



# That first moment!

## Niall O’Riordan *looks at ways to recapture a child-like excitement and joy every time you open your flute case*

**Y**ou unzip the case cover, slide apart the clasps, open the case and there it is, your flute. How do you feel right at that moment? What’s the first thing that goes through your mind? Does this everyday experience provoke a sense of expansion or contraction?

The dynamics of this moment could be a crucial point in a time you take for granted every day. “How you start your day is how you live your day; how you live your day is how you live your life,” says Louise Hay, the pioneering American motivational speaker, in reference to becoming aware of what you first think about when you wake in the morning. I love the simplicity of this idea. Most people begin their day with negativity, thinking “oh no, another day and I’ve got to get up.” Equally many of us begin our practice with a negative tone until it becomes so habitual we don’t even notice. Take a moment to think, perhaps even go to your flute: how do you feel in that moment when you open the case and look at the instrument? Is it a feeling of happiness, despair, joy or even

excitement? Do you think “oh yes! I love playing the flute and I can’t wait to get started.” Perhaps a positive feeling like this seems absurd to you? Of course, it changes from day-to-day, but I do believe we also have a habitual reaction. Is practising a chore or a pleasure?

When I was in Switzerland last year, at the end of the morning masterclass Sir James Galway began doodling around playing scales and little preludes. This was a usual occurrence — every spare moment he got he played. In this instance we all lingered, watching and listening (who wouldn’t?). When he came to the cadence and finished, he glanced out looking a little surprised to see so many of us watching and said, “you know what; I really love playing the flute!” It was a really touching moment. It seemed to sum it all up: after all these years, his love affair with the instrument was still alive and just as strong as when he was an inquisitive young boy who had just begun playing.

Do you love playing the flute? How on earth can we make progress if we have feelings of resentment?

Think back to the very first time you ever decided you wanted to play the flute, or the time you finally got your very own instrument. Mine was waking up on Christmas morning to find that Santa Claus had brought me my first flute. Before that I was so eager I gaffer-taped an old headjoint to the body of my brother's clarinet. It was out of tune, but it worked! How does that early feeling compare to how you feel now? What has changed?

### Negativity

Negativity can get enmeshed along the way due to exams, teachers, family pressure, peer pressure, or the desire to be successful. Flute playing can be competitive but at some point most of us did it simply for the love of it. Getting in touch with those core feelings again is very powerful. I believe we all still have that special connection we had when we were younger, but for some of us there is a need to dig through the foggy haze of negativity that sits on top. Perhaps the only exception to this is if you were *made* to play the flute, and years later you *still* find yourself doing it to please someone else. If this is the case, perhaps it is time for you to do what *you* really love. Next time you practice remind yourself why you began to play in the first place. Take time with that special moment: just open the case and fill it with the positive feelings that you had when you had just begun. Allow that childlike wonder and joy to be present once again. Above all, do it because you love it.



*Have you become trapped by negative thoughts?*

### Archaeology

Getting in touch with positive memories, and experiencing anew the feelings associated with these memories can be very powerful. To get started, try asking yourself the following questions. They are just a guide and some of them may not be applicable to you; you are free to use them as you wish. You may want to write a few pages or just something short; it's up to you. They may trigger something interesting that you may wish to write more about more fully, so follow your curiosity.

- write about why you started playing the flute
- what attracted you to the instrument?
- describe how you felt going for your very first lesson. What was it like? Can you describe the room? What was your teacher like? How did you feel afterwards? Perhaps write about your favourite teacher
- write about somebody who really encouraged you
- describe your very first flute and how you got it
- describe an early success you had
- describe a happy memory or a time you experienced real joy in playing the flute

### Creating a power colour

Go through your answers. In your imagination, highlight all the positive memories with a colour. This will be your power colour.

How do you embody this colour?

- you could draw it in through your eyes
- you could embody it by letting it flow through and around your body, or
- you could imagine this colour gathering in your hand, forming a ball of light; now slowly take it into your heart.



Now every time you open your case to practice, recall this colour and infuse your whole being with these positive feelings.

***Rediscover the joy of playing your flute.***