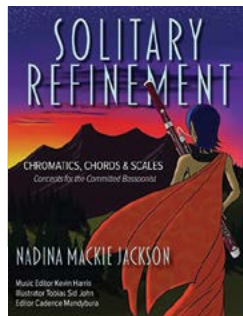




## BASSOON BOOK REVIEW

Review by **Christopher Millard** | Ottawa, Canada



**Nadina Mackie Jackson**  
***Solitary Refinement***  
***Chromatics, Chords & Scales: Concepts for the***  
***Committed Bassoonist***

(Kevin Harris, Music Editor; Tobias Sid John; Illustrator; Cadence Mandybura, Editor)

FriesenPress, 2020 (Updated edition, 2022)

Modern bassoonists are blessed with a wealth of method and etude books for both personal development and pedagogical use. We repeatedly turn to Milde, Jancourt, Orefici, Ozi, Bozza and many other sources, each offering a different balance between technical challenge and musical interpretation. In my own journey through life as an orchestral musician I've also come to rely on my own improvisational skills for the maintenance and development of technique. Inventing a melodic pattern and following it through multiple tonalities and ranges builds mental focus in addition to embouchure, fingering, and air control. While routines are essential, introducing new patterns every day will enhance our ability to unify mind and body. Invention and transposition are invaluable tools for enhancing our comprehension of keys, chords, and harmonies. An improvisational approach to technical exploration can be a vital component.

In her perfectly named book, *Solitary Refinement*, Nadina Mackie Jackson has created a deep resource for the modern bassoonist, offering hundreds of templates for daily practice and a wealth of entertaining challenges for all ages and abilities. Ultimately, engaging with this book will serve to hone the mind and facilitate a more skillful, flexible, and intuitive kind of technique. While *Solitary Refinement* contains in-depth explorations of familiar scale and arpeggio exercises, it also evolves into something much richer: a 400-page compendium of logically reordered melodic patterns and combinations. From three-and-a-half-octave range chromatic exercises, it moves on to page upon page of challenging intervallic exercises, modal scales, and chromatically modulating arpeggios. Along the way, the author includes guidance on articulation, tone production, embouchure, and intonation skills with concisely written comments both wise and welcome in their clarity.

The author, a distinguished orchestral and solo player, is well known for her numerous recordings of Vivaldi, Corrette, Hummel, and Boismortier as well as numerous CDs featuring commissioned works by the likes of her fellow Canadian, Mathieu Lussier. *Solitary*

*Refinement* clearly demonstrates how she has maintained her extraordinary technique for many decades.

For me personally, the primary gift of this massive book is its inclusion of over 200 pages of superbly organized diatonic triad and seventh studies presented in a multiplicity of inversions and chromatic alterations. They are a wonderful resource. You can open any page and play endlessly interesting and ever-evolving patterns, exploring the full range of the modern bassoon. It's a really fun way to develop and maintain a balanced and thorough technique while keeping your reading skills at a high level. In my five decades of playing and teaching, I've never seen a collection so perfectly designed to make those lonely hours of maintenance practice more productive and enjoyable.

Since its publication I have kept a copy of *Solitary Refinement* front and centre on my practice stand. Ms. Jackson has created a kind of "bassoonist centered Pilates," a mind-body approach to developing and maintaining a responsive technique. I play a few pages every day and feel happy.



*Christopher Millard recently retired from his position as Principal Bassoon for Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra.*