

Upper Body Strength Training for Flutists

developed by Jennifer Rhyne, DMA and Xcinia Babayan, DPT

Before beginning any exercise program, you may want to consult your doctor. You may also wish to seek the advice of a fitness professional to help you begin and maintain a strength-training regimen.

Benefits of Upper Body Strength Training for Flutists

- Correction of muscle imbalances
- Better posture, breathing, and tone
- Increased endurance
- Reduced risk of overuse injuries
- Relaxed and pain-free playing

Equipment

Dumbbells- a light pair (3-5 pounds each), a medium pair (7-10 pounds each), and a heavy pair (12-15 pounds)

Optional- Mat or Towel, Gloves, Yoga wrist supports, Music- a good tempo range for most people is MM=116-138

The following routine is recommended 2-3 times per week. Warm up with 5-10 minutes of aerobic exercise. Finish with gentle stretching.

Since the following descriptions are brief, please consult a professional if you have any questions about proper form.

Posture

- *Magic String* exercise
- Press head back into fingertips-10 repetitions

Chest- medium to heavy weights

- **Push-Ups**- with feet or knees on the floor or standing (wall push-ups); body in a plank position; abs contracted and pelvis tucked forward; optional use of dumbbells or yoga wrist supports. Complete 1-4 sets of 12-20 push-ups depending on your level of strength.
- **Chest Fly Exercise**- Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet placed on the floor hip distance apart. With a dumbbell in each hand, extend the arms above the chest. With a slight bend in the elbows, lower your arms straight out to each side and return to the starting position. 1-4 sets of 12-20 repetitions depending on your level of strength.

Back Muscles (Upper and Lower)- medium to heavy weights

- **Lower Back Strengthening Exercise**- Lie on your stomach. Place your fingertips on the back of your head or place the backs of your hands just below your lower back. Slowly lift the head and upper body off of the floor. Hold for 2-3 seconds and relax. "Superman" variation- lift both arms and feet off the ground as if flying. 1-4 sets of 12-20 reps.
- **Reverse Fly**- Stand with knees bent and feet hip-distance apart. Lean over with the upper body at a minimum 45-degree angle. Engage your upper back muscles by pulling the shoulder blades together. Hold a dumbbell in each hand. Pull both of the arms back and out to the sides and contract the upper back by squeezing between the shoulder blades. Variation- seated position in a chair or on a bench if you lack strength in your lower back. 1-4 sets of 12-20 reps.

- **Bent Over Row**- Use the same starting position as Reverse Fly. Bend the elbows and pull both arms straight back while concentrating on contracting the muscles of the upper back. 1-4 sets of 12-20 reps.

Biceps - medium to heavy weights

- **Bicep Curls**- One arm at a time or both together. Variations- Hammer Curls or Wide Bicep Curls. Keep the elbows beside your body, torso stationary; avoid leaning back. 1-4 sets of 12-30 reps.

Triceps- light to medium weights

- **Tricep Kickbacks**- Stand with knees bent and feet hip-distance apart. Lean over with the upper body. With one dumbbell in each hand, extend arms back, then relax. Avoid moving the upper part of the arms or swinging the weights. 1-4 sets of 12-30 reps.
- **French Curls**- Lie on the floor with knees bent. Extend both arms straight above your chest with dumbbells in each hand, palms facing each other. Slowly bend elbows until weights are just above your forehead, then return to the starting position. Press the lower back into the floor by contracting the abdominal muscles in order to protect the back from strain. 1-4 sets of 12-30 reps.

Shoulders- light to medium weights

- **Shoulder Shrugs**- 1-4 sets of 10-20 reps.
- **Shoulder Depressions** –Without holding any hand weights, and standing with arms extended down at your sides, press the tops of the shoulders down and towards the floor. Hold for a count of 3, then relax. Complete 1-2 sets of 10 reps.
- **Front Raises**- Hold dumbbells in both hands with arms extended by your sides and palms facing inward. Raise dumbbells in front of you no higher than shoulder height, then lower. 1-4 sets of 8-20 reps.
- **Side Raises**- Hold dumbbells in both hands with arms extended by your sides and palms facing forward. Raise dumbbells to each side no higher than shoulder height and return to the starting position. Palms should face forward throughout the exercise. 1-4 sets of 8-20 reps.
- **Shoulder Press**- Begin with arms in a “goal-post position”, and then push both arms up. Protect the lower back by contracting the abdominal muscles and keeping the pelvis slightly tucked forward. 1-4 sets of 8-20 reps.
- **Rotator Cuff Exercise**- Begin with arms in a goal-post position, holding either very light dumbbells or no weights at all. Slowly rotate the arms until the palms face the floor, and then return to the starting position. Avoid raising the shoulders during the exercise. It is much more important to use a full range of motion rather than heavy weights. 1-4 sets of 10-12 reps.

Jennifer Rhyne, DMA, serves as Affiliate Artist and Senior Lecturer in Flute at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, WA. She is also a member of the Tacoma Symphony. She holds a degree in neuroscience from Oberlin College and degrees in flute performance from the Oberlin Conservatory, the University of Michigan, and Stony Brook University. When not teaching or performing, Jennifer enjoys strength training, aerobic exercise, ballet, Pilates, and yoga.

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