

Tips on flute practicing

Mia Dreese

Many flute teachers give their students exercises to play by heart. In fact playing by heart is the best way to concentrate on your tone quality. You are not distracted by the notes in your book. For that same reason playing in front of a mirror should not be continued for too long. You are focused on what your playing looks like instead of on what it sounds like and how it feels.

Yet especially adult amateurs (and others!) often prefer the support of a book and notes to guide them in their preliminary exercises, especially when the melodies become more elaborate. Even so, some shorter warming-up melodies can be played by heart fairly easily and can then be transposed to different keys.

More than any other flute pedagogue it is Marcel Moyse (1889-1984) who has worked on making these exercise books. I am privileged to have known him and seen him work with these books when teaching. Many flautists who have become acquainted with his views (for instance Trevor Wye and Nancy Andrews) try to pass on Moyse's ideas to the next generations in their lessons, lectures and articles. And that is very helpful since there is not much text in Moyse's books, while there is a whole range of ideas behind the notes. In my own workshops I spend a great deal of time on his books.

Marcel Moyse – *How I Stayed in Shape* (Schott ED 8526)

Moyse recommended everyone when practicing to vary between technical and melodic exercises so as not to forget that we are making music. This book contains a mixture of his favorite musical exercises of both kinds. Arrangements of Reichert exercises are followed by arias from Mozart's *Magic Flute*, works by Boehm, Tulou, Hahn and many others. Every day you make a choice of what you feel like. Without being aware of it all aspects of flute playing are being practiced: the flexible lips, different tone colours, intonation and beautiful slurs (a combination of breathing, fingering and embouchure)

Youngsters are sometimes interested only in playing a lot of notes. The more notes, the better, while the teacher might want to concentrate on tone quality. In that case the *Flute Gymnastic Workbooks* by Simon Hunt (Pan Educational Music) can be a useful alternative. Various

technical exercises that sound nice and are not longer than one staff. The books are out of print at present. Hopefully they will be reprinted in the future.

Marcel Moyse – *Tone Development Through Interpretation* (McGinnis & Marx, available through the Marcel Moyse Society; it seems to be reprinted).

When he was a young man, Marcel Moyse went on several opera tours with the famous soprano Nellie Melba (the ice cream dessert Peach Melba is named after her). On these tours he got acquainted with famous opera's and afterwards transposed many aria's for flute. Very useful for developing a beautiful tone and so romantic in style that it is hardly possible to exaggerate. The book has a didactical build-up: low-soft, low-loud, low-expressive, high-soft, middle-supple, etc. It is especially suitable for adults. For young students I sometimes use classical melodies from *Everybody's Favourite Flute Solos no. 38* (Amsco Music Publishing Company).

Marcel Moyse – *24 petites Etudes mélodiques* and *25 Etudes mélodiques* (Alphonse Leduc). Short melodies with musical phrasing through instructions on dynamics, with variations in smaller note values which make it possible to practice articulation and dynamics even more precisely. It was, by the way, Moyse's opinion that timbre and tone colours should be independent of the dynamics. For instance, *piano* should not always be played light and you should try *dolce* in *forte* sometimes, and that in all registers.

To finish with, here are two exercises that William Bennett taught me. To be played in all keys – preferably by heart.



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