

# Nighteagle Flute Company

America's First Woodwind

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## **IMPORTANT - PLEASE READ**

Thank you for selecting Nighteagle flutes. Please examine the flute(s) for any possible damage in shipping or while on display. In addition, examine the reed block (Bird) and make certain it is tied securely to the flute body and is sitting square to the front air vent way. Complete information regarding the reed block can be found in the instructional sheet. **If you purchased a flute with a carving on the end (Eagle, Turtle, Wolf, etc.) it is very, very fragile, please treat it accordingly. Familiarize yourself with the flute by reading the enclosed copy of the instructions. If you have any questions please call and we will be happy to help. Please treat this instrument as you would an infant and in return the flute will reward you with a lifetime of joy.**

### **REGARDING TUNINGS:**

We are frequently asked what tunings our flutes are in. All are in the Pentatonic scale (Five note). Through experience one can produce many more notes. We try to maintain the following but on occasion we experiment with different tunings and **sometimes a flute wants to be tuned differently**. The following represents our standard tunings as of 02/10/97:

**Treble - Models 100 & 100C : G-A#-C-D-(E)-F-G**

**Bass - Models 200 & 200C : E-G-A-B-(C#)D-E**

**Deep Bass - Models 300 & 300C : D-F-G-A-(A#)-C-D**

**Contrabass - Models 400 & 400C : C-D#-F-G-(G#)A#-C**

The note shown in parenthesis indicates the fourth note hole from bottom of flute (opposite the end you blow through) and is accurate when top two note holes are closed and the balance are open. The last two notes indicated are accurate when the fourth note hole is kept closed. As is indicated in the instructional sheet, the fourth note hole is normally used in conjunction with other notes for tonal variations only and is not part of the standard scale.

NIGHTEAGLE FLUTE COMPANY  
NATIVE AMERICAN COURTING FLUTES  
*America's First Woodwind*

The end-blown flute is a very primitive instrument. Evidence indicates they have been in use around 6,000 years. According to legend, the American Indian flute was referred to as a courting flute as men would make one when they fell in love. Its original use was as a courting instrument. Young men would play it within earshot of the woman they loved but out of her visual sight. Eventually they would allow the woman to see them playing the flute. If the woman was moved by this or otherwise liked the man she would let him know. One of the oldest Native American Legends is of **KOKOPELLI**, the hump-backed flute player. This legend appears throughout the Americas. His music brought fertility and abundance to the people. Kokopelli played his magic flute to remind us that love is magic.

Our flutes are handcrafted from prime grade Aromatic Cedar, Cherry, Black Walnut, River Cane and a variety of other domestic woods. The woods we use are touted by professionals to possess the finest acoustics for flute making. Other woods are available upon request.

Numerous techniques are utilized in the making of our flutes to provide you with an **heirloom musical instrument** that can be passed down through generations. The interior of the flute has been sealed to protect the instrument from the player's breath moisture. The exterior of the flute has a hand-rubbed oil finish and is polished with a combination of carnauba and beeswax. Our flutes are guaranteed against any inherent defects. We will repair or replace any flute **that has been properly cared for** that may develop a problem. **DO NOT** attempt to modify or repair the flute, as this will void any warranty. The carved versions are not guaranteed against breakage. We will also attempt to repair, at the customer's expense, any flute that has been accidentally damaged.

Our flutes are referred to as six hole. Most Indian flutes have either five or six. Our flutes have six holes to provide you with a greater combination of available notes. The scale played by the flutes is the pentatonic scale. This scale predates the European eight- note (diatonic) scale. Many countries such as East India also use the pentatonic scale and have for centuries. Currently our flutes are available in four tonal ranges: **Treble, Bass, Deep Bass, and Contrabass.**

The small wooden block sitting above the flute body is called a reed block or "bird," and is made from any one of several woods such as: cedar, cherry, and black walnut. Any thin leather strap is suitable to tie the reed block to the flute body. **The reed block must be kept securely tied to the flute body.** If it becomes loose it should be retied tight. A loose reed block will not allow the flute to play properly. **It should be aligned so that it sits flush with the mouth end side of the square hole furthest from the mouth end (the only visible opening - one hole is hidden under the flat bottom of the reed block.)** When you first receive your flute examine the reed block to familiarize yourself with the appearance of this. Do not tie more than one knot in the leather strap as this will not keep the reed block tighter nor does it stop it from becoming loose. It does make it difficult to retie the reed block tightly if this becomes necessary. When tightening the leather strap turn the flute so you are looking at the bottom of the flute body and support the flute using your underarm. Then steadily pull the ends of the leather tight.

Music was not traditionally written for the flutes as they were meant to be played from the heart not from the head. As soon as a few rudimentary steps are learned the player should allow their heart to flow with and through the flute. The music may sound a little less than perfect at first but the more you allow your inner spirit to come through the more beautiful the sound will be.

The flute is most easily played while standing in somewhat of a looking down stance with your arms relaxed at your sides. The flute is pointing down - *towards our Earth Mother -- not up*. You will want to learn to breathe from your diaphragm not in shallow breaths. This may take practice. The **flute requires little air**. Trebles require more air flow than the Bass, Deep Bass or Contrabass. Higher notes (top notes) require more air than the flute's lower notes (bottom notes).

If the flute whistles or squeaks you are not covering the holes properly or may be blowing too hard or too soft. For the sake of this instructional paper we will number the keyholes starting with the bottom (foot) of the flute, the end with the largest opening. The first hole is number one and they progress up the flute to number six.

To play the scale you simply cover all the holes using the pads of your fingers not the tips. **VERY IMPORTANT**: Try to keep the first knuckle on your playing fingers as flat as possible, no curve. This requires the most practice and may take a while to learn. If any holes are partly covered or if you blow too soft or too hard, the flute may make an unpleasant whistle sound. If this happens just realign your fingers and experiment with the amount of air you blow into the flute. Work on mastering the note played with all holes covered. Don't be tempted to jump around on the keys. After you master the low note, lift your finger from the bottom hole (#1) and play that note. Again, after mastering that note, lift your finger from the second hole keeping your finger off of #1 also. Then, remove your finger from #3 keeping #'s 1 & 2 open also.

Work with these notes for a while going up and down in sequence. Then lift your finger from hole #5 keeping your fingers off of #'s 1, 2, & 3 also. Hole #4 is used for various tonal changes when used in combination with other notes. It is not part of your flute's pentatonic scale. Keep it closed when playing the scale. You will learn how to use this key hole in conjunction with other openings on your own as experience dictates. After you master key hole #5 progress to #6. The rule of thumb is that anytime you lift a finger all fingers below it should also be raised. This rule does not apply to key hole #4. It is only raised when you wish to play it with another note to change the tone. There is no such thing as a mistake. If a fingering combination sounds good then play it. As you progress up the scale to holes #5 & 6 you will increase the airflow as you go back down the scale you will decrease the airflow, especially when you close off the bottom note hole. After mastering playing the scale, you will want to spend some time working with your breathing. Practice taking deep breaths. This will develop your diaphragm and allow you to play much more intricate pieces. Also, don't feel that you must always blow from one note to the next. Practice starting and stopping notes, tonguing (like spitting a hair from the tip of your tongue.) At first allow a few seconds to elapse between each note. As you improve your tonguing technique try to go faster till you are pleased with your ability. Tonguing each note will conserve air and allow you to play longer between breaths.

**Caring for your flute:** Keep it away from moisture, extreme heat, cold and dogs and extended direct sunlight. Once or twice a year remove the leather thong and rub the flute and reed block with a high grade natural tone wood oil. Minwax or Watco natural tone oils are recommended Allow to set for five or ten minutes then wipe well and reassemble after completely dry. Be certain to keep bridge area clear of any finish as build up over the years will reduce air flow.

Wooden instruments are sensitive to temperatures and humidity extremes. You may notice a slight change in sound should either of these situations be experienced. If the flute is played for an extended period of time it may be necessary to shake accumulated moisture out of the end of the flute (the end you blow into). Do not disassemble the flute in an attempt to dry it out faster as this may cause the reed block and the flute body to dry out of shape (warp). Pipe cleaners put in the mouthpiece end of the flute after playing will help dry it out and protect it from "little critters" making a home in it. If you use pipe cleaners try to wipe any fuzz off of them before inserting them into your flute.

As soon as possible, after first receiving your flute, spend a while playing it, preferably, in a quiet earth surrounding. This allows you to bond with your flute and to hear subtle changes. As these instruments are primitive and do not have a "spit valve" they will fill with saliva and subsequently require a break from playing. Should you "play the voice out of the flute", you risk damage to the flute by saturating it with your moisture. If you enjoy playing for extended periods of time we advise the purchase of an additional flute. Try to limit the amount of moisture entering the flute.

Should you have any questions or wish additional information regarding other flute styles, stands, bags or other products please feel free to contact us @ P.O. Box 1110, Mancos, CO 81328 or call @ (970) 533-1139. E-mail: [info@davidnigteagle.com](mailto:info@davidnigteagle.com). Additional reading: [TRAILHEAD OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN COURTING FLUTE ISBN 0-9672383-0-7](#) and for the more advanced [THE ART OF THE NATIVE AMERICAN FLUTE - ISBN 0-964-78860-8](#). I do not agree with certain things in both books. Until Nigteagle Flute Company produces a complete instructional manual they are the best available. Both books are available through Four Winds Trading Company at 1-800-494-8984. Tell them David sent you.

**Enjoy playing!!**

**David Nigteagle**

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