

NWCR888

Louis Moyse

Works for Flute and Piano



First Sonata (1975)	(21:26)
1. I. Allegro	(5:14)
2. II. Poco adagio	(7:19)
3. III. Scherzo	(3:09)
4. IV. Allegro scherzando	(5:14)
<i>Introduction, Theme and Variations</i> (1982)	(19:34)
5. Introduction	(6:18)
6. Theme	(1:23)
7. Variation I	(0:32)
8. Variation II	(1:59)
9. Variation III	(0:59)
10. Variation IV	(3:45)
11. Variation V	(0:59)
12. Variation VI	(1:18)
13. Variation VII	(2:10)
Second Sonata (1998)	(25:57)
14. I. Allegro vivo	(7:07)
15. II. Poco adagio	(8:51)
16. III. Scherzo	(3:15)
17. IV. Presto	(6:40)

Karen Kevra, flute; Paul Orgel, piano

Total playing time: 66:20

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Notes

The morning I met **Louis Moyse**, he was at the piano playing a Beethoven sonata. For as long as I could remember, the name Louis Moyse had been associated with my chosen instrument, the flute. As a pigtailed nine-year-old growing up in suburban central New Jersey, I had worked my way through his ubiquitous *Forty Little Pieces for Beginning Flutists*. Years later, I had graduated to the serious player's mainstay, *Flute Music by French Composers*. For me, and for several generations of players throughout the world, these and many other Moyse editions are a vital part of the flutist's library. I was soon to discover that Louis Moyse was more than a great pedagogue, prolific editor, world-class flutist and pianist, but also a composer of distinction, whose stunning compositions were virtually unknown.

I was apprehensive during the two-hour drive from my home in Montpelier, Vermont, over the Green Mountain range, across Lake Champlain, to Westport, New York, where Louis and his wife Janet Moyse made their home, for my first flute lesson with the maestro. It was September 18, 1996. As I drove down his driveway, flanked by magnificent twisted locust trees, I swallowed the lump in my throat and breathed deeply. Louis Moyse was the most venerated living flute guru. Although I was by then a professional flutist, with respectable training and experience, I was still searching for my musical destiny. I had reason to hope that Louis Moyse might help me to find it.

During the preceding winter, I had heard a 1972 recording from the New England Bach Festival, on which Louis Moyse

played the "Süsser Trost" aria from J.S. Bach's Cantata #151. I had never heard flute playing like this before. His flute combined the passion and depth of a great human voice, with a haunting and rich cello-like sound. I was completely under the spell of his playing.

Louis's wife Janet greeted me at the door, and after a few minutes of polite conversation, she led me to Louis, who finished the last strain of his Beethoven, looked up from the keyboard and smiled so contagiously that I felt myself grinning. My life was about to change.

Louis no longer performs in public, and only rarely demonstrates on his flute when teaching, yet he puts across his ideas with perspicacity and incisiveness. He is warm, tactile, humorous, demanding, mostly patient and sings constantly. To the uninitiated English-speaking student, first lessons are a bit like an encounter with Inspector Clouseau. It's impossible to grasp all of the heavily accented words. In one of my early lessons, Louis proclaimed, "You wheel dovvelup." I turned it around in my head, frantically trying different possibilities. "You will double up" "You will devil up." I pondered this phrase off and on for two years, when it finally came to me. "You will develop."

Perhaps the strongest impression that Louis Moyse has made upon me is his vocal conception of flute playing. In his own compositions, this singing style is at the core of his writing. While his two sonatas, and *Introduction, Theme and Variations* demand virtuosity and technical brilliance, there is

a pervasive element of song in every composition. He believes that all of the characteristics that make a great singer—the inflection, articulation likened to diction, expert dynamic flexibility and control, even the impassioned expression of the breath—are what make a great musician, whether it be a flutist, saxophonist, or cellist. Simple folk tunes and arias are among the tools that he uses to teach these concepts. Perhaps the greatest compliment of my musical life was when my rendering of “The Bluebells of Scotland” moved Louis to tears.

My relationship with Louis Moyses can best be described by one of his favorite musical terms, “*incalzando*,” meaning “with growing warmth and fervor.” Within a year of my first lesson, our paths became closely intertwined: he and Janet decided to move, in 1997, to Montpelier. In addition to being my teacher, mentor, collaborator and friend, he is now my neighbor.

—Karen Kevra

This is the first commercial recording of three major works for flute and piano by the ninety-year-old composer Louis Moyses. I believe that these works are “major” not only among Moyses’s output of one-hundred or so compositions, most of which involve the flute, but also that they can hold their own among the best works for flute and piano written in the twentieth century. It has been a labor of love to record this music, but Karen Kevra and I have also been driven by a sense of urgency. Our hope is for Louis Moyses to gain some overdue recognition as a composer. We are also confident that listeners will enjoy these pieces and that musicians will want to play them.

Louis Moyses’s career has not focused solely on composition or one single instrument, but has been divided among his many varied talents. He is not only an outstanding flutist, heir to the great French flute tradition (he studied with Phillippe Gaubert as well as his father, Marcel Moyses, a hugely influential flutist and pedagogue) but also a superb pianist. Before World War II, he served as pianist in the internationally known Moyses Trio which consisted of Marcel and Louis Moyses along with Louis’s former wife, Blanche Honegger Moyses, a violinist. (Blanche Moyses remains active at the Marlboro School of Music as a conductor, renowned for her performances of Bach.)

Moyses’s extensive work as an arranger and editor for G. Schirmer features publications of a wide range of standard as well as less familiar flute repertoire. In addition, he has published many original compositions. As a teacher, he has been associated with Boston University’s School for the Arts, Marlboro College, and the University of Toronto. He continues to regularly conduct master classes and seminars in Europe, Japan, and the U.S., and is sought out as a teacher by students from around the world.

As a student at the Paris Conservatory, Louis Moyses studied flute and piano but not formal composition. Paris in the 1920s was his musical training ground. He played in freelance orchestras that accompanied silent movies, and was a regular, along with his father, in the orchestra at the Opéra Comique, where he absorbed the standard operatic repertoire. He recalls, with delight, playing piano duets with Duke Ellington and other American jazz figures who came to Paris.

When I was lucky enough to move to Vermont in the mid 1990s, I began collaborating with Karen Kevra. Karen’s style of playing—always vocally conceived, powerful-sounding at times—was far from the airy, mechanical approach of so many flutists. Her musical intensity shows the influence of Louis Moyses (her teacher) and indirectly, his father—French

musicians who both absorbed and affected the German-influenced style of the Marlboro School of Music and Festival in Vermont.

Marcel, Louis, and Blanche Moyses were founders of Marlboro, now perhaps the world’s most notable training center for chamber music, along with Rudolf Serkin and Adolf and Hermann Busch. (Louis cites the violinist Adolf Busch as having taught him all that he knows about articulation.)

Listeners who come to Louis Moyses’s music expecting something like much French flute music—fluffy, saccharine, or perhaps a bit academic—will be surprised. He describes the French style as “too light” and the German as “too heavy”—“like comparing a glass of wine and a glass of beer.” When I asked him what the most important musical influence was on his composing, he exclaimed, “Martinů!” (this from a man who encountered Fauré and Saint-Saëns, had regular contact with Stravinsky, and showed his music to Messiaen). Why Martinů? For his “rhythm and structure” and because he was a good friend. Certainly the influence of Martinů’s rhythmic vitality is felt in Louis Moyses’s music, and also the characteristic Czech fondness for thirds that change quickly between major and minor.

Louis Moyses’s music is the product of a kind of compositional craft that is in short supply today. It takes for granted, for instance, the ability to write convincing four-voice fugues, to successfully control traditional sonata forms, and to score with total sureness for any instrument. His originality reflects the diverse experiences of a long life lived in music and the person that Louis is: fun-loving but capable of reflection, a true *musicien français* in training and culture who has become an American composer. In conversation he often returns to the same subjects: his mother and father, his great love of all sorts of music, and memories of his native village,

St. Amour in the Jura Mountains of France. The mountains, fields, and towns of Vermont have become a beloved substitute for Louis over the years, and it is fair to say that for Karen and myself, the landscape of Vermont has nurtured our lives and our work on this recording.

One of the most effective features of the First Sonata, from 1974, is the contrast between the slow movement (so evocative of some sinister, exotic ritual) and the daredevil energy of the scherzo that follows it without a break. Hearing these movements for the first time, I knew I was encountering a composer who is equally adept at expressing himself in slow or fast music, a skill possessed only by the best. The perpetual motion scherzo is a true *tour-de-force*, the flight of a killer bumblebee.

The First Sonata is particularly well-conceived as a whole with the two inner movements balanced by the tough-minded first movement’s tidy sonata form and the concise fourth movement into which Moyses, ever wary of false sentiment, infuses a certain Parisian charm.

Composed in 1980, *Introduction, Theme, and Variations* was originally titled *Introduction, Theme, and Variations for an Imaginary Competition*. The layout of the piece, though not its style or content, is modeled on Franz Schubert’s set of variations on his song, “*Trockne Blumen*” D802. (Schubert’s “*Trockne Blumen*” variations is a work of great significance for flutists because it is the most important composition in the flute literature from the nineteenth century, a period in which that instrument was, for the most part, overlooked by the best composers.) Moyses’s *Variations*, like Schubert’s, consists of an extended introduction followed by the statement of the

theme, and seven variations that explore a wide range of moods and tend toward virtuosic display.

Moyse has long felt an affinity for Japanese culture and the *Introduction, Theme, and Variations*, particularly the "Introduction" and the "Theme" show his interest in the timbres and intervals of Japanese music. The techniques employed in the Introduction evoke the harmonics and sharp attacks of the shakuhachi flute. The Theme is a remarkable setting of four chant-like phrases with the piano's delicate arpeggios suggesting a delicate accompaniment of bells. These four phrases form the basis for the structure of each of the variations (character pieces really) that follow, though the "theme" is not usually detectable within them as a melody. The fourth variation, an effusive, romantic aria for the flute, is the emotional high point of the piece.

The Second Sonata was composed in 1998 and completed on August 14, Moyse's eighty-sixth birthday. It is inscribed "To my father 'In Memoriam'" and Louis has spoken of the violence of the opening piano solo (with its unintentional reminiscence of Chopin's Second *Ballade*) as representing his memory of his father's anger. While the First Sonata's expression tends to be terse, and its forms compact, the Second is expansive, filled-out. The virtuosic first and last movements accumulate power through rhythmic and harmonic repetitiveness. I hear something Spanish in the manner of *Carmen* in them.

Both are interrupted by contrasting interludes that give some respite from the ongoing motion, a leisurely minuet in the first movement, and a fugue in the last.

The second movement, "Poco adagio," is striking in its stillness. At the movement's opening, there is a musical anagram shown in the score. The letters of Louis Moyse's mother's maiden name, C-E-L-I-N-E G-A-T-R-E-A-U are set to a series of notes that create the movement's first theme, stated in the flute, with its touching movement between C major and minor. An imitation of the bells of the fifteenth-

century church in Saint Amour can be heard in the piano at the climax of the movement's middle section. The third movement is another demonic scherzo, heavier than that of the First Sonata but just as infectious. The finale is a full-fledged toccata.

—Paul Orgel

Flutist **Karen Kevra's** playing has been described as "having a passion and depth seen in few flutists anywhere." One of New England's busiest solo flutists, Kevra's appearances include performances on French National Television and at Carnegie Hall. A frequent soloist with New England orchestras, she also serves as artistic director for Capital City Concerts. Ms. Kevra is an alumna of the Manhattan School of Music, the North Carolina School of the Arts, and the Aspen Music School. She has studied with Eleanor Lawrence and Philip Dunigan. She currently resides in Montpelier, Vermont.

Pianist **Paul Orgel** has concertized throughout the United States as a solo recitalist and chamber musician. Critics have praised his playing for its "subtlety and attention to nuance" (*Philadelphia Inquirer*), "rare pathos" (*New York Times*), and "brilliant technique, sense of humor, and fantasy" (*Bridgeport Post*). A versatile musician with wide-ranging interests and an extremely varied repertoire, Orgel has been associated with many composers including Messiaen, Cage, Rochberg, Curt Cacioppo, T.L. Read, and Louis Moyse. Mr. Orgel was educated at Oberlin, the New England Conservatory, and Boston University. He holds a doctorate in piano performance from Temple University. Among his piano teachers were Russell Sherman, Lillian and Irwin Freundlich, and Harvey Wedeen. A distinguished teacher, he has served as an affiliated artist at M.I.T., a visiting teacher at Wesleyan University, and instructor of piano at the Interlochen Arts Academy. He also has taught on the faculties of Swarthmore and Haverford Colleges and Temple University. Mr. Orgel currently is a member of the music faculty at the University of Vermont.

Production Notes

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Piano technician: Paul Ratigan

Digital editing and mastering: Wayne Hileman at Squires Productions Inc.

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Karen Kevra plays Landell flute #146 made by Jonathon Landell of Richmond, Vermont.

Paul Orgel plays Steinway concert grand CD327.

CRI Executive director: John G. Schultz

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