

Flute Quotes

"From the start, when it was the instrument of the wood-god Pan, the flute has been associated with pure (some might say impure) energy. Its sound releases something naturally untamed, as if a squirrel were let loose in a church."

--Seamus Heaney

"The only woman awake is the woman who has heard the flute."

-- Rumi

"Playing a flute is like writing a book. You're telling what's in your heart...It's easier to play if it's right from your heart. You get the tone, and the fingers will follow."

-- Eddie Cahill

"Never give a flute player a screwdriver."

--anonymous

"You know that I become quite powerless whenever I am obliged to write for an instrument which I cannot bear."

--Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, in a letter to his father, after being commissioned to compose flute music

"When Hari puts the flute to his lips
The still are moved and the moving stilled;
Winds die, the river Yamuna stops,
crows fall silent and the deer fall senseless;
bird and beast are stunned by his splendour.
A cow, unmoving,
dangles a grassblade from her teeth;
Even the wise can no longer
hold firm their own minds."--Sur Das

"SERIOUS ACCIDENT AT THE VINTNERS' HALL. On Tuesday night an accident occurred at the Vintners'-hall, Thames-street, to a gentleman of the name of Ireland, brother of one of the liverymen of the company, which caused great alarm to those who were assembled at dinner on the occasion of the celebration of the Lord Mayor's-day. He entered the hall a little before 9 o'clock, and took his seat nearly under the orchestra. He had not been there above ten minutes when the flute belonging to one of the musicians dropped from the orchestra on his head. The blood immediately flowed most profusely, and he was for a moment stunned. Mr. May, a surgeon of the neighbourhood, was

instantly called in, who found that he had received a slanting wound on the scalp. The wound was dressed, after which Mr. Ireland was conveyed home in a coach. The stewards promptly inquired how the accident originated, when it was ascertained that while the musician was adjusting the leaves of his music-book the flute slipped out of his hand. The man was perfectly sober. It was stated by Mr. May that he did not anticipate any fatal result."

--unnamed reporter, in The [London] Times, 12 November 1841, page 7
Good thing it wasn't a patent-head Rudall...

"And all the people went up after him, and the people were playing on flutes and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth shook at their noise."

--anonymous scribe, in First Kings 1:40

"King Frederick of Prussia thought that it was 'unkingly' of his son to play the flute and read poetry, so he did everything he could think of to prevent him from doing so, including executing the prince's best friend in his presence. After Old Fred's death, Young Fred continued to play the flute, with composer Johann Quantz as his teacher and flutemaker. His people considered him such a success as king--engaging in such artsy endeavors as starting the Berlin opera--that he became known as King Frederick The Great."

--Russell Scott, paraphrasing historian Robert Scott and writer Kathy Russell

"The fluteplayer puts breath into a flute, and who makes the music? Not the flute. The Fluteplayer!"

--Rumi

"Every music lover is familiar with the sound of the flute, which seems to possess a magic power that emanates from its innermost being. It speaks, it moves, it entrances, almost as if it had been revealed to us on the glorious day of creation. And yet it is genuine human expression, an element of language, the image of a dream continually repeated."

--Meylan, in *The Flute*, p.9

"Q: How many classical flutists does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Only one, but she'll pay \$5,000 for a gold-plated ladder."

--Kathy Russell

"Q: How many Irish flutists does it take to change a light bulb?

A: None. There's nothing wrong with the old one that a little superglue, almond oil, and Guinness won't fix."

--me

"The flute is the only wind instrument which has to any appreciable extent been adopted by women. Still, in modern times at any rate, flute-playing has never found many votaries amongst women, and none have ever attained the very first rank as performers. The mere man might attribute this to the fact that one cannot flute and talk at the same time, or possibly it may be, as a fair flautiste is recently reported to have said, because kissing is fatal to flute-playing: in such a contest it is, of course, the flute that goes under. In early Victorian times, it was considered most unlady-like and vulgar. Yet the instrument is extremely well suited for ladies. The attitude when playing is graceful and healthy, affording ample opportunity for the display of a beautiful arm; it is a gentle instrument requiring but little physical exertion. Moreover, women possess more delicacy of touch and deftness of finger than men, and their lips are softer and more flexible."

--Fitzgibbon, in *The Flute*

"Flute music is love music from the heart. It must not stop, lest the pulsing of the heart be broken."

--Judith Redman Robbins, in *Coyote Woman*

"The flute calms the spirit and penetrates the ear with such sweet sound that it brings peace and an abeyance of motion unto the soul. And should some sorrow dwell in the mind, a care that wine cannot make us forget and banish, it lulls us to sleep and is balm on account of its sweet and gracious sound, provided that it adheres to modest music and does not excite and inflame the soul with too many notes and passages, which would weaken it and could easily come to grief on account of the wine."

--Meylan, in *The Flute*, p.11

"A flute with no holes is not a flute, and a doughnut with no hole is a Danish"

--Chevy Chase

"When Krishna plays the flute the whole world is filled with love. Rivers stop, stones are illumined, lotus flowers tremble; gazelles, cows, and birds are entranced; demons and ascetics enchanted."

--unnamed scribe, in the *Bhagavata-Purana*

"Street Musician: 'What is the difference between a flutist and a flautist?'

Famous Musician: 'I don't know.'

Street Musician: '\$50 a week, man.'"

--unnamed writer, in *New York Stories* (paraphrased)

"Thy music causeth my soul to dance; in the murmur of the wind I hear Thy flute; the waves of the sea keep the rhythm of my dancing steps. Through the whole of nature I hear Thy music played, my Beloved; my soul while dancing speaketh of its joy in song."

--Hazrat Inayat Khan (a Sufi master)

"IT IS ONLY A TOOL.
A TOOL FORGED FROM
THE METALS OF THE
EARTH. FROM SILVER.
FROM GOLD. FASHIONED
BY HISTORY. CRAFTED
BY MASTERS. IT IS A TOOL
THAT SHAPES MOOD AND
CULTURE. IT ENRAPTURES.
SOMETIMES DISTRACTS.
EXHILARATES AND SOOTHES.
SINGS AND WEEPS. NOW
TAKE UP THE TOOL
AND SCULPT MUSIC
FROM THE AIR."

--unnamed [Muramatsu](#) employee, on the World Wide Web

"The flautist poured his breath in quick puffs of jollity."

--Nathaniel Hawthorne, in *The Marble Faun* (first use of "flautist" to mean "flutist")

"The flute player played songs of the forest
and songs of the sky,
songs of the meadows
and songs of the sea.
all day and all night."

--Robyn Eversole, in *The Flute Player*

"And if there come the singers and the dancers and the flute players--buy of their gifts also. For they too are gatherers of fruit and frankincense, and that which they bring, though fashioned of dreams, is raiment and food for your soul."

--Kahlil Gibran, in *The Prophet*

The poem below, entitled "Music Lesson", should be accompanied by a picture of a man carrying a grand piano on his back up a steep incline of stairs.

"I really should have studied flute,
Harmonica, or chimes.
A clarinet is nice and light;
A fiddle would be fine.
But I had to take piano,
And my teacher is a brute.
He lives up seven flights of stairs.
(I wish I played the flute.)"

--Shel Silverstein, in *Falling Up*

"Of all the wind instruments, the flute can do the most things the most easily. A fine performer on a flute can dash up a scale and down again so quickly that our ears cannot separate the notes. A flutist can skip and jump from note to note so lightly that the music reminds us of the quickness of a rabbit or of a gazelle. He can swoop and turn and trill the notes until we think that we are hearing a bird. Musicians say that a flute can do anything!"

--Jean Craig, in *The Woodwinds*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications, 1963.

"In certain Anatolian communities, to this day, string players and performers on pipes and percussion live in apartheid or ritual enmity. The blown reed, immediate neighbour to the wind, the pipes of Pan, seems to mark the precarious transgression from nature to culture. In their range, we can hear the whistling of birds, the yelp of the fox.

They can belong to the solitary, the illiterate and those who cohabit, in an almost animal state, with their flocks. The shrill of the pipe, mimed by our piccolo, the tremolo of the flute, can suggest or echo a whiteness as of madness. In fatal contrast, Apollo's lyre is the instrument of reasoned harmony, of Pythagorean-mathematical relations and intervals. It is crafted out of slain animals - the shell of the tortoise, the gut of the cat. The lyre induces music towards speech, towards the textuality of the lyric, of epic recitation. The pipes of Marsyas are the 'woodnotes wild' of ways of life a shade less than and prior to man; the Apollonian lyre is that of a thoroughly humanised, divinely inspired species. Between them ensues a homicidal rivalry."

--George Steiner, *Errata*

Regarding a sign in a show window reading, "Flute for sale. Easily concealed":

"Why, although this seems at first sight so strange, does it also seem so appropriate? It is because the flute is terrible, mysterious and primitive... the marvellous thin pipings of the flute are a link with older things - with a fearful ecstasy of melody in the first dawn. . . Of all musicians, flautists are most obviously the ones who know something we don't know... The goat eyed, the devious flute player moves softly among us, none can see the flute he carries. He walks past unsuspecting doormen, into public assemblies, into restaurants and parties - into churches, even. He nods and smiles, he talks to other people, to us. He does not reveal that he is a flute-player. For there have been rumours - a pubful of people in Croydon discovered in a trance, from which they have never emerged, a bus that simply disappeared across fields, a whispered story of platelayers found sobbing in a tunnel, of thin high music disappearing into a cave, of men discovered with a look in their eyes like that of Mole in *The Wind in the Willows*, after he saw Pan..."

--Paul Jennings, "Flautists Flaunt Afflatus"

Play from the heart; the flute is a heart song...
like a sweet prayer, and it will teach you as well
as you teach yourself.

--Mato Wambli

"The heart of the cedar... the center of it, or the pit, is red and soft. That has to be removed by the flute maker. And so then the flute player, of course, has the obligation to restore that... to replace that with his own heart."

--Kevin Locke

"The flute resists your breath in a necessary way; the whistle offers no resistance and the breathing is very different. But, gradually, you start to get a buzz. You learn to 'fill' the flute. You feel the flute vibrate when it is warm, and the little coin-columns of air stacked beneath your fingertips dance up and down like mercury thermometers, all registering different bouncy volatiles of temperature. The sound begins to carry, to lift and it's surprising how a flute carries: when you leave the session for the bog or loo or bathroom, it's the voice you hear above the box and fiddles and pipes and guitars."

--Ciaran Carson, *Last Night's Fun*

Praise him with the strings and flute...

--Psalm 150

When in doubt, trill.

--John Phillip Sousa's advice to piccolo players (contributed by Lee Davis)

"Blasen ist nicht floeten, ihr muesst die Finger bewegen"

Blowing is not playing the flute, you must move the fingers

--Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre

Translation by Steven Haaser

His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all who play the harp and flute.

--Genesis 4:21