

Native American Flute Playing—Beginning

Instructor: Chris Oravec, Ph. D. Communication Arts, Emeritus Professor University of Utah
ICL Fall 2017 PAB 114 Thurs. 3:00-4:30 pm

Syllabus

Our goal is for everyone to play confidently and expressively on the Native American style flute, “from the heart.” We’ll have information sharing, playing in the group, and individual development. We will aim toward our goal within a supportive, encouraging atmosphere.

You will need a 6 or 5 hole Native American style flute, preferably in A minor, G minor or F sharp minor. I will bring some flutes and sanitary straws for the first session or two.

Session 1. Introduction to the Native American Style Flute Oct. 19

- Breathing
- Making sounds
- Holding the flute and covering the holes
- The basic Native American style scale or “Mode 1”

Homeplay: Play long, full sounds, but don’t run out of air. Play the basic scale.

Session 2. Playing from the Heart Oct. 26

- Playing what you feel
- Playing a melody—“one breath solos”
- Care and feeding of the Native American Style flute

Homeplay: Play some one breath solos or melodies. Try using as many notes as you can.

Session 3. Rhythm Nov. 2

- You’ve got rhythm!
- Using your body to develop your inner rhythm
- Native American style rhythms, traditional and modern
- Using rhythm-makers (drum and/or rattle) or a metronome

Homeplay: Play to your own beat. Then play to a regular beat using a rhythm-maker, click-track or metronome.

Session 4. Embellishments on the Native American Style Flute Nov. 9

Four key embellishments—tongue, trill, pop/chirp, and slide/roll
The distinctive Native American style

Homeplay: Find a traditional Native style piece on CD or YouTube. Try to imitate the style after you listen to it a few times. Or play from the heart, using embellishments.

Session 5. Playing well with others Nov. 16

The drone, the bass and the treble

Forms of duets: “melody hold on the last note,” running bass, call and response, etc.

Nonverbal communication: switching cues and ending cues

Homeplay: Find a CD tune or YouTube video you like. Listen to it two or three times. Find notes on your flute that work well, and use them to play a drone or bass line.

THANKSGIVING NO CLASS Nov. 23

Session 6. Song Structure Nov.30

Using structure to create songs

The structure of a non-Native American style song

The structure of a Native American style song

Homeplay: Create a song simple enough to play in class by heart or from scratch notes. Try to make the song structure as clear as possible to the listener.

Session 7. Coming Full Circle Dec. 7

Flute Circle activities—Zion Flute Circle, second Saturday 3-5 at Green Valley Spa

Questions: How do I choose a next flute? How do I use tablature or sheet music?

Where can I find more flute resources? How do I record what I play? How can I play traditional Native American music? How can I play it forward?

Resources: www.flutopedia.com; www.flutetree.com; John Vames, Understanding the Native American Flute, 3rd ed; Scott August, The Complete Guide to the Native American Style Flute; Odell Borg’s (High Spirits) NAF lessons, www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7tCU5CQ_Os; O.W. Jones’ traditional flutes, pictures and music, <http://wind-riverflutes.com>; CD Backing tracks at www.NAFTracks.com; Some free downloadable tracks, www.FluteHaven.com/kiosk; Clint and Vera’s Flutecasts, www.youtube.com/watch?v=hckXZ9e7tWU&list=PLGAYOPJFd_Y5sizCTFEum0FDOL7AoMmlp