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Examining solo flautists' body movements from sight-reading to final performance

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Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) is a theoretical framework used to observe, notate, describe, and analyse human movement. The current study used LMA to investigate how the solo flautists' body movements might progress from sight-reading an unknown piece, through practise, to a "performance take". Thirteen flautists (seven university students, and six professionals) were asked to sight-read, practise, and perform up to five times either a standard notation or extended technique adaptation of an unknown solo flute piece. LMA was applied to the videoed performances to analyse weight shift, posture, and spatial pathway patterns. Analyses showed that body movements differed between flautists and within each rendition by the same flautist. Student-level flautists showed a bigger difference in the range, type, and patterns of body movements when learning/practising versus performing compared to professionals. The results indicated that body movements are used to signify new sections in the music, vary performance renditions, and prepare the flautist to transition from practising into "performance mode". The outcomes of this research are applicable to both teachers and performers to further inform their teaching, practice, and performer-audience communication.