



## GPFS Member Feature: Donna Maebori

By BJ Nicoletti with Donna Maebori



I've recently had the pleasure of working on a piece for The Portland Piper with GPFS member Donna Maebori and feel certain members would love to hear her "flute story." She is a perfect example of the richness of talent, playing perspective and passion within the GPFS. As members, we have so much to offer each other and the GPFS's mission to nurture the teaching and learning of the flute for all ages and levels in Oregon.

Donna is a retired physical therapist who for the last 30 years of her practice (at Providence St. Vincent Rehab) specialized in treating persistent pain and balance/dizziness. She used yoga extensively and became a [Feldenkrais](#) Practitioner in the 90's (Guild Certified Feldenkrais Practitioner). Feldenkrais involves systematic self-observation of how one starts and carries out movement. The method uses very small movements that teach how to observe, focus, and experiment using constraints and other learning tools to find how one's actions can fulfill one's intentions. Along the way, she learned about mindfulness, through [Jon Kabat Zinn's](#) book, Full Catastrophe Living, and through a few seminars and lectures. She views yoga, mindfulness and Feldenkrais (or Alexander Technique or other body mapping work) as central to learning, playing and staying healthy with the flute for a lifetime!

### What is your flute "origin" story?

In early grade school, I went to my sister's high school band concerts. She played the oboe, but it was the flutes that fascinated me. At fifth grade when I could join band myself, I had sights only for the flute. That began many wonderful hours of practice, in addition to piano which I had started a few years earlier.

I love that the flute has an ancient history. It can simply sing, its timbre is always so attractive to me. It's quite fun that one can sound notes just by closing the keys without blowing in. I didn't select the flute for being light and easy to carry, but my appreciation for that feature has grown over the years!

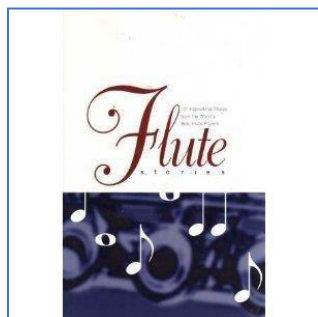
## What's your fluting joy?



Playing classical music is closest to my heart and what I have most experience with. In my twenties, I became acquainted with Jean-Pierre Rampal who was very inspiring as a performer, giving a sense of what great depth a musician can develop. I so appreciate discovering how he was also a very congenial, enjoyable person to be with. His performance of “Suite for Flute and Jazz Piano” by Claude Bolling opened up new possibilities to aim toward.

I majored in physical therapy at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Playing in the marching band was a big highlight there, still carries fond memories. After graduating college in 1973, I kept up with the flute, playing for some weddings and various church services over the years.

A new flute chapter came in 2009 when Patti Duthie, a piano teacher in Portland and fellow Episcopal church member, and I started a piano-flute duo. Named “Iridescence,” we explored different facets of musical genre: classics, modern, jazz, ragtime and show tunes. We were both classically trained, but we certainly found the show tunes to be grand delight. Together until early 2020, we put on public concerts (which turned out to be primarily for friends), played at retirement homes, art shows, and a few private parties. I joined GPFS and began to see myself as a professional musician, and feel very grateful to have been able to develop new levels of musical understanding and playing proficiency.

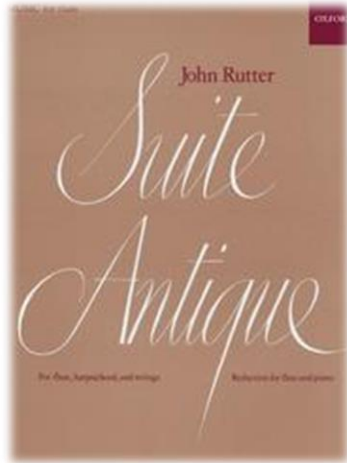


*Flute Stories: 101 Inspirational Stories from the World's Best Flute Players*, Windplayer Publications (2003), is a book I highly recommend. (Available from [www.fluteworld.com](http://www.fluteworld.com) and [www.flute4u.com](http://www.flute4u.com).) The stories of these professional players let one know there is struggle in mastering the art but with humility, humor, grit, passion and love of learning these challenges can be met with great reward. The sheer love of music shines throughout this book.

www.flutestories.com  
**III. Andante**  
from Sonata No. 5 in E minor for flute and continuo  
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)  
BWV 1014

Andante (♩ = 60)

The Andante movement from Bach’s “Fifth Sonata for Flute and Piano” is very dear to me. It has a wonderfully lyrical flow. I have played it flute-alone, with piano, and with the organist at my church, Fred Beal, Episcopal Parish of St. John the Baptist. He and I produced a CD in 2016 which includes this Andante. I have played it at a friend’s ordination and for a few memorial services.



In the performances, Patti and I gave as a duo, some delightful favorites were the “Hindemith Sonata,” John Rutter’s “Suite Antique,” and “I Enjoy Being a Girl!” from Flower Drum Song.

Through this pandemic, the piano-flute duo came to an end. I miss it. With sadness, I re-assembled my music repertoire, selecting many pieces that work well for flute alone, or were already written for solo flute. I’m playing these for just myself, something I never imagined I’d like per se, but I do, it’s good. I put in regular practice most weeks and really enjoy scales, mechanics, etudes, extended techniques. Plus, with the help of a few improvisation lessons, am learning pentatonic scales, and the various modes (Ionian, Dorian, etc.) I am memorizing some works, such as Debussy’s “Syrinx.” “The Kestrel Paced Round the Sun” by Peter Maxwell Davies is my newest adventure.

What keeps me motivated is that simply playing the flute for myself is truly satisfying. The brain work, breath work, finger action, posturing and emotional refreshment it brings is valuable. I am also playing for the future. When the pandemic lifts and possibilities open-up to join with others in making music, hey, that’s not the time I want to find where I stashed the flute and crank performance capacity back up. I want to be ready to go!

### **What are your fluting insights you’d like to share with members?**

In my physical therapy career, I discovered the wonderful usefulness of yoga, which eventually led me to discover the *Feldenkrais Method*®. *Feldenkrais* involves systematic self-observation of how one starts and carries out movement in design with the skeleton. The method uses movement exploration to learn to move throughout one’s self in ways that are graceful and efficient. I took the professional Feldenkrais training, eight weeks per year for four years, finishing in 1996. I employed Feldenkrais and yoga extensively in my two+ decades of specializing in treatment of persistent pain and balance and dizziness. Now retired, I keep up with both disciplines as they are deeply enriching for health and movement. I stayed certified as a Feldenkrais Practitioner.

Through the use of ourselves is how we play the flute, and the more we can learn about ourselves, the greater our capacity to play can be.

Back to the flute. During those four years of Feldenkrais training, I did not touch the instrument as I was too busy with family, work and the training. Yet, when I picked the flute up afterwards, the improvement was surprising and distinct.

Insights gained through yoga and Feldenkrais have led to some performance approaches for the flute. One is to “play on the vertical axis,” meaning sensing the ground support into the feet, through the leg bones, into the pelvis, through each vertebral body of the spine and out the top center of the head. A common tendency is to instead live and act through the “horizontal axis,” i.e., the head, arms and hands moving forward through rounding with the upper back, which may be how we move as we reach for

our mobile phone, the steering wheel, to shake a hand or look at the computer screen. It's very easy to "head forward" into all this activity, but it throws off our balance. Living and moving from the vertical axis often takes intentionality. Keeping in mind the sensory image of the ground force coming up through the vertical axis as one plays the flute can provide a good basis for postural support.

Another thought is "how can I make this action easier?" I asked that question when wanting to have reliably good tone for certain notes that were challenging. I played with where to imagine I was sending my breath, such as toward my right little finger, or left ring finger, or a foot, and found I could locate a target that would result in the tone being a solid one.

Lastly is an idea regarding tension and distraction during performance. When I performed, problems ensued quickly when thoughts came into my head such as "I hope I look okay," "I wonder if anyone is impressed," or "I hope I make it through." Such thoughts can derail everything, and usually came with anxiety. At such point, a remedy has to be very fast. For me, I'd think of the word "gift."

With the image of "gift" I'd settle into the sense of the gift of music, of creating sound, of persons listening as part of the creating, of life. I became enveloped in something larger than myself, which would bring me back to focus and steadiness.

### **Do you play freelance or teach?**

I don't give flute lessons. Though, I can be available to flutists who would like to explore the use of themselves in flute performance through the skill sets I have to offer. That could mean experimenting with posture, breath, eye action, mouth, and jaw functions, calming techniques, creative ways to enhance flute techniques, and the like. Zoom sessions would be a good option and in-person can be considered. Sessions would be an hour with the first one free. My phone is 971-409-3611. Email is [donna.maebori@gmail.com](mailto:donna.maebori@gmail.com).

I look forward to the day when once again *we can be together* to listen to performers, walk amongst all those incredible flutes on display, sift through printed music, pick up those little packets of papers to dry key pads, and talk with each other.

### **Why are you a member of GPFS?**

I am a member because I value professional organizations. GPFS is impressive. The spring flute fair and fall guest artist events are excellent as are the newsletters. At pre-pandemic in-person events I certainly experienced great friendliness and enthusiasm amongst the members. From technical instruction, through inspiration from performances to companionship of fellow flutists, GPFS has it all. I hope both fall and spring events continue, on Zoom or in-person when it is safe.

## Sponsors & Commercial Members

GPFS acknowledges with gratitude the many years of support from our [Sponsors and Commercial Members](#). It is because of their excellence that the GPFS mission can excel and celebrate our 44<sup>th</sup> year of extraordinary programming for the greater Portland area.

## GPFS 2021-2022 Program Sponsors



[Brannen Brothers Flutemakers, Inc.](#)  
58 Dragon Court  
Woburn, MA 01801-1014  
781-935-9522, [brannen@brannenflutes.com](mailto:brannen@brannenflutes.com)



[Canter Flute Repair](#)  
*Flute Repair Specialists*  
Beaverton, OR  
Straubinger & Muramatsu Certified  
JS Engineering Gold Pads  
971-266-4096



[FLUTEWORKS Seattle LLC](#)  
[Facebook Page](#)  
781-526-3677, [fluteworks@gmail.com](mailto:fluteworks@gmail.com)  
By appointment only



[www.wmshaynes.com](http://www.wmshaynes.com)



## GPFS 2021-2022 Commercial Members



[Altus Flutes](#)  
12020 Eastgate Blvd.  
Mt. Juliet, TN 37122  
615-773-9918, [Chiara.conn@khsmusic.com](mailto:Chiara.conn@khsmusic.com)



[Burkart Flutes & Piccolos](#)  
2 Shaker Road, #D107  
Shirley, MA 01464  
978-425-4500, [info@burkart.com](mailto:info@burkart.com)



[Carolyn Nussbaum Music Company](#)  
625 Digital Drive, Ste 300  
Plano, TX 75075  
972-985-2662, 877-FLUTE4U (toll free)  
[info@flute4u.com](mailto:info@flute4u.com)



[Flute Center of New York](#)  
Phil Unger  
1841 Broadway, Suite 1106  
New York, NY 10023  
212-307-9737, [flutephil@aol.com](mailto:flutephil@aol.com)



[The Flute Pad](#), in Lake Oswego  
Marc Grafe  
Flute Repairs and Adjustments  
Certified Straubinger Technician  
503-351-5176, [marc@grafeworks.com](mailto:marc@grafeworks.com)



[Flute World](#)  
29920 Orchard Lake Rd.  
Farmington Hills, MI 48334  
248-855-0410, [flutes@fluteworld.com](mailto:flutes@fluteworld.com)



[Miyazawa Flutes, Ltd.](#)

West Music  
 1214 5th Street  
 Coralville, IA 52241  
 319-351-2000, 800-397-9378  
[info@miyazawa.com](mailto:info@miyazawa.com)



[Verne Q. Powell Flutes, Inc.](#)

Christina Guiliano-Cobas, Marketing Director  
 1 Clock Tower Place, Suite 300  
 Maynard, MA 01754  
 978-461-6111 (main), 978-344-5159 (direct)  
[CG@PowellFlutes.com](mailto:CG@PowellFlutes.com)



[Sankyo Flutes](#)

West Music  
 1212 Fifth Street  
 Coralville, IA 52241  
 319-351-2000, 800-397-9378



[Sherry Lee Dealer of Fine Flutes](#)

678 Sperber Lane  
 Grand Junction, CO 81506  
 970-242-9364, [sherrysflutes@gmail.com](mailto:sherrysflutes@gmail.com)



[Ted Brown Music](#)

6228 Tacoma Mall Blvd  
 Tacoma, WA 98409  
 800-562-8938, 253-272-3211  
[sales@tedbrownmusic.com](mailto:sales@tedbrownmusic.com)