

FLUTE CARE & MAINTENANCE ***A Few Simple Steps to Avoid Costly Repairs***



Assembling the Flute

Never hold the key work of a flute when assembling it. Always try to hold the flute with one hand wrapped around the barrel (where the flute brand name is), and the other around the lower end of the foot joint, avoiding all contact with the keys. Take care that you do not get the instrument out of its case by pulling on the key work.

Insert the headjoint into the barrel using a careful 'twist and punch' action, making sure that the body and headjoint are held in a straight line to avoid 'rounding off' the tenon. Then, holding the body of the flute around the barrel, put the footjoint into the palm of the other hand with the thumb on the E flat key. Do not press on the C, C# or D# touchpieces as they have no support and will bend. Holding the parts in a straight line with each other, 'push and twist' as you did with the headjoint. If you don't put them together in a straight line you will 'round off' the tenon and your footjoint will become loose.

We often see flutes in for repair that simply wouldn't need repair if the player had assembled it correctly. The headjoint is much more difficult to damage, but care must be taken to avoid grabbing the lip-plate.

The headcork assembly seals the headjoint as well as allowing a degree of flexibility in tuning. To check its position, carefully insert the end of your cleaning rod, the end you don't put the cloth through, as far as it will go. The groove on the cleaning rod should be in the centre of embouchure hole. If it is not then the assembly needs to be moved, either by your teacher or repairer. If the head cork

moves freely, then the cork needs replacing immediately, as air will escape at the walls of the headjoint.

Buy a Flute Stand

- Never lay a flute down on a chair or a bed. I would hate to count the amount of flutes that we have had to repair that have been bent almost at right angles because the flute was left on a bed. Flute stands are quite cheap and can save a lot on repairs.

Keep your Flute Clean

Never use an impregnated silver cleaning cloth. Although these cloths will make your flute sparkle, they have a very fine dust in them that is attracted to moisture, i.e. the oil in the key mechanism, and the moisture on the pads after you have finished playing which turns everything into a gooey mess. These cloths are best left for the silver teapots and cutlery.

The best cloths to use are made by the Selvyt or Altus companies. These are simply a very lightly abrasive cloth that removes any dirty marks on the flute although they sometimes require a little moisture to remove some marks. These cloths will not remove Black tarnish. This should be removed when the flute is completely disassembled by a competent repairer.

Every time you play your flute, condensation forms inside, failure to remove it will cause the pads to absorb moisture and swell. Swollen pads will not cover the holes and will

stop the flute from playing well. The inside of the flute should be kept clean with a gauze cloth or a man size handkerchief and a wooden cleaning rod, as metal rods can poke through the cloth and scratch the inside of the instrument. Push a corner of the cloth through the slit in the rod. Wrap the cloth over the tip and around the rod. Now push the rod all the way through your flute until all the moisture has been absorbed, taking care not to press or squeeze the mechanism.

Never use cigarette papers to clean sticky pads. They are surprisingly abrasive and will tear the pad skins, resulting in a very expensive repair job.

Quite often the cleaning process, apart from being of therapeutic value after a hectic rehearsal, can alert the player to any problems waiting to happen i.e. corks missing or falling off, dents or torn pads.

Always make sure that the tenons (the parts that connect the joints) of the flute are very clean, if they are dirty excessive pressure might be needed to put the joints together resulting in damage to the tenons or bent keys. If the joints are too tight (or loose), it is usually a simple process to fit them correctly. Never grease or oil the joints, it attracts grit and dust and may damage them.

Store Rods and Cloths in Case Cover

Try not to leave cleaning cloths and rods inside the flute body as this will keep the inside of the flute moist and cause the pads to go mouldy. Case covers are a good place to keep cleaning cloths.

Oiling the mechanism

Never oil the mechanism on your flute. The oils used are of a special type and it needs to be applied in the correct amounts in the correct places. Over-oiling and incorrect oiling can cause disasters.

Regular Servicing

Regular maintenance is highly recommended. It keeps the flute in good playing order and stops minor problems becoming major ones. How often a service is needed depends on how much use the flute gets, but as a rule of thumb it should be checked over once a year. If a flute has had a good service record it holds its value better.

Insurance

We recommend that all musical instruments are insured. Many instruments will be covered by a standard household contents policy but always make sure there is adequate cover for the flute at school or on trips. Always insure your flute for the replacement as new value, not its current second hand value. We are happy to advise upon, or arrange, comprehensive insurance if required.