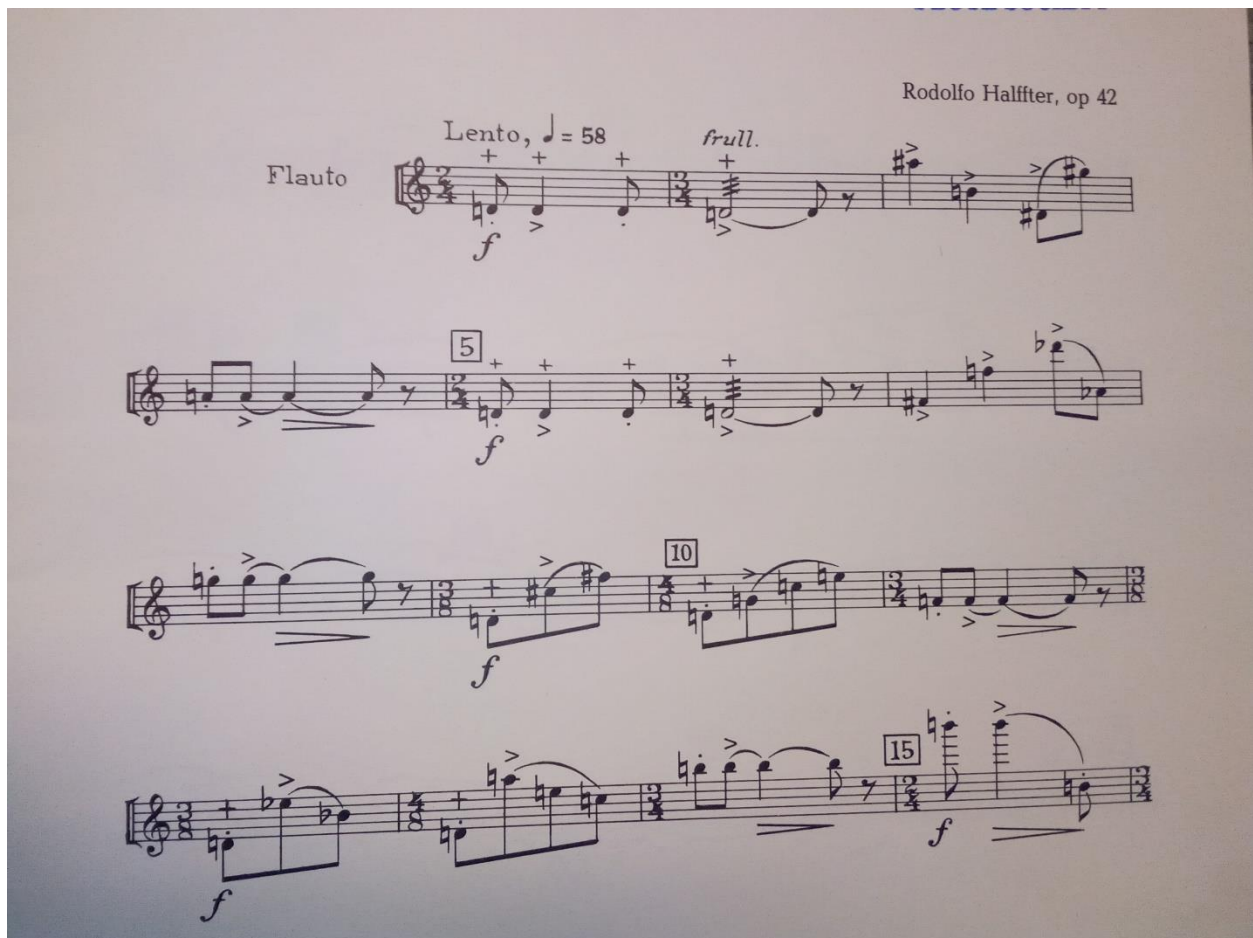


While waiting for the music to arrive in the mail, I did a bit of research on the composer, Rodolfo Halffter. I discovered that he was born in Madrid, Spain in 1900; but in 1939, after the Spanish Civil War was over, he moved to Mexico and became a Mexican citizen. (His mother was Spanish, but his father was German, hence his non-Spanish last name!) He was highly regarded in both countries as a composer and won awards from both nations. His brother (Ernesto) and Uncle (Cristobal) were also composers but not as well known. Rodolfo promoted modern music and is considered to have brought 12 tone music to Mexico. (12 tone music is based on the chromatic scale. There are certain rules that are generally applied, but Halffter didn't follow most of them!) In Spain, he was part of the Grupo de los Ocho, a group of 8 composers that explored new musical composition techniques. While in Mexico, he taught at the Conservatorio Nacional de Mexico from 1941-1970; formed the Nuestro Musica chamber ensemble; directed the Ediciones Mexicanas de Musica publishing company; and was an editor for the journal Nuestra Musica. Rodolfo Halffter died in Mexico City in 1987. Now, some information regarding Rodolfo Halffter's two pieces from the GPFS Library.

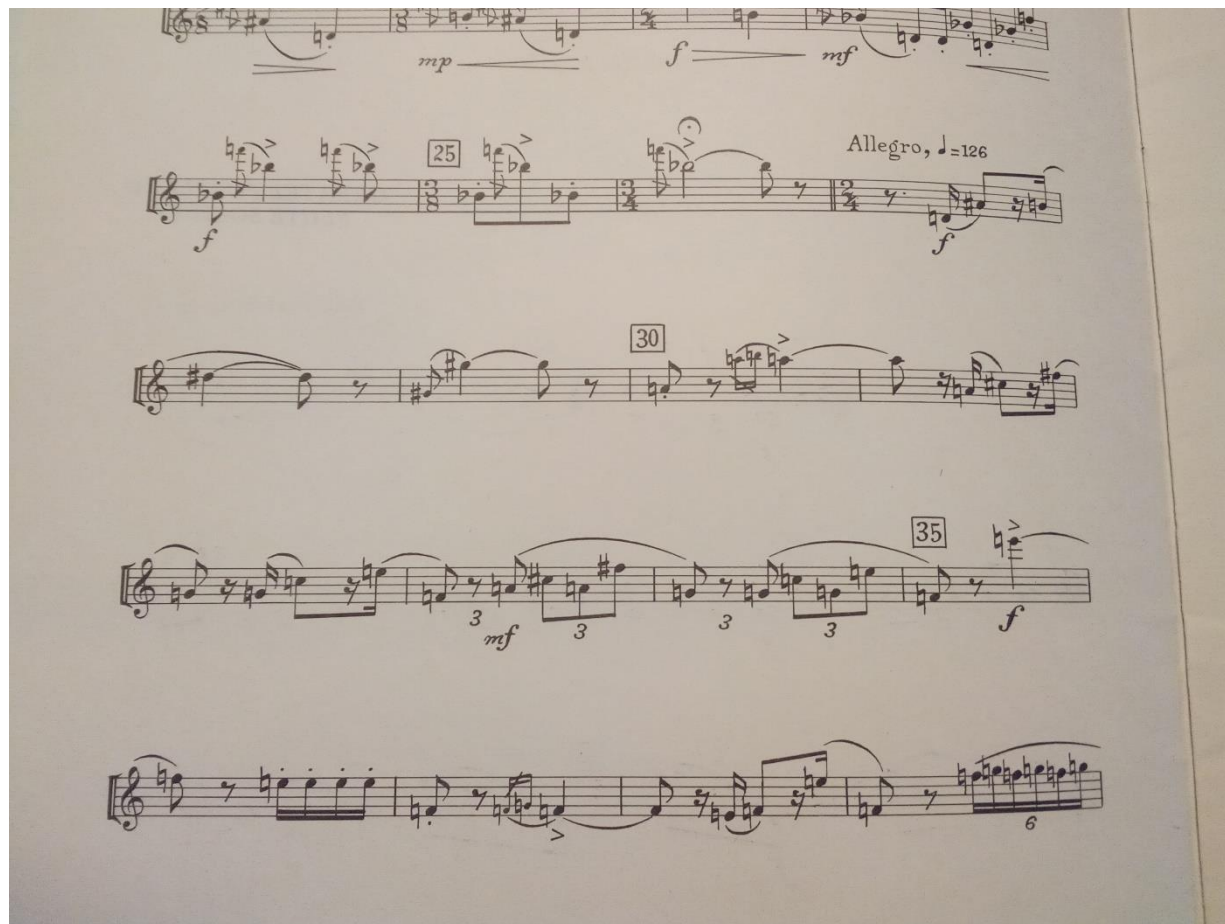
Review - *Epinicio* for Solo Flute, Op. 42

Epinicio for solo flute, op. 42, was written in 1979. “Epinicio” means Victory Song or Hymn of Triumph. (“Yay!” We survived COVID!) After a slow opening, perhaps lamenting the loss along the way to victory, the piece picks up tempo and sounds like it is marching on triumphantly. While there are brief moments of lyricism and slower tempos, it always returns to the triumphant march and ends victoriously. There are catchy rhythmic motifs, such as the groups of four repeated sixteenth notes. Some mild extended techniques are used, including key clicks, flutter tonguing, and multi-phonics. But for those of you who are afraid of multi-phonics (playing more than one note simultaneously), not to worry! Rodolfo gives you other options if you don’t want to venture into that realm! I must say, though, that the multi-phonics at the end of the piece are very beautiful! The piece is about 6 and a half minutes long. You can click on this link to listen to it - <https://youtu.be/Z7R5jmRKjNY>

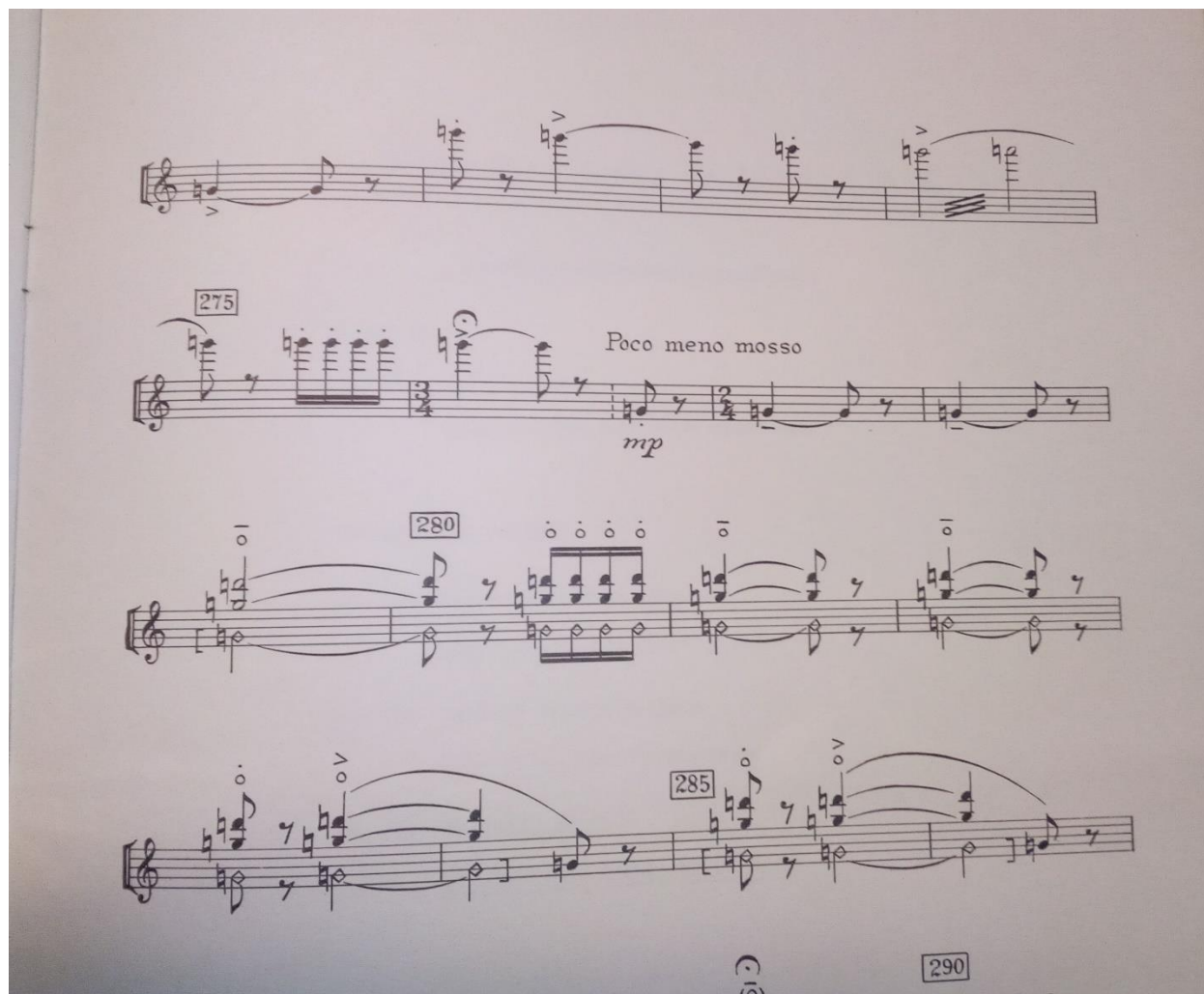
Picture – The beginning of *Epinicio*



Picture – Where the tempo picks up to a March tempo...



Picture – Showing some of the multiphonics...



Huesped de las Nieblas for Solo Flute and Piano, Op.44

Huesped de las Nieblas (Guests of the Mist) for flute and piano, op. 44, was written in 1981. (I think we Oregonians can relate to the mist ... especially at the Oregon Coast!) This work is made up of three continuous movements, mostly in 3/8 time. The beat is not fast, counted by the eighth note, and only varies slightly from movement to movement. As the title might suggest, it is mysterious and ethereal. The range is from our very highest C to our very lowest C, ending with a long low C. (*Epinicio* has about the same range, but only reaches our highest B.) Approximately 7 minutes in length, you can listen to the whole work here - <https://youtu.be/Z7R5jmRKjNY>

Both of these pieces use all 12 notes of the chromatic scale. (It was interesting to discover that the works use the same note sequence at the beginning.) There are many big interval jumps, often slurred. There are also many time signature changes. I find the music to be quite expressive, calming, and altogether lovely. Like a good book or movie, they get better with study, practice, and hearing! If you are looking for something a bit out of the ordinary, these works are definitely worth checking out.

**The following few pictures show the beginning of
each of the three movements.**

a Mario Lavista

GREATER PORTLAND
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...huésped de las nieblas...

rimas sin palabras

I

Rodolfo Halffter, op. 44

The musical score is written for Flute and Piano. It consists of two systems of music. The first system starts with a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 112$. The Flute part begins with a *p cantabile* dynamic and a *non cresc.* instruction. The Piano part starts with a *p* dynamic. Both parts include a *poco accel.* marking followed by a double bar line and a *a tempo* marking. The second system continues with similar dynamics and tempo changes. The Flute part has a *p cantabile* dynamic and a *non cresc.* instruction. The Piano part starts with a *p* dynamic. Both parts include a *poco accel.* marking followed by a double bar line and a *a tempo* marking. The score also includes a *8^a* marking and a *mf* dynamic in the Piano part.

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[Musical notation]

poco movendo // a tempo

f sub. *mf* *p* *attacca:*

poco movendo // a tempo

f *mf* *p* *attacca:*

II

p *non cresc.* *p*

mf *p*

non cresc. *p*

mf *p*

First system of musical notation. It consists of a vocal line on a single treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on two staves (treble and bass clefs). The vocal line begins with a melodic phrase marked *mf* and ends with a note marked *f*. The piano accompaniment features chords and arpeggiated figures, with dynamics *mf* and *f* indicated.

Second system of musical notation. The vocal line includes the instruction *cresc.* followed by *ff* and *rit.* with a fermata. The piano accompaniment has dynamics *f*, *più f*, and *ff*. The system concludes with the instruction *attacca:* on the right side.

III

Third system of musical notation, starting with a tempo marking $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 132$. The vocal line shows dynamics *mf*, *p*, *mf*, and *p*. The piano accompaniment starts with *p* and ends with *mf*. The system concludes with a fermata.

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