**TIPS FOR FLUTE STUDENTS**

**(Things I’ve learned from my students and myself over the years.)**

***(by Helen Blackburn…Artist Teacher of Flute – WTAMU, Principal Flute – Dallas Opera Orchestra)***

FUNDAMENTALS are the SHORTCUT!! (Scales, arpeggios, tone, vibrato & articulation exercises, perfect posture, perfect hand position, relaxed embouchure, great breathing.) Spend time every day on fundamentals…*reward* yourself with pieces.

Practice in front of a mirror – constantly evaluate (& correct) your posture/body position, hand position and embouchure. (Look at **yourself** in the mirror...not the floor, wall or ceiling!)

PRACTICE SLOWLY to develop good habits and muscle memory.

PRACTICE **EVERY** DAY! A little bit every day is much better than a whole lot once or twice a week.

Always HAVE A PLAN for what you want to accomplish & how you’re going to go about it.

Always COUNT the rhythm before you play. Subdivision is the secret of life! (Tongue the subdivisions as an intermediate step to help w/subdivision.)

Practice what you aren’t good at YET.

Be “present” when practicing. (Just going through the motions is a total waste of time.)

Practice mentally.

Practice fingering without blowing.

Practice with the headjoint turned upside down.

Learn to play softly and loudly *correctly* (i.e. without letting tone & intonation suffer.)

Play long tones for a few minutes every day. (Be sure your ears are “ON”.)

Learn **all** of the trill fingerings. Trill exercises are fabulous technique builders. (Trevor Wye trill study – p. 73-74; Taffanel/Gaubert – EJ 17)

LISTEN to as many live performances as possible. (Flute, orchestral, other instruments, voice, etc.)

LISTEN to recordings. Start a CD library. (And LISTEN to them often!)

SING your pieces!

DANCE to your music!

Learn all 3 fingerings for A#/B-flat (Thumb B-flat, Lever, 1&1) and when & where to use them. (Be flexible…not stubborn! This will change your life!!)

Drop your jaw. (Try using a pencil eraser, wine cork cut in half, or a small piece of carrot to keep teeth apart.)

FIND A GREAT TEACHER that fits you and the way you play now. (Ask around…schedule a trial lesson.)

Learn to DOUBLE TONGUE as soon as possible. Start TODAY if you haven’t yet!

Play the PICCOLO!

Practice with a tuner to learn the tendencies of your instrument, but use your **ears** to **hear!!**  **“In tone” = “In tune”**

HAVE FUN!!! (If you’re not enjoying it, take a break & come back later…you’ll accomplish more!)

**COMMON PROBLEMS (& solutions)**

Thin, airy tone. (Move flute lower on chin, drop jaw, aim air down.)

Sharp, shrill tone. (Drop jaw and relax embouchure…esp. corners and upper lip.)

Wrong fingerings:

LH #1 *must* be up for middle D and E-flat and high B-flat.

F# *must* be fingered with RH #3 (ring finger)….**not** #2 (middle finger)

 (you *may* finger **high** F# w/middle finger.)

 RH pinky should be down for E natural in the low & middle registers.

“Monstrous” hand position. (Curve fingers & depress the keys with the *pad* of the finger.)

“Rockette” fingers. (Keep fingers low & close to the keys.)

“Nanny goat” vibrato. (Pulse in 8th notes, triplets, 16ths…ask your teacher for more vibrato exercises.)

**RECOMMENDED FLUTE ARTISTS**

(available on CDs, Amazon, iTunes, etc…this is just the beginning…

there are many fine performers not listed here.)

 **Emmanuel Pahud** (International artist, Principal Flute – Berlin Philharmonic)

 **Jacques Zoon** (International artist, former Principal Flute – Boston Symphony)

 **Paula Robison** (Solo artist)

 **Timothy Hutchins** (Principal Flute – Montreal Symphony)

 **Jeanne Baxtresser** (former Principal Flute – NY Philharmonic)

 **Goran Marcusson** (Fabulous Swedish flutist)

 **Claire Southworth** (Wonderful English flutist)

 **Marina Piccinini** (Solo artist, Professor of flute – Peabody Conservatory)

 **Mathieu Dufour** (Principal Flute – Chicago Symphony)

 **Amy Porter** (Professor of Flute – University of Michigan)

 **Manuela Weisler** (International artist)

 **Alexa Still** (Professor of flute – Oberlin Conservatory)

 **Kirsten Spratt** (another wonderful English flutist)

 **Julius Baker** (former Principal Flute – NY Philharmonic…before Baxtresser)

 **Barthold Kuijken** (Historical flute specialist)

 **Janet See** (Historical flute specialist)