**Notes on My Encounter with *The Talent Code* by Daniel Coyle**

**How It Changed the Way I Approach Playing and Teaching**

**Flute Performance and Pedagogy**

**Or—Six Things that Work All the Time for Everyone\***

**Christine Gustafson**

[**gustafsonc@ecu.edu**](mailto:gustafsonc@ecu.edu)**; Tel. (252) 328-4279 studio; (626) 379-8356 cell**

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**I. *The Talent Code***

**Coyle, Daniel. *The Talent Code*. New York: Bantam Dell, Random House, 2009. Print.**

**Daniel Coyle, Author Bio**

Daniel Coyle is the New York Times bestselling author of*The Little Book of Talent, The Talent Code, Lance Armstrong’s War*, and *Hardball: A Season in Projects*.  A contributing editor for *Outside Magazine*, he is a two-time National Magazine Award finalist.  Coyle lives in Cleveland, Ohio during the school year and in Homer, Alaska, during the summer with his wife, Jen, and their four children

**Basic Concepts**

1. Deep Practice—Efficient practice and the acquisition of gift—you have the power to gain all the myelin you need!

2. Myelin—The biological basis of talent

3. Ignition—Love and Commitment

4. Master Coaching—Getting to know students deeply and how to engage them.

**Quotes from Daniel Coyle: “Greatness isn’t born, it’s grown . . .”\***

**“Small changes in approach during practice can make huge differences in performance.”**

**“Struggle makes you smarter.”**

My heartfelt thanks to Daniel Coyle (not a sponsor), who has been actively supportive and encouraging ever since I first wrote him about my *Talent Code* adventure two and a half years ago! I owe a great debt of gratitude as well to Tadeu Coelho and Krisztina Dér, who made it possible for me to present these ideas at the 2013 New Orleans Convention.

**II. The Six Things\***

**Important Caveat:** In order for any of this to work, you have to have equipment that is in proper playing condition and that will respond to what you are actually doing. One of the great things about being a flutist now is that there are many fine quality flutes available at very affordable prices. Get help from a professional player when selecting an instrument or headjoint. Keep your flute in excellent repair with regular maintenance. Resolve issues with the instrument quickly so that it does not prevent progress. Often, replacing a headjoint with something that is more responsive (a very personal choice because everyone is built differently) will open a whole new sound-world.

Starting points:

1. Feet planted shoulder-width apart and flat on the floor

2. Flute held level to the ground

3. Hands rotated so that fingers are poised above the instrument and over the keys, arms held loosely away from the body

Essentials:

4. Jaws even with top and bottom teeth parted to form a framework for the lips

5. Push/pull embouchure; shaping lips around the teeth, firm and elastic pressure on the air.

6. Abdominal pressure to support the sound and balance lip shape

\*7. Amount of air—ultimately variable, depending on dynamic and intensity level

**Make the best use of your practice time**

Quality of attention—You can learn to concentrate!

Beginning with short bursts builds mental and physical stamina

Attention to detail

Listen to your body

Quit while you’re ahead

**Further Advice**

Find a great teacher in your area!

Explore global methods such as, but by no means limited to, Alexander Technique, Body Mapping and yoga, to help with balance and exploration of your own physical processes

Record yourself—become your own best teacher.

**Your Instrument**

If you need to alter your flute to get comfortable, do so and experiment with changes in equipment until you feel secure! This is good advice in particular for women with smaller hands. Many women flutists use a non-slip pad for the left hand where the flute rests that can be made from many different materials. This allows the left hand to settle higher so fingers are free. Left-hand C# extensions are also common. My experience is that many hand and technical difficulties resolve with the resolution of tone problems. If the tone is secure, the hands and fingers are quite free. There are exceptions, of course, see a doctor if you are having hand, arm, neck or other difficulties that are not resolving.

The ultimate goal is to be able to make music freely and to say what you wish to say!