

For those players who are exclusively committed to the modern flute, yet wish to pursue Irish music in depth, there are some options that may be attractive. There are Boehm-system flutes made of wood, both older instruments and new ones such as those made by Chris Abell, which sound somewhat more like simple-system flutes. Abell and others also make wooden headjoints for metal modern flutes which bring forth the warm tonal qualities reminiscent of the older instruments.



Figure 3-11. A modern Boehm-system flute made in silver by the William Haynes Company, Boston, Massachusetts, serial # 44166, 1978.

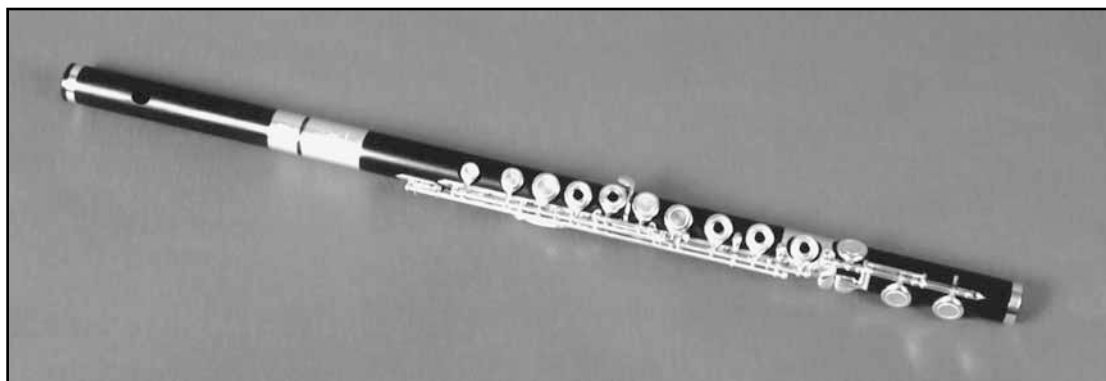


Figure 3-12. A wooden Boehm-system flute, in African blackwood (grenadilla) and sterling silver, by Chris Abell, Asheville, North Carolina, 2001.

Boehm himself wrote that:

The silver flute is preferable for playing in very large rooms because of its great ability for tone modulation, and for the unsurpassed brilliancy and sonorousness of its tone. But on account of its unusually easy tone-production, very often it is over-blown, causing the tone to become hard and shrill; hence its advantages are fully realized only through a very good embouchure and diligent tone-practice. For this reason wooden flutes on my system are also made, which are better adapted to the embouchures of most flute players; and the wood flutes possess a full and pleasant quality of tone, which is valued especially in Germany.^v

It is interesting to note that the effect on flute tone of wood vs. other materials is a hotly debated issue. There are scientific studies that contend that the material of the flute has no impact on tone, that instead tonal differences are due to such factors as hole size, bore size, bore finish, and tone-hole chamfering (the beveling on the inside and outside of the tone holes).

NEW, IMPROVED HEADJOINTS FOR SIMPLE-SYSTEM FLUTES

Simple-system flute players may also want to look into having new headjoints made for their instruments. I currently play a 19th-century simple-system flute by Firth, Pond & Co. and have a custom-made Abell headjoint that is significantly superior to the original headjoint, giving the instrument better responsiveness and overall sound.