



Some Learning and Playing Wisdom from Flutist Wissam Boustany

Shared by GPFS Member BJ Nicoletti



The following are quotes from Wissam Boustany as heard during one of the [Chicago Flute Club's *Fluting with the Stars* sessions](#) during which he provided a general “lecture/sharing of life and musical observations” as well as a masterclass. Wissam offers a range of online masterclasses, lessons and flute-intensive courses and is a world-renowned performer and with several CDs to be enjoyed. He is also well-known and respected for his teaching and life philosophy – [A Method Called Love](#). Last, but not least, he is the founder of a non-political initiative (1995) called [Towards Humanity](#). Please consider visiting his robust website with similar “insights” on learning and playing. Here are a few links below:

- ❖ Link: His website, <http://www.wissamboustany.com/>
- ❖ Link: [His Music/Flute Articles](#)
- ❖ Link: [His webpage called Wisssdoms](#)
- ❖ Link: [His CD Recordings](#)
- ❖ Link: [Recordings on YouTube](#) (he is a huge advocate for playing my memory) All of these recording snippets are worth listening to, but the Telemann is certainly a good single choice.

Quotes & Insights from the Session

- *How is your “room” – figuratively and in the heart?*
- *If you are having a conversation with someone, what do you believe more – the words or the body language?*
- *What the body says when we play says something.... We need to radiate despite the instrument. The flute is static on our face so then the audience notices everything on your face.*
- *Aim your energy at the camera’s eyes or the audience, not the screen and not people’s faces. It is more engaging and confident. Don’t underestimate how you target your energy at the audience. Radiate to the right place.*
- *I prefer to teach by asking questions... allow the student to think their own thoughts and to create the music in their own image. I try to resist telling the student how to play.*
- *Air, breathing, is your absolute priority. How to do this is to know your priority. You want to know your ideal and how you want it to sound then have a backup plan B but practice the ideal 80% of the time and plan B 20% of the time. Ideals are there for a reason. Be in tune with the ideal and you try harder, you plan harder to create the ideal. If you have an ideal and a plan B that you have practiced then when things go wrong you can adapt quickly.*
- *Practice quite long phrases by memory then a few sections then stop and adjust.*
- *Whenever possible work from the score.*
- *There is a natural connection between our emotions and body. Emotions first, always.*
- *Articulation articulates your ideas. Stay agile.*
- *If you want to articulate clearly then the note before needs to be a little softer.*
- *If we are blowing too hard we over articulate.*
- *Weed and lift out the sound. If you make it all the same you can’t distinguish between the apples, pears....*
- *Strategizing a piece involves understanding not just the first movement. It is about creating an arc of the performance. I discourage learning only a movement or two.*
- *Playing from memory challenges you to take the music to another level and how we engage with that music as players. This is key to keeping it fresh.*
- *Think of the horizontal line to a piece versus vertical rhythms. Think forward versus up and down.*
- *Creating sustainable energy is a goal. This can be done in part by [the above] and playing it 1% - 2% faster and lighter.*

- *The mistakes are the doorway to how you want to play. It just means you have not learned to love that sequence yet.*
- *Memory means we've learned. Discovery is only part of learning.*
- *Make mistakes gratefully and learn from them.*
- *Practicing from only the flute part is like learning how to drive your car only in your backyard.*
- *The beginning strategies of learning a piece are only about falling in love with the notes and the shapes. I will ignore dynamics and metronome markings.*
- *On memorizing, learn small amounts of the music very intensely and then build on it. Memorizing starts slow then accelerates because you recognize the elements and the patterns. Visualize the sound in the room. Repetition and build on it. Build organically. Build slowly. Allow your confidence to grow with your ability.*
- *Spread the energy between sound and rhythm, the flow and sound. This is a more sustainable way of playing. You will have better stamina and flexibility in your playing.*
- *Find your own storyline.*
- *Navigate the limits of your body and where the music is going. You have to pace your palettes of color, sound, and breathing so you can have the nuance.*
- *I can always tell when someone is reading a dynamic versus feeling an emotion. Replace dynamics with emotion not dynamic control.*
- *A composer would far prefer you to inspire your audience than to play it perfectly.*
- *The reason we get tired is we are rushing the breath. Make time for breathing. The breath has a specific meaning for the phrase.*
- *Play in a way that allows you to pace yourself in a way that has a long living life versus a piece with a lot of dead ends. It takes strategizing to be able to go the distance, to have stamina.*
- *Take a few minutes to improvise your tone exercise.*
- *The process of progress in playing is an inward journey. It must be centered on our emotional life and not more knowledge per se. The details emerge out of love.*
- *A lot of people do play with beautiful details, but many miss the arc of the piece.*
- *The two legs I stand on are memory and improvisation, the rest are details.*
- *We're not to be dealing with just the physicality of our playing. Without the spirit it is just sound.*

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