

THE FLUTE STREET JOURNAL

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Upcoming Events

FIELD TRIP!

MARCH 21, 2020

11:00

Peter and the Wolf
with the
Louisville Orchestra
and

Squallis Puppeteers

Brown Theater
315 W. Broadway
Louisville, 40202

SPRING ENSEMBLE CONCERT

APRIL 18, 2020

10:00-12:00

DOUGLASS LOOP
FARMERS MARKET
2005 Douglass Boulevard
Louisville, 40205

SPRING SOLO RECITAL

MAY 3, 2020

3:00

Douglass Boulevard
Christian Church
2005 Douglass Boulevard
Louisville, 40205



FEATURED FLUTIST

HEIDI CHANG

Heidi is in 7th grade and plays in the band at Highland Hills Middle School. She also is a member of the Floyd Central Color Guard. When she isn't playing flute, she enjoys drawing, painting and visual arts.

FLUTE SHOPPING 101

Few occasions are more exciting for a flutist than buying a new instrument. But once the shopping begins in earnest, the sheer volume of information may become overwhelming. There are so many good makes and models available. And so many options to consider. What is most important? How does one choose? There is a flute for every budget. So, decide how much you are willing to spend and then look for the flute that offers the biggest bang for the buck. Be sure to try several flutes. The one with all the bells and whistles may not be the one that feels and sounds best. So, here are a few aspects of flute design and construction to consider.

Solid Silver Head Joint, Body, Keys Most beginner student model flutes are made from a base metal like brass and plated with a less expensive nickel or nickel silver. Higher grades of silver contribute to a more brilliant sound. The more silver content the better. Some flutes will be entirely silver-plated. Some will come with solid silver head and silver-plated body. Others will be completely solid silver. This is the single most important factor in determining the instrument's quality of sound. While most modern flutists play silver, fine flutes are also available in wood, gold and platinum!

Open Holes On open holed flutes, five of the keys have holes that must be covered by the finger when the key is pressed. On intermediate flutes, the holes come with plugs. We take out one plug at a time as we learn to cover the holes. Most professionals (but not all) play open hole flutes. The effect of open holes on the sound of the flute is debatable. But, the open holes do allow for the execution of some more advanced techniques that cannot be performed on a closed hole flute.

Offset G The offset G key (versus in line G) is a mechanism that is more ergonomically designed to fit the shape of the left hand. The left hand ring finger plays the G key and the offset key allows the ring finger to more easily reach. Ironically, for many years the offset G was associated with beginner flutes. Apparently, it was only recently that makers and players realized the ring finger is still shorter than the middle finger even in adults! This option usually does not add to the cost of the flute, though technicians will tell you that it adds to the complexity of the mechanism and therefore may make maintenance more complicated.

B Foot Joint Foot joints (feet joints?) are commonly available to C or B. The B foot joint extends the lower range of the flute by one half step. But more importantly, the added length of the tube affects the quality of sound in the higher register. Whether the effect is positive or negative is open to discussion. Nonetheless, most professionals play flutes with a B foot joint.

Split E Mechanism The split E mechanism corrects an acoustical shortcoming of the traditional key design. On flutes without the split E, the G key and the next key down the tube are joined. The split E allows the two keys to function independently. When fingering high E on the flute without split E, both keys are open. With split E, only one of the two keys is open making the pitch and tone quality easier to control. Some flute makers include Split E mechanism as standard with no additional cost while others treat it as an upgrade.

C Sharp Trill Key C sharp trill keys are rarely available on models other than professional flutes. Where it is available, it makes the B to C sharp trill much more easily played. In tandem with the first trill key, it also offers a far superior high G to A trill. There are other uses for the C sharp trill key, but these alone are worth the additional cost.

Brands and models There are too many brands and models to list here. And since I am not a representative for any particular maker, I will not endorse one. However, quality instruments are



Get your tickets for Peter and the Wolf at louisvilleorchestra.org/concert/family-peter-the-wolf/
We will meet at the Brown Theatre on March 21st.

Flute Shopping (continued)

available through a many local and online specialty retailers. If you are considering a flute, check to see if that same make and/or model is available from any of the shops listed below. If the make seems to be available only on Amazon or e-bay, be suspicious. There are many poor quality instruments available at rock bottom prices. If you buy one of these very inexpensive instruments, consider it disposable. When very cheap instruments need repair or maintenance, most technicians will not attempt to work on them. They have difficulty working with easily broken parts and often cannot locate replacement parts.

Local vs. Online Retailer One additional consideration is whether to buy local or online. While an online purchase may result in a lower purchase price, it is difficult to place a value on establishing a relationship with your local dealer. If/when your instrument needs repair or maintenance, will you be comfortable going to the local dealer or will you have to ship the flute?

A flute upgrade can be expensive and there is a lot to consider. Ask questions. Seek advice from a trusted teacher or someone knowledgeable about buying musical instruments. Enjoy trying out several new instruments. Find the one that makes you play like a virtuoso.

Some web sites: Flutistry.com; Fluteworld.com; wwbw.com; flute4u.com; flutes4sale.com