

**Mel Bonis's 'Violin Sonata in F Sharp Minor' Reimagined for the Flute**

**By**

**Martina Rosaria O'Connell**

**Dissertation submitted to University of Dublin, Trinity College in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements of the degree of  
Master in Music Performance**

**2024**

**Royal Irish Academy of Music**

**Supervisor: Dr Orla Shannon**

## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work. Sources and materials used in the course of this dissertation have been acknowledged in this thesis. I require the university to seek my prior permission before depositing this thesis in the University's open access institutional repository or library. This would be subject to Irish Copyright Legislation and Trinity College Library conditions of use, agreement with the author and acknowledgement. I do not consent to the examiner retaining a copy of the thesis beyond the examining period (EU GDPR May 2018).

**Signed:**

*Martina Rosaria O'Connell*

**(Martina Rosaria O'Connell)**

**Student ID: 18321375**

**Date: 22nd May 2024**

## **Acknowledgements**

This thesis has been a labour of love over the past two years. I am privileged to have found a topic that amalgamates my passions, and I am profoundly grateful to have explored an area that has truly come to life. However, this research was not undertaken alone.

First and foremost, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Orla Shannon, for her unwavering support, guidance, and encouragement throughout my research and the writing of this thesis. Dr Shannon's expertise and insights have been invaluable to my work. The transcription and editing of the score would not have been possible without the meticulous input of Professor William Dowdall and former RIAM Head of Chamber Music, Dearbhla Brosnan.

Special gratitude goes to Christine Géliot, the great-granddaughter of Mel Bonis and president of the L'Association Mel Bonis, for her unwavering support. From our initial email correspondence, to an in-person tour of the family archives, to attending the world premiere of the transcription and to her ongoing assistance with the future publication of the score, her guidance has been invaluable. Having a direct descendent to guide me on this journey has made the experience profoundly special and meaningful.

A heartfelt thanks goes to my friends at the Royal Irish Academy of Music, whose moral support, and endless laughter have made this journey more enjoyable and less stressful. I am especially grateful to pianist, David Vesey for premiering the transcription with me; his dedication and musical skill have been an honour to collaborate with.

I am deeply indebted to my family for their unwavering support and encouragement. To my parents, Ornella and Seán, thank you for your boundless love, patience, and for believing in me even when I doubted myself. Your support has been a constant source of motivation.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to the Liam Swords Foundation for awarding me the three-month research residency at the Centre Cultural Irlandais. This opportunity provided invaluable personal and contextual insights that greatly enriched my research.

Lastly, I am grateful to everyone with whom I have discussed Bonis. Your interest in this composer and your thoughtful perspectives have significantly influenced my research, fostering meaningful discourse and helping me achieve my aim of drawing more attention to the life and work of this composer.

## Table of Contents

<b><i>Declaration .....</i></b>	<b><i>1</i></b>
<b><i>Acknowledgements .....</i></b>	<b><i>2</i></b>
<b><i>Abstract.....</i></b>	<b><i>6</i></b>
<b><i>Introduction .....</i></b>	<b><i>7</i></b>
Background to the Study .....	7
Rationale for the Study .....	8
Aims and Objectives of the Research.....	9
Methodology.....	10
Literature Review .....	16
<b><i>Chapter One: Contextualising Mel Bonis's Musical Legacy Through Postcards .....</i></b>	<b><i>21</i></b>
1.1 Mel Bonis, the Paris Conservatory and the Prix de Rome .....	21
1.2 The Origins of the Name Mel Bonis.....	24
1.3 Bonis: An Influential Figure in the French Music Scene.....	26
1.4 Bonis's Advocacy for Her Work .....	28
1.5 Mel Bonis's Lifelong Affinity for Sacred Music and Her Final Compositions .....	31
<b><i>Chapter Two: Contextualising Mel Bonis's Violin Sonata and Selected Chamber Compositions.....</i></b>	<b><i>34</i></b>
2.1 Bonis and her Sonatas .....	34
2.2 <i>Suite pour Flûte, Violon et Piano</i> .....	36
2.3 <i>Éleve-toi, Mon Âme</i> .....	40
2.4 Background on the Violin Sonata .....	44
2.5 Musical Overview of the Violin Sonata .....	46
2.5.1 Movement One .....	46
2.5.2 Movement Two.....	47
2.5.3 Movement Three.....	48
2.5.4 Movement Four .....	49
<b><i>Chapter Three: Transcription Process and Performance Edition .....</i></b>	<b><i>51</i></b>
3.1 Masterclass Insights: Enhancements Incorporated into the Transcription .....	51
3.2 Transcribing and Rewriting of Works by French Composers .....	52
3.3 Critical Adjustments: Crafting a Performance Edition .....	53
3.3.1 Rehearsal Marks .....	54
3.3.2 Time Signature Changes.....	54
3.3.3 Tempo markings .....	55
3.3.4 Upbeats.....	56
3.3.5 Octave Transposition .....	57
3.3.6 Usage of Top C and Exclusion of Low B.....	57
3.3.7 Double Stops and Pizzicatos .....	58
3.3.8 Addition of Cautionary Accidentals .....	59
3.3.9 Phrasing and Articulation .....	59
<b><i>Conclusion.....</i></b>	<b><i>61</i></b>
<b><i>Bibliography.....</i></b>	<b><i>62</i></b>

<b>Appendix 1: Post World Premiere photo with Christine Géliot .....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Critical Apparatus .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Appendix 3: Score of Transcription .....</b>	<b>71</b>

## **Abstract**

This thesis re-evaluates the musical legacy of the French composer, Mel Bonis (1858-1937), by conducting the first comprehensive analysis of her correspondence with publisher Vittorio Carrara, consisting of postcards written in Italian during the last seven years of her life. Comparing primary sources with Christine Géliot's detailed biography *Mel Bonis, the Woman and the Composer* this study uncovers Bonis's endeavours to overcome professional obstacles and establish her influence in the music industry. Additionally, this thesis offers an in-depth examination of Mel Bonis's *Sonate pour Violon et Piano*, exploring its compositional features and historical importance within her extensive compositional output. Furthermore, the limited romantic flute sonata repertoire is enriched by the creation of a transcription of Bonis's lesser-known violin sonata for the flute, thereby enhancing its accessibility and audience reach.

## Introduction

### Background to the Study

This performance-led research was originally inspired by studying César Franck's *Sonata in A major* for violin and piano. Although initially composed for violin, the work became a staple in the flute repertoire by French flautist, Jean-Pierre Rampal, who created a transcription for the instrument after the composer died in 1890. As well as being an accomplished composer, pianist and organist, Franck was a very well-respected teacher. In 1872, he was appointed as the organ professor at the Paris Conservatoire; bestowing his musical legacy on many well-known names such as Louise Ganne, Darius Milhaud, and Ernest Chausson, to name but a few. A lesser-known example is Mel Bonis, described as a 'special student' or "élève particulière" of Franck's, whom is the main focus of this research.<sup>1</sup>

Bonis holds a special significance in the flute repertoire. There is a prominent scarcity of repertoire from the Romantic period of music, and Bonis's work fills that void.<sup>2</sup> Bonis's *Flute Sonata in C Sharp Minor* was written in 1904 and is dedicated to the renowned flute professor, Louis Fleury. Her flute sonata is only one of two Romantic sonatas within the instrument's repertoire, the other being by the German composer Carl Reinecke entitled *Undine Sonata* Op. 167 (1882).<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Joël – Marie Fauquet, César Franck, (Paris: Fayard).

<sup>2</sup> Jenna Daum, "Mel Bonis: Six Works for Flute and Piano" (Arizona State University, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Jenna Daum, "Mel Bonis: Six Works for Flute and Piano" (Arizona State University, 2013), 31.



## Rationale for the Study

In recent years, there has been an evident surge in the research carried out on women composers. Books such as ‘Women & Music: A History’, ‘The Woman Composer’ and ‘Woman in Music’ serve as encyclopaedias for these forgotten figures of music history.<sup>4</sup> However, even within the pages of these books, there are prevalent female figures that remain unacknowledged, and such is the case for Mel Bonis, the name she composed under. The existing literature explains that Bonis is particularly unfamiliar in anglophone countries despite the efforts since the 1990s to disseminate her music.<sup>5</sup>

Bonis’s compositional legacy of over 300 works, places her amongst the list of high-calibre musical figures of history, however much work is needed to have an equal amount of exposure to her male counterparts. Wolfgang Kossack, the owner of the publishing company ‘Edition Kossack’, specialises in publishing forgotten music specifically of the German and French Repertoire. He stated in an interview for the bi-annual journal of the British Flute Society, “Without my company, it’s likely that no one would know [Mel Bonis] flute music today, because even the French publishers were not interested in her music at all when I discovered her”.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Karin Pendle, *Woman & Music: A History*, (Indiana, Indiana University Press, 2001); Jill Halstead, *The Woman Composer*, (England, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1997); Carol Neuls Bates, *Women in Music*, (Lebanon, University Press of New England, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Rachel Harlene Rosenman, *A Rosary Among the Roses : Tracing Pastoral Allusions and Spiritual Resonances in Chamber Music by Mel Bonis* (Bachelor of Arts with Departmental Honours, Wesleyan University, 2017), <https://digitalcollections.wesleyan.edu/object/ir-967>.

<sup>6</sup> Wolfgang Kossack, “Edition Kossack”, *Pan Journal of the British Flute Society*, Volume 41 Number 3 (2022): page 39.

## Aims and Objectives of the Research

The aims of this research are threefold: firstly, to create the first comprehensive translation of postcard correspondence between Bonis and the Italian editor Carrara and to frame these findings within aspects of Bonis's biographical background. Secondly, to conduct a contextual and comparative study of Bonis's other flute/violin and autobiographical works in relation to her Violin Sonata in F-sharp minor. Thirdly, to analyse the violin sonata and create a unique transcription of the work for the flute, thereby expanding the instrument's romantic repertoire. The primary focus of this thesis is to pay homage to a relatively unknown composer and to provide findings that may invite new audiences to the life and music of Mel Bonis.

Several objectives were completed to fulfil these aims. Firstly, collating an annotated bibliography which incorporates the available literature in both the English and French languages. To further my contextual studies, I spent three months in Paris and a week at the Saline Royale Academy, taking lessons with French flautists, who are experts in the field of the 'French Flute School' or 'Modern French School' of flute playing. In addition, by actively engaging and participating in the Erasmus+ mobility programme FARM (Fostering Artist Research Programme), I had the opportunity to further solidify the vision of amalgamating the areas of musicology and artistry through performance-led research. This engagement significantly contributed to ascertaining findings and clarifying the relationship between performance and its impact on research objectives.

Studying and performing other flute and chamber works by Mel Bonis aided in achieving the objectives related to analysis and transcription. This included her 1904 Flute Sonata in C-sharp minor, *Elève-toi mon âme Op. 40*, *Suite en Trio for Flute, Violin and Piano Op. 59*, *Une Flute Soupire, Op. 121*, *Scenes de la Forêt, Op 123*, *Suite dans le Style Ancien, Op. 127*, *Andante et Allegro, Op. 133*, *Scherzo, Op. 187*, and *Piece pour flute et piano, Op. 189*.

I performed these works to understand how Bonis orchestrated for the flute, specifically analysing the range, timbre and voicing with the piano. In preparation for transcribing her Violin Sonata in F-sharp minor for the flute, it was important to understand as much as possible how she viewed and used this wind instrument in her compositional style.

## Methodology

The primary methodologies employed in this research were archival research, ethnohistoriographic analysis, and a combined contextual and comparative study of scores, culminating in the production of an original transcription.

### Archival Research and Ethnohistoriographic Analysis

Archival research was necessary to collate relevant primary and secondary sources. The most important of these materials was an unearthing of the earliest available score of the Sonata for Violin and Piano in F sharp minor, Op. 112. In November 2022, I emailed the L'Association Mel Bonis, explaining my plans to complete a dissertation as part of my Master in Music Performance. I requested access to a facsimile of the Sonata for Violin and Piano in F sharp minor, Op. 112. The president of L'Association Mel Bonis and great-granddaughter of the composer, Christine Géliot, responded stating that the autograph manuscript had unfortunately been lost and that it was, therefore, not possible to access the facsimile. However, she gifted me the first publication of the sonata published in 1923 by Éditions Senart, now out of print, upon which my research relies. I also found a 2002 publication of the sonata by Edition Kossack.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Having access to both editions of physical scores offers a broader insight for the transcription process. It also alleviates any difficulties of working with photographic reproductions in which potential errors in misinterpreting details are a possibility. One such example of this scenario is outlined in *The Nature of the Musical Score* chapter of James Grier's publication, where he recounts how 'pin-pricks' were mistaken as musical notation. James Grier, *The Critical Editing Of Music*, (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 57-60.

A key component of the ethnohistoriographic analysis in this research involves the detailed study of the primary source correspondence between Bonis and Vittorio Carrara, director of the Carrara Editor in Bergamo, Italy. Specifically, I translated the correspondence written in Italian to examine how Bonis communicated her value and the conviction behind securing proper recognition for her work.<sup>8</sup> Through this translation, I correlated specific details from the letters to various aspects of Bonis's life and career, as outlined in existing biographies and other historical texts such as the personal writings of Mel Bonis entitled *Souvenirs et Reflexions*.<sup>9</sup> This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of her strategies and her position within the world of composition, contrasting sharply with the relatively minimal attention she receives in traditional music historiography. Chapter One also includes a comparative analysis of the biographical account by Christine Géliot, which briefly mentions Bonis's relationship with Carrara but omits significant details that the correspondence illuminates.

## Contextual Studies

Conducting a contextual study to set Bonis's compositional style within the wider framework of the French Flute School was crucial to create a historically informed performance edition of the Sonata for Violin and Piano in F sharp minor, Op. 112, for flute. This approach was pertinent considering that the Sonata for Flute in C Sharp Minor was dedicated to one of the leading French flautists of the time, Louis Fleury, who studied under Paul Taffanel at the Paris Conservatory. Taffanel with Philippe Gaubert created one of the most valuable flute technique books 'Grands Exercices Journaliers de Mécanisme pour Flûte.'<sup>10</sup> It was therefore

---

<sup>8</sup> This translation was assisted with the help of native Italian speaker, Ornella Evangelista

<sup>9</sup> Melanie Domange, *Souvenirs et Reflexions*, Nant d'Enfer, 1974.

<sup>10</sup> Taffanel and Gaubert - *Grands Exercices Journaliers de Mécanisme pour Flûte*

important to take into consideration the development of the ‘French Flute School’ or ‘Modern French School.’<sup>11</sup>

The French Flute School emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, focusing on a refined, expressive playing style characterized by a clear, flexible tone and technical precision. Taffanel and Gaubert's collaboration produced the seminal technique book, *Grands Exercices Journaliers de Mécanisme pour Flûte*, which became foundational for flute pedagogy. This school's influence extended beyond technical aspects to include phrasing, articulation, and overall musical interpretation, shaping the performance standards for future generations of flautists.

In preparing a historically informed performance edition of Bonis's sonata, it was imperative to consider the principles and stylistic nuances of the French Flute School. This context not only informed the technical execution but also the expressive aspects of the music, ensuring that the arrangement for flute remains faithful to the stylistic and aesthetic values of the period. By understanding the development and characteristics of the Modern French School, the performance edition can accurately reflect the artistic intentions of both Bonis and the flautists of her time, providing a deeper, more authentic musical experience.

#### Comparative study of scores

In selecting Bonis's works for this comparative study, specific emphasis was placed on her *Suite pour Flûte, Violon et Piano* and *Élève-toi, Mon Âme* due to their unique and significant characteristics, offering insight into her compositional style and personal expression. The *Suite pour Flûte, Violon et Piano* stands out as the only composition in Bonis's output written for the combination of flute, violin, and piano. This unique instrumentation provides a

---

<sup>11</sup>According to the literature it was fathered by Paul Taffanel after the development of the Boehm system (flute keywork) in the mid-nineteenth century. Dorothy Glick, “Paul Taffanel and the Construction of the French Flute School” (Degree of Master in Music, University of Kansas, 2014), <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/213407112.pdf>.

distinctive timbral palette and showcases Bonis's ability to blend the sonorities of these instruments in a chamber setting. Analysing this suite allows for an exploration of her innovative approach to ensemble writing and her skill in creating intricate textures and dialogues between the instruments.

*Élève-toi, Mon Âme*, on the other hand, is considered one of Bonis's most autobiographical works. This composition is deeply personal and reflects significant life events of her affair with A.L. Hettich during her marriage with Albert Domange. Given the autobiographical nature of this piece, it provides a window into Bonis's inner world, revealing her emotional depth and the personal circumstances that influenced her music. Considering the numerous life events surrounding the composition of her Violin Sonata, it becomes even more crucial to include *Élève-toi, Mon Âme* in the analysis. This work offers valuable context and allows for a deeper understanding of the emotional and psychological dimensions of her music, particularly in relation to her experiences and personal narrative.

## Transcription

Insofar as this research can conclude, there is no specific methodology or literature regarding the transcription of violin to flute music. Consequently, I relied on the transcriptions of similar instrumentation in the Romantic French style. Studying and performing these works offered an insight into the compositional considerations. Such examples include *Pièce en forme de Habanera* a transcription by Louis Fleury of Maurice Ravel's *Vocalise-Étude en forme de Habanera* which was commissioned by Bonis's first love A.L Hettich. *Pavane pour une infante défunte* another solo piano work by Maurice Ravel was transcribed by Fleury for the flute or violin. In addition to these examples, there is a range of works by Gabriel Fauré which were transcribed for flute in order to fill the void in the instrument's romantic repertoire. These scores served as an important guiding force in bridging the gap between the technicalities of string to wind instrumentation.

The transcription leverages analytical insights from the comparative study outlined in the 'Comparative study of Scores' to inform decisions regarding the harmonic balance between the flute and violin, acknowledging their respective strengths and weaknesses. This approach ensures that the transcription is characteristic of Bonis's other flute works. The formatting conventions and idiomatic notation during the transcription process were guided by Elaine Gould's *Behind Bars*.<sup>12</sup> Differentiating the articulation of string to wind instrumentation and understanding the layout/presentation were also assisted by this literature. *The Critical Editing of Music* provided a foundational guide to the role of a music editor, emphasising that understanding the meaning of musical symbols is essential before transcribing them to accurately convey their intended significance.<sup>13</sup> *Essential Dictionary of Orchestration* by Dave Black and Tom Gerou served as a reminder of instrumental techniques and ranges.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Elaine Gould, *Behind Bars*, (Edition Peters, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> James Grier, *The Critical Editing Of Music*, (Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>14</sup> Dave Black, Tom Gerou, *Essential Dictionary of Orchestration*, (Alfred Publishing, Los Angeles, 1998).

The thesis entitled ‘A Transcription of César Franck’s Sonata in A Major for the Baritone Saxophone’ highlights the interpretive considerations needed when transcribing from a string to a wind medium, in addition to the aspects mentioned above these included: key, dynamics, breathing, articulation and the width/speed of vibrato.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> William Todd Oxford, “A Transcription of César Franck’s Sonata in A major for the Baritone Saxophone” (Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts, University of Texas at Austin, 2001), 29.



## Literature Review

Mel Bonis's great-granddaughter Christine Géliot, the president of the 'L' Association Mel Bonis', has been a leading advocate in the promotion of Bonis' life and musical legacy. In 2010, she published the first edition of a biography entitled *Mel Bonis, Femme et "compositeur"* - *Mel Bonis Woman and Composer*.<sup>16</sup> This book, which is only published in French and German, gives an in-depth account of the private and professional life of Mel Bonis, including details of her illegitimate daughter, Madeline. Géliot gave me a digital copy of an English translation by Dilys Barré for the purpose of my research and this is referenced throughout the thesis.

There was another much shorter biography written by the family of Bonis, on the tenth anniversary of her death in March 1947.<sup>17</sup> This biography, unlike Géliot's publication, details Bonis's career with limited mention of emotional or controversial topics – although her childhood is recounted as having much sadness: “une impression de tristesse”.<sup>18</sup> The short biography lists her musical awards and describes her unique compositional style with reference to the influence of her teachers, Franck and Fauré. A catalogue of all her works is listed before a selection of tributes from a range of musicians, professors, and composers. One such written message came from the flute player, Marquis de Gantés, as they encountered one another through her orchestral work, *Danse sacrée* (sacred dance) written in 1889. Gantés commended her on her original talent and they kept correspondence through a range of letters from 1903 to 1927 which are available online on the Bru Zane Mediabase.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, on November 5, 2023, the same online database uploaded the correspondence between Bonis and Vittorio Carrara, the Director of the Carrara Editor in Bergamo, Italy.

---

<sup>16</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis Femme et <<Compositeur>> (1858-1937)*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (France, 2022).

<sup>17</sup> *Mel Bonis (Madame Albert Domange) Compositeur de Musique Biographie – Oeuvres*, (1947).

<sup>18</sup> *Mel Bonis (Madame Albert Domange) Compositeur de Musique Biographie – Oeuvres*, (1947).

<sup>19</sup> Bru Zane Mediabase, [http://www.bruzanemediabase.com/eng/Musical-scholarship-online/Articles/\(searchText\)/Mel%20Bonis](http://www.bruzanemediabase.com/eng/Musical-scholarship-online/Articles/(searchText)/Mel%20Bonis).

These primary sources show Bonis being recognised at an international level as a reputable composer and influential figure in the French music scene.

In 2007, Christine Géliot wrote an article for the National Association of Teachers of Singing in which she uncovers how she personally became involved in the music of her great grandmother. She highlights the family's general disinterest in the compositions, describing the scores, which were stored in the basement of her Aunt Jeanne and Aunt Yvette, being mentioned "in the context of many unwanted piles of scores occupying space in the basements."<sup>20</sup> In addition to biographical details there are contextual topics discussed including, 'Woman and Composer.' A notable quotation that captures the position of women in music during this time is from the great French composer, Camille Saint-Saëns. He wrote "Mel Bonis decides to compose, and music gushes from her despite the repetitive duties a housewife must assume". Géliot points out that the lack of support by her own family or the one she married into creates a poignant disparity between her and the limited amount of female precursors Bonis had.<sup>21</sup>

Another section in this National Association of Teachers of Singing article is entitled the 'The Profound Neglect of Mel Bonis' work.' Géliot admits the lack of performance of Bonis' work during her lifetime being an attributing factor, the author notes a great effort was made by her oldest children Pierree Domange and Jeanne Brochot to have her works published. This article posits that the resurgence of the Baroque era and also 'modern music' from 1945 to 1985 in France made Bonis's 'post romanticism' style outdated.<sup>22</sup>

Christine Géliot co-wrote another book under the direction of d'Etienne Jardin entitled 'Parcours d'une compositrice de la Belle Époque'.<sup>23</sup> This source discusses how the beginning

---

<sup>20</sup> Christine Géliot, *Compositions for Voice by Mel Bonis, French Woman Composer 1858 – 1937*, National Association of Teachers in Singing, (2007): 47-57.

<sup>21</sup> These include Augusta Holmès, Cécile Chaminade, Louise Farrenc, Alma Mahler and Fanny Mendelssohn.

<sup>22</sup> Géliot, *Compositions for Voice by Mel Bonis, French Woman Composer 1858 – 1937*, 47-57.

<sup>23</sup> Étienne Jardin, *Parcours d'une compositrice de la Belle Époque*, (Actes Sud – Palazzetto Bru Zane, 2020).

of the first World War was an opportunity for women composers who, up to then, had been banned from the profession. ‘La Belle Époque’ defined by Philippe Jullian as spanning from 1900–1914, is commonly associated with music but applicable to many different perspectives from historical to cinematic, and literary to name but a few. The two books, *Mel Bonis, Femme et “compositeur”* and *Parcours d’une compositrice de la Belle Époque* are the only ones specifically dedicated to discussing Mel Bonis. She is briefly mentioned in a few other publications including ‘New Grove Dictionary of Woman Composers’ and ‘Dictionnaire Encyclopedique des Musiciens.’<sup>24</sup>

In 2018, a dissertation entitled *A study on the compositional style of the Flute Chamber works of Mel Bonis* was conducted, focusing on four chamber works originally written for the flute. This study explores the relationship between the experimentation of modern techniques of the twentieth century and the deep-rooted structure and tonality of Bonis’s writing. The document determines how the socio-political factors of Bonis’ life, specifically the restrictions imposed on women, limited the success and posterity of their work. The study outlines four contrasting stylistic changes in her flute chamber works: ‘Suite en Trio’(traditional form), ‘Fantaisie Septior’ (late-romantic style), ‘Scenes de La Forêt’ (programmatic language), and ‘Suite dans le style ancien’ (baroque practices).<sup>25</sup>

There is another thesis written by French and Music Bachelor student, Rachel Harlene Rosenman on the theme of Bonis’s chamber music. It discusses Bonis’s Catholic faith and strict religious upbringing, arguing that these sentiments can be also seen in her secular works. Within this study there is an analysis which incorporates literary pastoral ideas and

---

<sup>24</sup> Julie Anne Sadie, Rhian Samuel, *The New Grove Dictionary of Women Composers*, (Macmillan,1994); L’Encyclopædia Universalis, *Dictionnaire Encyclopedique des Musiciens*, (Laffont, 1995).

<sup>25</sup> Geraldine Margaret Padilla, “A study of compositional style of the Flute Chamber Works of Mel Bonis (Graduate School, University of Southern Mississippi, 2018).

historical context from the French period known as ‘fin-de-siècle’ in order to show a relationship between music and religious identity in the late nineteenth century in France.<sup>26</sup>

An examination of the six works for flute and piano by Bonis are discussed in a research paper by Jenna Daum entitled ‘Mel Bonis: Six Works for Flute and Piano’.<sup>27</sup> This includes performance suggestions on all works. Of particular significance to my research is an in-depth analysis on Bonis’s flute and piano sonata composed in 1904 for the prolific French flautist Louis Fleury. Daum writes that ‘understanding the structure of each movement as a whole will aid in a rich interpretation of this work’.<sup>28</sup>

In regard to primary sources, there is an abundance of Bonis’s autograph manuscripts kept predominantly in private storage by her descendants. However, the facsimile of her Violin Sonata in F Sharp minor is lost. The first publication of this score was in 1923 by Editions Maurice Senart in Paris and this is regarded as closest to the original.<sup>29</sup>

Besides letters, there is only one other documented source of the personal writings of Mel Bonis entitled ‘Souvenirs et Reflexions’.<sup>30</sup> These dated reflections and personal anecdotes were compiled together by her daughter Jeanne Brochot (1888-1987) who wanted others to know the ‘originality of thought’ of her mother.<sup>31</sup>

As previously mentioned, the online archive, Bru Zane MediaBase, holds music-related resources specific to the Romantic French era and a collection of Mel Bonis letters.<sup>32</sup> Of specific relevance to my research is the correspondence between Bonis and the daughter of Louis Bourgault-Ducoudary, an ethnomusicologist who composed the Greek folk inspired

---

<sup>26</sup> Rachel Harlene Rosenman, *A Rosary Among the Roses : Tracing Pastoral Allusions and Spiritual Resonances in Chamber Music by Mel Bonis* (Bachelor of Arts with Departmental Honors, Wesleyan University, 2017), <https://digitalcollections.wesleyan.edu/object/ir-967>.

<sup>27</sup> Jenna Daum, “Mel Bonis: Six Works for Flute and Piano” (Arizona State University, 2013).

<sup>28</sup> Jenna Daum, “Mel Bonis: Six Works for Flute and Piano” (Arizona State University, 2013).

<sup>29</sup> Bonis, Mel. *Sonate pour violon et piano*. Maurice Senart, Paris, 1923.

<sup>30</sup> Melanie Domange, *Souvenirs et Reflexions*, Nant d’Enfer, 1974.

<sup>31</sup> Dedication of book - Melanie Domange, *Souvenirs et Reflexions*, Nant d’Enfer, 1974.

<sup>32</sup> Bru Zane Mediabase, <http://www.bruzanemediabase.com/eng/Archives-collections/Mel-Bonis-collection>.

melody on which the third movement of the *Sonata for Violin and Piano in F sharp minor*, *Op. 112* is based upon .

Regarding sound recordings, there is a booklet essay that accompanies a ‘Toccata Next’ CD recording of the ‘First Ladies Three Romantic Violin Sonatas by Elfirda Andrée, Mel Bonis and Ethel Smyth’.<sup>33</sup> This sonata by Bonis was only heard twice between 1925 and the first recording in 1993.<sup>34</sup> It includes a brief biography and analysis on Bonis’s ‘Violin sonata in F Sharp Minor’.

---

<sup>33</sup> Mel Bonis, Anette-Barbara Vogel, Durval Cesetti, First Ladies Three Romantic Violin Sonatas by Elfirda Andrée, Mel Bonis and Ethel Smyth, <https://toccataclassics.com/product/first-ladies-three-romantic-violin-sonatas/>.

<sup>34</sup> Jeffrey Stokes, First Ladies Three Romantic Violin Sonatas by Elfirda Andrée, Mel Bonis and Ethel Smyth, <https://toccataclassics.com/product/first-ladies-three-romantic-violin-sonatas/>.

## Chapter One: Contextualising Mel Bonis's Musical Legacy Through Postcards

Through a detailed analysis of un-examined correspondence between Bonis and Vittorio Carrara, this chapter seeks to contextualise the critical reception of Bonis's music in light of existing biographical and historical knowledge of the composer. The intersection of gender and age is investigated within the historical context of the Prix de Rome, with a specific focus on the experiences of the composer Mel Bonis. A century after its establishment, this competition allowed female participation. These primary sources provide insights into Bonis's personal and professional endeavours, illuminating not only her challenges but also the gender-based barriers and broader dynamics of the music publishing industry.

### 1.1 Mel Bonis, the Paris Conservatory and the Prix de Rome

The Prix de Rome was a prestigious award for exceptional individuals in the arts. It included a financial reward and a residency in Villa Medici in Rome, offering “public attention, exposure and artistic honour.”<sup>35</sup> It took 100 years for the award, which originated in 1803, to permit women's participation and another decade for a woman to be awarded the namesake prize.<sup>36</sup> In her biography on Mel Bonis, Géliot writes that one of Bonis's teachers and a past winner of the Prix de Rome, Ernest Guiraud, might have “envisaged putting her in” for the award in the late nineteenth century, “but for a young lady.. that had never been done before”.<sup>37</sup> Bonis received commendable results in her 1881 summer exams where Théodore

---

<sup>35</sup> Annegret Fauser, “La Guerre en dentelles: Women and the “Prix de Rome” in French Cultural Politics,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Volume 51, Spring (1998): 89-90, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/831898?searchText=annegret+fauser&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Dannegret%2Bfauser&ab\\_segments=0%2Fbasic\\_search\\_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3Aecbd73d58196cc22d14d0e9c1bfa370d](https://www.jstor.org/stable/831898?searchText=annegret+fauser&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Dannegret%2Bfauser&ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3Aecbd73d58196cc22d14d0e9c1bfa370d).

<sup>36</sup> Annegret Fauser, “La Guerre en dentelles”: Women and the “Prix de Rome” in French Cultural Politics,” 84.

<sup>37</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the Woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 20.

Dubois wrote “good fugue, clear, musical, well written”.<sup>38</sup> A fugue in four voices and four clefs was the preliminary requirement for the competition, in addition to setting a poem for SATB choir with orchestral accompaniment.<sup>39</sup> The compositional skill of a fugue was not offered to women studying in the Paris Conservatoire when it first opened in 1795; instead, they attended female-only classes in solfège, harmony, piano and piano accompaniment.<sup>40</sup>

Music education was considered an attractive additional element for young women to bring to marriage.<sup>41</sup> It was this perception that persuaded Bonis’s parents to allow their daughter to receive piano and music theory lessons.<sup>42</sup> Another family friend and cornet professor at the Paris Conservatory from 1874 to 1880, Monsieur Maury, encouraged Bonis to study at this famous music establishment. She was then eighteen years old and possessed significant musical talent, including “seriously developed” piano technique, good sight reading ability, and a natural gift for improvisation.<sup>43</sup>

In 1876, Bonis became a private student of César Franck, and later that year, she began studying harmony and accompaniment, before progressing to composition and organ.<sup>44</sup> In December, she commenced classes in harmony and counterpoint with Monsieur Giraud (1837–1892) and composition with Monsieur Frumence.<sup>45</sup> It was during these classes that Guiraud congratulated Debussy and Bonis, referring to them as his “beginner composers.”<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 20.

<sup>39</sup> Annegret Fauser, “La Guerre en dentelles”: Women and the “Prix de Rome” in French Cultural Politics,” 93.

<sup>40</sup> Annegret Fauser, “La Guerre en dentelles”: Women and the “Prix de Rome” in French Cultural Politics,” 89.

<sup>41</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 17.

<sup>42</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the Woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 17.

<sup>43</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the Woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 17.

<sup>44</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the Woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 17.

<sup>45</sup> Monsieur Frumence (dates unknown)

<sup>46</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the Woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 20.

Bonis had completed the counterpoint course in a few months and began studying the ‘fugue’ in the spring of her first year.<sup>47</sup>

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of February 1903, when Monsieur le Secrétaire Perpétuel announced the inclusion of women in the Prix de Rome, strict criteria were established for female entrants to meet. These included French nationality, being unmarried, aged over fifteen years of age and under thirty.<sup>48</sup> In Mel Bonis’s case, she only met one of these criteria, being of French nationality. By 1903, at the age of 45 and married since 1883, she was considered too old to qualify. Therefore, while this inclusion marked the progression of women in the compositional profession, it did not benefit individuals like Bonis due to their age and marital status. Consequently, female composers were compelled to forge their own paths to success in the profession.

Bonis challenged ageist and sexist barriers in the composing profession as exemplified by her exchange of sixteen telegrams and letters between 1930 and 1937 with Vittorio Carrara, the Director of the Carrara Editing House in Bergamo, Italy. Despite being in her seventies and in ill health during this period, she demonstrated unwavering determination to promote her work through an organ periodical printed in seven languages and distributed across Europe. These primary sources contain discussions between Bonis and an international editor (Vittorio Carrara). She was respected without any gender-based bias, as she faced no reprimand for being a woman of a certain age or marital status.

Just days after Bonis's passing on March 22, 1937, a telegram arrived from the office of Carrara editors, known as the ‘Direzione’.<sup>49</sup> This message contrasts previous communications, as it had a more personalized tone. It expressed gratitude for Bonis’s recent

---

<sup>47</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the Woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 20.

<sup>48</sup> Annegret Fauser, “La Guerre en dentelles”: Women and the “Prix de Rome” in French Cultural Politics,” 87.

<sup>49</sup> Postcard from Carrara to Bonis, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1937, Bru Zane Media.

<https://www.bruzanemediabase.com/en/exploration/documents/lettres-edizioni-musicali-carrara-mel-bonis>.



letter, dated March 16th, which had arrived just two days before her death, detailing modifications she wished to incorporate into the piece catalogued as No.796. However, Carrara's editors deemed this piece unsuitable for publication due to its perceived detached and pianistic style. Despite their unawareness of her passing, they eagerly awaited another piece more aligned with their preferences.

## 1.2 The Origins of the Name Mel Bonis

Mel Bonis, originally named Mélanie Hélène, was born on January 21, 1858. It wasn't until 1881 that she adopted the name "Mel Bonis," a shortened, androgynous version of her birth name.<sup>50</sup> She chose this name during her studies at the Paris Conservatory when her improvisational style began to evolve into full musical compositions. The first piece she signed with this new name, was a piano piece titled "Impromptu, my first piece, by Mel Bonis."<sup>51</sup> Bonis's close collaborator and lover, Amédée-Louis Hettich, whom she met during her studies also wrote under various pen names throughout his life to distinguish his work from his stage and societal identity.<sup>52</sup>

In October 2022, Géliot, the composer's great-granddaughter, released an article entitled 'Le nom de plume' ('The pen name'). The contents discuss the appropriate usage of Mel Bonis and the composer's name at birth, Mélanie Bonis. Géliot quotes Liszt's advice to one of his female students, Marie Jaëll (1846-1925), "A man's name and your score would be on all the pianos."<sup>53</sup> Work began in 1998 to promote the compositional output and musical legacy of Mel Bonis. Following these promotional efforts, Christine and the three other

---

<sup>50</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the Woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 21.

<sup>51</sup> This is believed to have been submitted for the exam jury under the title "Romance Sans paroles," published in 2001 by Armiane,<sup>51</sup> and judged by Theodore Dubois as "not bad".<sup>51</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Examples of Pen names include Landély, Amadée L., and Héler. - Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré -2023, 50.

<sup>53</sup> Christine Géliot, *Le nom de plume*, 10<sup>th</sup> October 2022. <https://www.mel-bonis.com/PDF/Mel-bonis-nom-de-plume.pdf>

leaders involved—the Mayers (l'ensemble de Cologne), Gilles Manchec (Les Editions Armiane), and Laurent Martin (Pianisre, les Concerts de Vollore)—made a collective decision to no longer use Mélanie Bonis but rather the name Mel, that the composer chose for herself, though Mélanie has been used to feminise her presence to counteract one of the primary obstacles she faced in her career, being a woman. The use of both names is pointless according to Christine Géliot as building “a name for one’s self is difficult enough.”<sup>54</sup>

Over the final seven years of Bonis’s life, the composer’s correspondence with Carrara revealed subtle shifts in address and tone. Initially, Carrara’s letters opened formally with “Esimio Maestro,” indicating respect for Bonis’s stature as a composer.<sup>55</sup> In the second telegram and parcel, received on July 3, 1930, Mel Bonis is addressed as “Egr. (Egregio) Maestro,” a form of address that utilises the masculine adjective and noun for grammatical purposes. This choice of wording reflects the prevailing norms of the time, where masculine forms were often defaulted, regardless of the recipient’s gender. Despite the grammatical gender misalignment, the respect conveyed through the term “Egregio Maestro” remained intact, underscoring Carrara’s acknowledgement of Bonis’s respected status as a composer. This formality persisted in subsequent exchanges, maintaining the address “Esimio Maestro Mel Bonis at 21 Boulevard Bertier,” a consistent reflection of Carrara’s reverence for Bonis’s professional stature.

By July 12, 1932, Carrara’s tone shifted to a more elevated form of respect, addressing Bonis as “Illustrious Maestro Mel Bonis.” Yet, further changes emerged in the letter of January 29, 1934, where Carrara switched to a more personal tone, referring to Bonis as ‘Esimia Prof.sa (professoressa).’ The progression continued with the telegram of October 19,

---

<sup>54</sup> Christine Géliot, *Le nom de plume*, 10<sup>th</sup> October 2022. <https://www.mel-bonis.com/PDF/Mel-bonis-nom-de-plume.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> Technically addresses a respected ‘eminent’ male, however, this is not to be misunderstood as a misgendering of Mel Bonis, but rather the proper use of Italian grammar. To this day there is no feminisation of the word “Maestro” which is used in a musical context to address a “master of the arts, especially a composer or conductor” - <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/italian-english/maestro>

1935, where Carrara acknowledged Bonis's marital status by addressing her as 'Madame Domange' for the first time.<sup>56</sup>

On January 20, 1937, possibly the final exchange, before Bonis's passing on March 18, 1937, Carrara addressed her as “Gentilissima Amica,” signifying a deeper level of friendship and perhaps a recognition of their inevitable mortality. Even in the standardised confirmations sent to composers upon receiving their compositions at the Carrara editing house, the gender imbalance in the composing profession was subtly highlighted by the use of the address, "Signor Maestro."<sup>57</sup> These nuanced shifts in address and tone reflect both the evolving nature of their relationship but the broader societal attitudes towards gender and status within the composing profession.

### 1.3 Bonis: An Influential Figure in the French Music Scene

The first recorded correspondence between Carrara and Bonis took place on the 10th of April 1930. This telegram served to inform Mel Bonis about her organ ‘Prelude’, recently published by “Casa Editrice V. Carrara” in their periodical “Maestri dell ‘Organo” (Composers of the Organ). Along with the telegram, Carrara sent a “rotolino” (roll) containing part no. 5 of the publication, which featured Bonis's work. He expressed his hope that she was pleased with the publishing, as the rest of the editor's collaborators always were, and did not spot any mistakes. Carrara also requested Mel Bonis's assistance in promoting this new periodical, emphasising the importance of its widespread dissemination.<sup>58</sup>

Additionally, he inquired if she could recommend another good French “Collaboratore” (non-

---

<sup>56</sup> Bonis's grave in Montmartre cemetery – Paris, is marked as 'Madame Albert Domange née Mel Bonis', serving as a poignant reminder of the lack of recognition she received for her identity, both personally and professionally.

<sup>57</sup> All compositions were registered with a number unique to each piece. There is a total of five of these telegrams in this collection, all without dates and the stamps are too faded to read, however the Bru Zane Media Base has included estimated years that they were sent. This is said to be in 1932 and the piece that is being registered is number 176.

<sup>58</sup> “ha bisogno di essere diffuso e lanciato per ogni dove”

gender specific) for their endeavours. This initial correspondence between Bonis and Carrara demonstrates the composer's active involvement with Carrara's publishing house. As highlighted by her role as secretary and competition winner within the 'Société des compositeurs de musique,' Bonis's significance within the organisation is evident as she is uniquely recognised as 'Mel-Bonis (Mélanie Bonis)' among members listed in surname-first name order.<sup>59</sup>

Carrara's subsequent interactions with Bonis, such as his humorous acknowledgement of her persistent submissions on July 12, 1932, and his expressions of gratitude for her contributions and engagement, further solidify their professional relationship, demonstrating a growing rapport within the music publishing sphere. Additionally, his extension of gratitude for her participation in an organ piece competition on January 29, 1934, illustrates Carrara's increasing respect for Bonis and their evolving professional relationship. In a letter dated January 29, 1934, Carrara assured Bonis that he would promptly send her three complimentary copies of the publication featuring her piece, registered as No. 35, while declining any compensation and expressing deep appreciation for her contributions.

Carrara greatly valued Bonis's description of him as the "più amabile degli Editori" (the most liked of the editors).<sup>60</sup> This expression was more than a compliment; it signified the deep mutual respect and admiration that had developed through their correspondence. This phrase became emblematic of Bonis's high regard for Carrara's editorial work. Carrara frequently reiterated this sentiment in multiple telegrams, expressing his hope that Bonis would perpetually remember her words. This continual reference highlights the significance Carrara placed on their professional relationship and his profound respect for Bonis.

---

<sup>59</sup> Members List of *Société des compositeurs de musique* (1862-1911)

[https://www.iremusc.cnrs.fr/sites/default/files/adherents4\\_0.pdf](https://www.iremusc.cnrs.fr/sites/default/files/adherents4_0.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> Postcard from Carrara to Bonis, 19<sup>th</sup> July 1936, Bru Zane Media.

<https://www.bruzanemediabase.com/en/exploration/documents/lettres-edizioni-musicali-carrara-mel-bonis>.

#### 1.4 Bonis's Advocacy for Her Work

On the 8th of February 1933, a general letter of correspondence was sent to all the composers published, in Italy and abroad, who had been featured in Carrara publications. With this letter, a copy edit of the latest periodical 'L'organista Liturgico' (Liturgical organist) was sent, with a page entitled "Errata-Corrige," meaning "correction of errors." Carrara asked the composers to check their works for any note or annotation mistakes and send them back by post before the publication is commercially circulated. Carrara sent this general letter for three main reasons. Firstly, to recognize the generosity of collaborators and express gratitude to them. Secondly, to ask for support from the editor in the upcoming publication. Thirdly, to convince the composers that the beauty of this collection, and the works that Carrara publishes in general, are kept very simplistic. He wanted the composers to see other published works to get inspiration from their shared style. This was significant regarding the romantic traditional style of Mel Bonis, which was publicly regarded as "old hat" with the emergence of the "Les Six" in France.<sup>61</sup> Perhaps realizing even in her old age, that the legacy of her music may be more secure with a more global audience, she could no longer confine her publications within the context of France.

However, amidst their professional relationship, there were moments of tension and disagreement. On the 28th of March 1935, Mel Bonis received a letter, the longest length of personalised correspondence from Carrara, where he responded to her three last letters in a clear ("chiaro") and concise/understood ("inequivocabile") manner. The first paragraph expressed deep upset and regret from Carrara when he read that Bonis wanted to end publishing her works with "Editoriale Carrara". He mentioned how Bonis had previously referred to him as the best/most liked editor. He hoped that she made this decision in a

---

<sup>61</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the Woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 131.

moment of unhappiness and that she would continue to send her beautiful pages of music, which were read with such pleasure. Carrara explained that Bonis must have misinterpreted his words when he asked for a composition that was light and full of life. He made this suggestion as the majority of subscribers enjoy works that are “un po allegre” (a little bit lively). He confirmed that he was not trying to diminish his admiration for her compositions.

Bonis’s work, registered as number 1140, in the key of E flat major was noted as missing in the third paragraph of this letter; it had been replaced by the work registered as Moderato No. 2085. They would continue to search for no. 1140, even to destroy it to avoid further confusion. Carrara went on to confirm the registration of three other works: Lento No. 1621, Allegretto No. 1891, and Allegretto non troppo No. 2095. He suggested that the works would be sent back to her if they were not accepted for publishing. He concluded the letter by hoping that their relationship had been corrected and he prayed that she continued to have goodwill towards him, as he held for her. He knew that in France she had the ability to advertise all of her work and hence why he held her support in specific high regard. The aim of his periodical was to be simple, popular, and easy for the sponsors, while also trying to keep “exceptional writers” happy as they had a higher “taste” in music. He signed off in a hopeful manner – “in tale speranza”.

Bonis wrote to Carrara again on the 8th of July 1935, and he replied on the 15th of the same month. The unnamed piece registered as No. 1140 was mentioned once again; it seemed that Bonis had requested the work (by musically notating the opening theme) which was published in 1933.<sup>62</sup> Carrara explained that he did not have any other copies, and to obtain the piece, one would have to purchase the entire volume published in 1933, which included a lot of useful music for liturgical services.

---

<sup>62</sup> “Pezzo di cui mi trascrive il tema iniziale”

As documented in the Géliot biography, Bonis had requested for all her organ works to be republished in a collection. Géliot writes that Carrara refused to do so without financial payment and that the financial proposition deeply offended Bonis and thus was the end to their professional relationship. By studying the postcards, it is evident there were still two years of personal correspondence. In response to Bonis's request, Carrara explained that he had to grant her this publishing right; however, he said he would appease Bonis only due to their work relationship. As a solution, he offered to create a small extraction of all the past periodicals, but he questioned the prospect of commercial success. He asked if she would organise the selling of these in the shops in France because the collection would not make any money for the Carrara publishing house as they had already published these materials.

In a telegram dated July 10, 1936, Carrara swiftly addressed a contentious assertion made by Mel Bonis opening with a line that translates to "while she [Mel Bonis] has the audacity (typed in red ink) to write that I have no longer interest in her and her music is of no longer interest to our establishment (Carrara editing house), I am publishing one of her pieces (in capitals) .... to be used in this month's publication".<sup>63</sup> He provided a musical notation of the first bar of the work and emphasised that her accusation had no foundation, urging her to retract her statement. This charged exchange towards the end of Bonis's life may be explained by Géliot's description of her great-grandmother as an individual who experienced "great highs and great lows".<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> Postcard from Carrara to Bonis, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1936, Bru Zane Media.  
<https://www.bruzanemediabase.com/en/exploration/documents/lettres-edizioni-musicali-carrara-mel-bonis>.

<sup>64</sup> In person discussion with Mel Bonis's great granddaughter Christine Géliot – 8<sup>th</sup> July 2023

### 1.5 Mel Bonis's Lifelong Affinity for Sacred Music and Her Final Compositions

Music was subconsciously part of Mel Bonis's life from a young age. She claims that one of the biggest disappointments as a child was learning that the singing of the choir in the church was not the laughter of "God, the Blessed Virgin, angels and saints' as she had thought.<sup>65</sup> Due to the close proximity to her house, number 18 Rue Montmartre, the Saint Eustache church in Paris is the likely place she had her first confirmation.<sup>66</sup>

In the last seven years of Bonis's life, she felt a compelling urge to return to sacred music, evident in her prolific output of organ compositions during this period. The telegram and parcel from July 3, 1930, were addressed to 21 Boulevard Bertier, the location of the mansion where Bonis lived after the publication of her "Sonate pour violin" in 1922, following her widowhood. She had an organ installed in the drawing room, hinting at the compositional direction that would characterise her final years. In 1931, Bonis rented the residence at the 17<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement of Paris and settled permanently in Sarcelles, located on the northern outskirts of the city. Géliot writes that this move was prompted by Bonis's declining mobility. "Mélanie became less and less mobile. The comings and goings between Paris and Sarcelles exhausted her...."<sup>67</sup>

Reconnecting with her Catholic upbringing, Bonis also found ways to express her faith in personal gestures within her correspondence with Carrara. In a telegram dated October 19, 1935, she sent Carrara a religious photo, a poignant reminder of her concern for his students and staff involved in the East African conflict. This act echoes her gesture during the First World War when she provided conscripts with an image of the Holy Shroud as a symbol of

---

<sup>65</sup> Melanie Domange, *Souvenirs et Reflexions*, Nant d'Enfer, 1974, 11.

<sup>66</sup>In the *Souvenirs and Reflexions* she recounts a priest called Coullié, was ordained in 1854 and served in the Archdiocese of Paris as a vicar in three churches including St-Eustache Melanie Domange, *Souvenirs et Reflexions*, Nant d'Enfer, 1974, 12.

<sup>67</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 134.



Christ's protection.<sup>68</sup> Continuing this thread of personal matters in the telegram dated July 10, 1936, Carrara expresses his desire for the resolution of these issues with the aid of 'La grande Madre' (Our Lady).<sup>69</sup>

Insofar as this research can conclude, Bonis received the last piece of personalised correspondence with Vittorio Carrara on the 20th of January 1937. Bonis passed on the 18th of March 1937. In this postcard, Carrara thanks her for the piece entitled "Sortie," the French word for "Exit." There are two organ works listed in the Bonis catalogue with 'Sortie' in their names.<sup>70</sup> Number 96, "Sortie (pour orgue ou harmonium)," without a compositional date, was first published by an editing house in Toulouse by the name "La Musique Sacrée". However, it was also included in the 1971 collection of Bonis's organ works published by Carrara and a publication by the French publisher Armiane. The other work is titled "Sortie en ré majeur (pour orgue)," which is not numbered but registered in the 'Domange Catalogue'.<sup>71</sup> There is no additional information apart from a dedication to 'Issac Strauss' and the phrase "mieux vaut renoncer" ("better give up") regarding the whereabouts of the score. Like himself (Carrara), Bonis was in ill health. He wishes that the Lord "il Signore" waits a little bit more time before calling him so he can get his affairs in order. He writes that he is also in a position of chronic illness. He signs off encouraging Mel Bonis to "stia allegra," to stay in spirit.

Bonis's journey through music education and her career as a composer reveals a mix of personal goals and societal limits. Bonis was allowed to pursue music as a way to better her chances in marriage and improve her social status. But her demonstration of compositional talent during her time at the Paris Conservatoire hinted at a bright future that could have led

---

<sup>68</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 109.

<sup>69</sup> Postcard from Carrara to Bonis, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1936, Bru Zane Media.

<sup>70</sup> Catalogue was gifted to me with thanks to Christine Géliot during an in person visit to the Bonis archives on the 8<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

<sup>71</sup> Catalogue of Bonis association - <https://www.mel-bonis.com/catalogueMelBonis2020.pdf>

to awards like the Prix de Rome—a goal that was out of reach due to initial restrictions on gender, and post-1903, on age and marital status.

The abundance of organ music from her later years marks a return to her spiritual and musical roots. This phase not only underscores her consistent creativity but also her deep commitment to her faith, an aspect she shared with Carrara, which shaped both her personal and professional life. Her long-term correspondence with Carrara over seven years shows how Bonis cleverly manoeuvred through these professional barriers, looking for opportunities to publish outside France, to avoid local compositional biases and widen her influence. This demonstrates her forward-thinking approach but also the growing professional respect Carrara had for her, which went beyond her age or gender. Carrara's letters gradually shifted in tone, becoming more personal and respectful of Bonis's unique artistic voice. This is particularly noted in Carrara's repetition of the phrase said by Bonis that he was “più amabile degli Editori” (the most liked of the editors).

## Chapter Two: Contextualising Mel Bonis's Violin Sonata and Selected Chamber Compositions

This chapter provides a detailed examination of Mel Bonis's violin sonata, analysing its compositional characteristics and historical significance within her extensive musical repertoire. Drawing from primary sources such as Bonis's correspondence and biographical accounts, including insights from Géliot's biography, the chapter explains the evolution of Bonis's compositions, with a focus on her exploration of cyclic form and the influence of her teacher, César Franck. It also highlights structural differences between her flute and violin sonatas, revealing the distinct compositional approaches she employed in these chamber works. Through a meticulous analysis of instrumental voicing, thematic development and harmonic progression, this chapter aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of Bonis's chamber music and her contributions to the late Romantic genre.

### 2.1 Bonis and her Sonatas

Bonis wrote three sonatas as part of an extensive output of 300 works. The first was a four-movement flute sonata dedicated to Louis Fleury and published in 1904 by Demets. A year later her three-movement cello sonata dedicated to Maurice Demaison was published, also by Demets.<sup>72</sup> It was not until 1923 that her final sonata, a four-movement work for violin dedicated to her cousins, Madeline and Simon Filon, was published by Maurice Senart. In 1998, German musicologist, cellist and Mel Bonis advocate, Eberhard Meyer described this four-movement sonata as starting with a moderato that intricately blends rhythmic complexity, chromaticism, and deeply evocative melancholic themes, ultimately conveying a

---

<sup>72</sup> Bonis performed this work with cellist Louis Feuillard at the "Société de Compositeurs de Musique" concert on February 14th 1906 in the Quartets Room of the Salle Pleyel alongside compositions by Hélène Fleury first woman to receive a prize in the Priz de Rome. – Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the Woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré -2023, 99.

pure sense of melancholy. The witty and charming scherzo provides a stark contrast to this.<sup>73</sup> Another commentator, reflecting on the composition, 75 years after its creation, similarly praised its contrasts. This unnamed critic recalls their experience at the *Salon des Musiciens*, expressing immense pleasure in hearing a sonata by Mel Bonis. They noted the presence of a thoughtfully crafted andante, featuring a Greek melody that unfolds with captivating development before reaching a vibrant and powerful finale. This interplay of darkness and light within the composition was also deemed profoundly satisfying by the critic from *Courrier des Musiciens*.<sup>74</sup>

The Violin Sonata in F sharp minor is compositionally and musically her most advanced sonata work and embodies the compositional technique of cyclic form that her teacher, César Franck, was so prominently known for. Franck was influential throughout her life. Géliot writes that at 65 years of age, Bonis would sit for hours rehearsing her late teacher's Quintet after attending mass.<sup>75</sup> Similar to Franck's Violin Sonata in A Major, Bonis's sonata has a connective thread between movements that could be separated into two pairs: the first with the second movement, and the third with the fourth. Bonis uses the third movement in both her flute and violin sonata as a point of musical intensity, the cello sonata does not have a similar compositional signpost. The cello sonata while containing the movement of interesting musical lines lacks compositional structure and instrumental dialogue, so prominently seen in the flute and particularly the violin sonata. The continuously seamless musical material and formatting of the score give the impression of a symphonic/tone poem. The texture is homophonic on many occasions rather than a rich polyphony as seen in her other works. Maurice Demaison, to whom the cello sonata was

---

<sup>73</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 132.

<sup>74</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 132.

<sup>75</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 127.

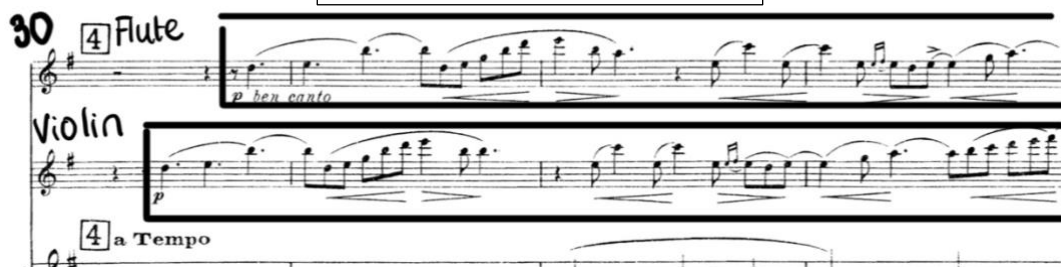
dedicated, wrote about Franck's influence on the work, stating it is "very recognisable in the last movement. It ends with a "furioso" which recalls the "maestoso" introducing the second theme of the first movement."<sup>76</sup>

## 2.2 *Suite pour Flûte, Violon et Piano*

An analysis of Bonis's *Suite pour Flûte, Violon et Piano* is crucial in understanding the different compositional approaches used by the composer for the violin and flute interchangeably. It exemplifies her proficiency in crafting intricate interplays between different instruments, a skill that proved essential for composing her flute sonata (1904) and later her violin sonata (1923). This work is the sole composition featuring this specific instrumentation, offering a unique insight into Bonis's treatment of these instruments, with moments of divergence and convergence enriching their interplay (playing octaves apart, with the flute intermittently taking precedence over the violin and vice versa.). This is particularly seen in the 7-bar fugue in the second movement (bars 30-37) and antiphonal passages throughout the first movement (bars 6 – 10 and 48 – 52).



Musical Example 1.0



Musical Example 2.0

<sup>76</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 99.

*Suite pour Flûte, Violon et Piano* was described by Mel Bonis as her “petit trio”.<sup>77</sup> First published by Demets in 1903, the suite showcases a masterful blend of echoing and contrasting motifs across its three movements—*Sérénade*, *Pastorale*, and *Scherzo*. This suite was performed by Bonis herself on several occasions with the amateur flautist, Marquis of Gantès and well-known flautist, Louis Fleury.<sup>78</sup> The work was also played by Philippe Gaubert, one of the fathers of the French Flute School, in a concert in Bordeaux.<sup>79</sup>

The first movement entitled *Sérénade* is in common time. It begins with a five-bar reoccurring theme played by the flute and lightly accompanied by the piano. The violin enters in bar six playing descending crotchet pairs that support the flute which is now playing the theme up a third. In bars 14 and 15 the finishing flute passage is assisted by the violin to enter the B section which has now been modulated to G major. The violin now sets up the accompaniment with the same crotchet pair movement which is now ascending rather than descending. The two single melody instruments work in contrary motion throughout bars 20 to 22. In bar 27 the flute takes on the accompaniment role while the violin takes on the countermelody. The theme is now in the left hand of the piano. A two-bar sub-theme begins in the right hand of the piano at bars 35 and 36, this is repeated at the same pitch in the flute line (bars 37-38) and then directly after this, by the violin now a fourth higher but with smaller melodic intervals. In bar 43, the opening theme is reiterated, this time on the violin, mirroring how it was initially played by the flute with one difference in which the second half of the phrase descending rather than ascending, utilising notes out of the flute’s range.

---

<sup>77</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 96.

<sup>78</sup> Bonis frequently performed many of her compositions featuring the flute, likely due to her close connections with various accomplished flute players. In particular, she performed the debut of her Flute Sonata on March 4<sup>th</sup> 1905 at the Salle Pleyel in Paris with Louis Fleury. Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 96.

<sup>79</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 99.



Musical Example 3.0

The lines finally meet in a passage which is in octave unison in bar 58, the flute being the lower of the two. The violin line repeats a short extract of the original theme before it joins with the flute in bar 65 for a suspension leading into the piano modulation back to the home key of E minor. The final 3 bars of the piano have staccato chords which support the violin's final notes as two pizzicato chords.

The second movement, *Pastorale*, is a very lightly textured work, with a folk-like quality reminiscent of the third movement in the violin sonata. It is written in compound quadruple time. The piano and violin both enter on the downbeat of bar 1 as a G major drone that supports the melody line played by the flute entering on beat two of the same bar. This 8-bar melodic theme introduces this peaceful atmospheric movement. It includes a triplet semiquaver that acts as a motif throughout the piece, passing through all the instruments. This written-out ornamentation is similarly, a prominent feature of the third movement in the violin sonata. The violin takes this motif for the first time in bar 12, employing the higher registers of the instrument in a similar manner as the flute at the beginning of the movement. The dotted crotchet counter melody is exchanged between the left hands of the piano (bars 16 and 17) and the flute (bars 20-22). The violin takes on the melody from bars 21 to 25, and the accompaniment is an antiphonal dialogue between the right hand of the piano and flute with variations of a quaver crotchet pattern. As seen in Musical Example 2.0 at bar 30 there is an

evident fugue between the flute and violin, with both voices in the same octave, phrasing and dynamic markings. This fugue ends in Bar 37, and the voices resume their primary roles, the flute with a pastoral melody and the violin as a supporting drone.

The *Scherzo*, closing the Suite is the longest movement, stretching over 241 bars similar to the final movement of the violin sonata. From experience performing the work, it has a strong feeling of one beat in a bar. The flute plays solo for a dotted crotchet, indicating an upbeat, although this is not traditionally facilitated in the last bar of the movement (Musical Example 4.0). This is also a feature in the second movement of the Violin Sonata (Musical Example 5.0). The presto also in triple time (3/4) has a clear 4 quavers upbeat before the downbeat of the opening melody. It is unclear if Bonis meant it as an upbeat as the last bar is played only by the piano with a crotchet on the downbeat followed by two crotchet rests

**SCHERZO**

Mel BONIS

FLÛTE  
VIOLON  
PIANO

Allegro con moto  $\text{♩} = 96$   
*dolce gravior poco rubato*

Allegro con moto  $\text{♩} = 96$   
*p differé*

Musical Example 4.0

II

Flute  
Piano

Presto

Musical Example 5.0

The opening theme of the Suite's last movement is played by the flute for 7 bars. It is then developed in the right hand of the piano with the addition of grace notes. The grace notes become a motif throughout the rest of the work and are shared in all instrumental lines. The flute provides emphasis on the downbeats of bars 10-12. The violin enters in bar 17 with the same introductory theme as the flute at the same pitch however it does not complete all 7 bars, rather the flute completes the final two bars of the theme. At bar 53, the flute and violin are in contra-motion while the piano right-hand plays a variation on the theme (Musical Example 6.0).



13

53

Musical Example 6.0

The music is increasingly polyphonic at bar 124, which shows the independent strength of the violin and flute working in conjunction - two instruments play in unison octaves once again at bars 215 to 221. The movement ends with the flute playing an arpeggio to the tonic (G) while the violin plays a sustained B (3<sup>rd</sup> of the G major chord) till the end of the work.

### 2.3 *Éleve-toi, Mon Âme*

While autobiographical elements were not the primary source of influence in Bonis's vast compositional output, her eventful life undoubtedly shaped her art. One such example, is the vocal chamber work *Éleve-toi, Mon Âme* (Rise up, my soul) first published in 1894. It has a deep association with ethnomusicologist Bourgault Ducoudray who collected the Greek melody that the third movement of the Violin Sonata is based on.<sup>80</sup> It is described in Géliot's 2010 biography on Mel Bonis as a work of "powerful romanticism."<sup>81</sup> The text is from the poetry of A.L. Hettich, Bonis's first love and father of her illegitimate child, Madeline, born in September 1899.<sup>82</sup> Géliot writes that it was during the time of composition that Bonis met

<sup>80</sup> Though Bonis had a strong relationship with the Leduc publishing house it is with Bretonneau (later taken over by the minor Parisian publisher Pfister) that this work was first published. The work has been published by several others including Armiane (1999) and Fortin Armiane (2014). The original instrumentation set for mezzo-soprano/baritone, a cello/violin obligato and piano or harp. An additional harp adaptation was written by Huguette Géliot née Domange the mother of Christine Géliot (Great-granddaughter of Mel Bonis). - Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the Woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré -2023, 11.

<sup>81</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the Woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 96.

<sup>82</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the Woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 11.

music history professor and composer, Louis Bourgault Ducoudray, who was a good friend of Hettich's.<sup>83</sup> Bonis and Hettich remained close to Ducoudray during the period of their affair, Géliot writes in her biography that he was one of a very small amount of people who would have known about their forbidden relationship.<sup>84</sup> Bonis dedicated her 1899 SATB work 'Prière de Noël' to Bourgault Ducoudray which was a setting of text by Hettich. The lyrics read as a prayer demanding Christ's forgiveness:

*"May your heart always soften towards us*

*And Love us for what we are.*

*May we be pardoned"*<sup>85</sup>

The only instrumental work of Bonis associated with Bourgault-Ducoudray is the third movement of the Violin Sonata. This movement, with its clear improvisatory feel, serves as the centre of gravity for the entire piece.<sup>86</sup> Works associated with Bourgault-Ducoudray often carry significant emotional weight, and this movement is no exception. This is similar to the third movement in César Franck's 'Violin Sonata in A Major,' which is a 'Recitative' speculated to be a prayer about the trials and tribulations of great love. Given the profound emotional depth typical of works linked to Bourgault-Ducoudray, and his association being the only name connected with this sonata composition, one can conclude it has autobiographical properties.

As indicated at the top of the score, this movement is based on a popular Greek theme collected by Bourgault-Ducoudray. This two-bar motif is developed throughout the movement through the addition of ornamentation and improvisatory passages (sextuplets).

---

<sup>83</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 46.

<sup>84</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 137.

<sup>85</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 58.

<sup>86</sup> Jeffrey Stokes, First Ladies Three Romantic Violin Sonatas by Elfirda Andrée, Mel Bonis and Ethel Smyth, <https://toccataclassics.com/product/first-ladies-three-romantic-violin-sonatas/>.

Insights on this movement were provided by Anastasia Motiti, a PhD candidate at Trinity College Dublin, who integrates music history and compositional techniques in her research, particularly focusing on elements reminiscent of Ancient Greek drama. Upon her first listening to a performance by the pianist David Vesey and me, she noted elements of orthodox chant. This association with religion and Bourgault-Ducoudray further suggests that this movement held autobiographical significance for Bonis.

Motiti explains that Greek folk songs, written and sung by simple people, mainly lower-class citizens, often revolve around themes of love and heartbreak. She believes this movement remains consistent in theme, motives, and textures, resembling ancient Greek modes and melodies. The movement starts and remains within the same range (lower in the instrumental register), constructed with very similar intervals and modes. When the theme returns for the last time in full, it is a perfect fourth higher (Bar 56). The interval of a perfect fourth is significant in Ancient Greek music, derived from the “tetrachord,” a group of four notes with three smaller intervals spanning the total of the interval of a fourth, seen as the basic unit for tuning.<sup>87</sup>

Motiti's observations contribute to my understanding of the movement's deeper emotional and autobiographical layers. The improvisatory feel and the use of a Greek theme collected by Bourgault-Ducoudray, combined with elements of orthodox chant and ancient Greek musical structures, suggest that Bonis infused this movement with personal and cultural significance. This reinforces the idea that works associated with Bourgault-Ducoudray carry profound emotional weight, and his influence in this sonata composition implies autobiographical properties for Bonis.

---

<sup>87</sup> <https://music.stackexchange.com/questions/11274/what-are-the-greek-modes-and-how-do-they-differ-from-modern-modes>

Though *Éleve-toi, Mon Âme* is in G flat major—a key that only appears for a few bars, specifically rehearsal marks 13 and 14 in the second movement—there is some comparable musical material seen in the 3/2 section of the final movement (bars 137 – 150 – musical example 8.0). When discussing *Éleve-toi, Mon Âme*, Géliot writes that “six flats in the key signature reinforce the seriousness of the work”.<sup>88</sup> In another quote, Bonis’s stepson enquires about the number of flats she uses and she replies “I don’t do it on purpose, I hadn’t even noticed, that they just came perhaps to show the seriousness of things”.<sup>89</sup>

Musical Example 7.0

Musical Example 8.0

Rehearsal marks AA to BB have a definite change to minim beats from the fluctuating 3/4 to 2/4 crotchet beat time signature. The triplet crochets are also seen in bars 12 and 13 in *Éleve-toi, Mon Âme* and in bar 129 of the fourth movement of the sonata. The near static single-line melody is in both works accompanied by a rhythmic piano baseline that allows the music to move forward while catering for a musical break from the rich romantic intensity that proceeds and succeeds it.

The group ‘Trio Alouette’ released a recording of the work in 2015 with Etcetera Records, in this arrangement, the flute, played by Helene-Hilde Michielsens, takes the role of the

<sup>88</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 43.

<sup>89</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 69.

original cello obligato line. There is no sheet music available for purchase of this arrangement so I, therefore, wrote a flute line of my own (using an Editions Fortin-Armiane score) to perform this chamber work myself, a mezzo-soprano and piano.<sup>90</sup>

According to Géliot's biography *Mel Bonis, the Woman and the Composer (1858-1937)* *Éleve-toi, Mon Âme* contains "emotional charge and the forbidden pleasures associated with it."<sup>91</sup> This is particularly seen in the lyrics of the 'Molto espressivo e sostenuto' section:

*"The deeper the wound, the purer it seems to us  
The indescribable sweetness of eternal dreaming"*<sup>92</sup>

## 2.4 Background on the Violin Sonata

According to Géliot's biography, in the late 1880s, Mel Bonis said to her cellist friend Jeanne Monchablon, "I have so many ideas, my head is full of them. I want to write violin sonatas..... how I would like to have a husband who loves music!".<sup>93</sup> Across the 300 works written by Mel Bonis, seven works are written for solo violin and piano (*Sérénade* Op.64, *Andante Religioso* Op.78, *Largo en mi bemol* Op.83, *Allegretto ma non-troppo* Op.84, *Suite en do Majeur* Op. 114, *Chant nuptial* Op.128) only one is a Sonata – *Sonate pour violin et piano* Op.112.<sup>94</sup>

Premiered in 1919 in the Salle Gaveau, the 8<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement of Paris, by Andree Arnoult and Henry Merckel the event was sponsored by Societe Musicale Independante. According to a letter written by Anton Webern to Maurice Ravel in 1927, the Societe Musicale Independante "exists to combat musical censorship, permitting voices and styles to be heard

---

<sup>90</sup> While I was inspired by the recording I changed some of its elements so that the flute sits in a higher register than that of the original cello/violin to accompany the mezzo-soprano line. This also allowed the flute to symbolise the subject of the work, an eagle ("Like the wounded eagle, soars into space") a common choice of instrument used to depict avian.

<sup>91</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 46.

<sup>92</sup> *Éleve toi mon ame* - bars 22- 29

<sup>93</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 54.

<sup>94</sup> Catalogue of Works <https://www.mel-bonis.com/EN/Catalogue/>

that would otherwise be stifled by Vincent d'Indy's exclusive and demanding aesthetic requirements.”<sup>95</sup> The premiere was a year after the death of her husband, Albert Domange, on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 1918. From a young age, Mel Bonis did not deal well with loss. She experienced bereavement from an early age following the death of her two-year-old sister when she was only six years old. This tragic event was compounded by the torment she received from her classmates, upon returning to school. She notes that these cruelties experienced in the school environment were a daily affair, adding to her profound sense of loss and sadness.<sup>96</sup>

At the time of the composition of the Violin Sonata, Mel Bonis had inherited a small farm in Sarcelles from her husband which is referred to as “Le Béguinage”, a term that comes from the French “Béguines” meaning ‘women who dedicated their lives to God without retiring from the world’.<sup>97</sup> Géliot writes once Mélanie was widowed she was free to make her own decisions, she asked no one’s advice! <sup>98</sup> Géliot writes, “Mel Bonis’s music between 1900 and 1914, without being avant-garde, conforms to the evolution of the time and progresses towards the future, curious to the evolution of the time and progresses towards the future, curious to explore new domains in which to practise her inspirational powers.”<sup>99</sup>

Madeline, Bonis's illegitimate child, married Pierre Quintet on October 17, 1923, and Edouard wed Françoise Duroyaume on November 24, 1919. <sup>100</sup> Madeline and Edouard, unaware of their shared parentage, found themselves drawn to each other when they lived under the same roof during the First World War. When Bonis revealed the truth about their

---

<sup>95</sup> <https://musicalgeography.org/fictional-letter-societe-musicale-independante/>

<sup>96</sup> Mélanie Domange, *Souvenirs et Reflexions*, Nant d'Enfer, 1974.

<sup>97</sup> <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/855/>

<sup>98</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 121.

<sup>99</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 108.

<sup>100</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré - 2023, 125.

relationship, they had to reluctantly accept that their love was not to be. This revelation must have been particularly poignant for Bonis, who herself had been unable to marry her first love due to her parent's objections.

## 2.5 Musical Overview of the Violin Sonata

### 2.5.1 Movement One

A two-bar piano introduction in B minor begins this work before the flute enters in A major with the theme lasting until Figure A (Bar 10). There is an interlude section (Bar 11) with a motif of quaver pairs followed by a quaver rest. In Bar 15, there is an introduction of two against three between the piano and flute lines. The B theme enters in the flute line at Bar 29, again after two bars of solo piano, establishing the home key of F sharp minor. The interlude section in Figure C (Bar 39) is reintroduced, now with the duplets in the flute line of Bar 41 rather than the piano. This is developed to a musical climax at Bar 57 which includes a pause for the flute on the third register G flat and a piano descending line into the key signature change of the next section. In the document titled "A Day in the Life of Mélanie B.," Bonis discusses her teacher, Monsieur Frumence, and recounts her experience writing bridge passages. These passages serve as transitional elements that connect the first and second subjects within the first movement of a sonata.<sup>101</sup> In Bar 58, we have a recapitulation of the opening first theme (D), the introductory bars of the piano are fuller in texture and harmony with the addition of notes in the LH. The interlude section that was heard earlier in Bar 11 is now repeated a perfect 5th lower in Bar 73. The motif is played for only a few bars before a larger harmonic development with a lot of semiquaver virtuosic movement (see Appendix 3). This is in preparation for the return of the B theme now in D Flat major at Rehearsal mark G.

---

<sup>101</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré -2023,18.

The next interlude, which begins in B minor at Rehearsal mark H, is a development of the quaver pairs followed by a quaver rest motif but includes more technical semiquaver passages leading to a fourth octave C in the flute (Bar 118) and a double tonguing (tremolo) passage to exit the A major section, arriving back in the home key F sharp minor. The piano plays solo for seven bars with material heard throughout the movement. At Rehearsal mark J (Bar 132), there is a repeat of the development seen at rehearsal mark H but now a perfect 5th lower. The final 10 bars of the movement are in F sharp major, the parallel key to the tonic (F sharp minor). It is slowed down rhythmically and harmonically, with a lot of chordal movement in the piano that supports the flute playing small fragments of the original melody.

### 2.5.2 Movement Two

In the Violin Sonata, the second movement is marked as a 'Presto'. As in Bonis's Flute Sonata, this movement takes the form of a Scherzo, marked as a 'Scherzo-Vivace'. Both movements serve as a light-hearted interlude for the listener, providing a contrast to the intensity of the third movement. Their somewhat satirical nature adds a touch of levity to the overall composition. The flute line begins the recurring theme in this movement, which is then repeated at the same pitch but for only four bars (bars 21 to 24). There is a more lyrical section with ascending piano broken chords as accompaniment. The theme returns in bar 50, now a major third lower. As before, it is only four bars in length. Proceeding the lyrical section in G sharp major beginning at bar 55, the piano plays the four-quaver upbeat motif. Before Figure M, the flute introduces a new motif of three groups of quaver pairs on the same note, which becomes a theme in the next section in G flat major. The main theme returns to the original opening key at Bar 106 but is now a perfect fourth lower. The theme comes back one final time at the original starting pitch in bar 140; it is prepared two bars in advance with a close canon of the ascending four quavers between the flute and piano. The lyrical section



returns with the piano playing sparse crotchet chordal variations of the primary theme. The rhythmic and melodic idea, of three groups of quaver pairs on the same note, returns throughout the last section of the movement, bars 219 to 236 which includes fragments of the four quaver upbeat motif leading into a stretto and lightly textured ending.

### 2.5.3 Movement Three

One of Bonis's unique attributes as a composer was her ability to journey through many different keys before reaching her tonal destination. This element sets her apart from her teacher Franck, particularly when looking at the third movements of their violin sonatas. When comparing the harmonic development of these movements which are the centre point in both works there is an evident difference in the usage of cyclic form as a method of harmonic structure. Franck begins in D minor for 10 bars before introducing a developmental interlude that re-introduces the theme again a perfect 4<sup>th</sup> lower. The harmony changes to B flat major in the upbeat to 26 before a second theme and the music only arrives in the home key with the theme again in bar 44.

Bonis takes a longer harmonic journey, the movement begins with an opening theme from bars 1 to 10 in B minor, followed by a developmental interlude from bars 10 to 22/23. The opening theme re-emerges from bars 24 to 33, still in B minor. A large interlude follows, referencing the descending scalar quaver line from the 1st Movement, extending from bars 33 to 51. At bar 42, the opening theme transitions to the piano line, continuing until bar 56. Subsequently, the theme is passed to the flute, now a perfect 4<sup>th</sup> higher, beginning at bar 56. An ascending semiquaver and quaver passage is repeated at a new pitch in bar 62. Three against-two rhythms are introduced in the piano in bars 60, 62, and 65, which are then transferred to the flute in bar 68. The piece finally concludes in A major, the starting key of the final movement, and the relative to the home key of the entire work - F sharp minor.

#### 2.5.4 Movement Four

The fourth movement, performed attacca to the third movement, offers a stark contrast to the sombre Greek melody. Although it is not explicitly indicated in the score, similar to the Franck sonata, this work is structured in pairs of two movements. Like the cello sonata, this movement uses cyclic form, a compositional technique widely employed by Bonis's teacher, Franck. The right-hand (RH) line of the piano opens with a three-bar motif. This motif begins by being repeated consecutively twice at the same pitch (E). After this initial repetition, it ascends a perfect fourth to A, where it is repeated once more. Following this, the motif returns to E for a developed variation before the flute takes over. The piano line in this movement becomes noticeably chordal, and the textures of the bouzouki and other Greek instruments echo the piano's chords. This is particularly noteworthy in the percussive ostinato pattern that appears in the left hand (LH) of the piano from bars 88 to 113 (musical example 9.0).



Musical Example 9.0

Triplets are a feature in a lot of Bonis's music, particularly her flute works. They begin in the piano line at bar 185 as a light accompaniment to the melody line in the flute (musical example 11.0). The grace note ornamentation of the previous movement is a noticeable feature (musical example 10.0), as are the lyrical, long melodic lines of the first and second movements.

Musical Example 10.0

Musical Example 11.0

The harmonic trajectory recalls the first movement, with an increased dialogue between the two lines. The piano also takes a principal role on two occasions in bar 173 to 178 and bar 222 to 225. At bar 208, the Greek theme returns again before the fourth-movement theme reappears in G major at Rehearsal mark DD. The movement concludes with descending triplets (musical example 12.00), also seen in the final movement of her Flute Sonata (musical example 13.0).

Musical Example 12.0

Musical Example 13.0

### Chapter Three: Transcription Process and Performance Edition

The third chapter of my thesis details my transcription process. My editorial decisions were shaped by collaborative workshops with William Dowdall and Dearbhla Brosnan, and the debut performance in Paris with David Vesey, this was accompanied by intensive masterclasses with Philippe Bernold and Fuminori Tanada at the Saline Royale Academy.

The world premiere of my flute transcription of Mel Bonis's Violin Sonata occurred on Friday, April 5th, 2024, at the Saint Patrick's Chapel of the Centre Culturel Irlandais (CCI) in Paris, France, with Irish pianist David Vesey.<sup>102</sup> From April 7th to April 14th, I attended the Saline Royale Academy in Arc-et-Senans to study under Philippe Bernold, a flute professor at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris, and worked with flute accompaniment specialist, Fuminori Tanada. During this week of masterclasses, all four movements of the transcription were focused on. The attached audio is a recording from the final masterclass, featuring the last movement of the sonata.<sup>103</sup>

#### 3.1 Masterclass Insights: Enhancements Incorporated into the Transcription

As previously discussed, it was crucial to create a transcription authentic to the French Flute School. Studying with Philippe Bernold, who both teaches at and attended the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris during the era of Jean-Pierre Rampal, was instrumental. Rampal, a prominent French flautist, famously transcribed César Franck's *Violin Sonata in A major* for flute, solidifying its place in the flute repertoire after the composer died in 1890.

---

<sup>102</sup> World Premiere Recording - <https://youtu.be/1TqvByHuK9w>

<sup>103</sup> [Royal Saltworks At Arc-et-Senans.m4a](#)

Bernold noted the sonata's similarity in texture and harmony to Franck's Violin Sonata in A major, especially in the first movement compound time signature.<sup>104</sup> He did not see the complexity of the virtuosic passages as limiting for the flute, viewing them instead as opportunities for technical display with the use of proper breathing techniques.<sup>105</sup> The constant modulations and chromaticism of violin repertoire present challenges for the flute, which traditionally plays in D major and requires cross-fingering for more complex keys. This necessitates cautionary accidentals throughout the score to aid the performer. Bernold also commented on the sonata's length, noting that it exceeds Bonis's original flute sonata by over two minutes.

Suggestions from Bernold and Tanada included moving the pizzicato-like crotchets from the flute to the piano's left hand in the fourth movement, which originally doubles the melody an octave lower than the right hand. Bernold also recommended changing the time signature from 1/4 to 5/4 (from bar 14), using 3/4 and 2/4 patterns to give the returning theme more shape and contour.<sup>106</sup>

### 3.2 Transcribing and Rewriting of Works by French Composers

Throughout the repertoire of French Romantic Flute and Violin music, it is common to see composers indicate their compositions for "Violon ou Flûte" (Violin or Flute). Engaging with a selection of scores, I explored how composers transcribed between these two instruments and how they repurposed compositional materials for different instruments and contexts. Lili Boulanger's 1911 *Nocturne* (Eroïca Music Publications) and Camille Saint-Saëns's *Romance Op.37* are two examples of this. Eugène Bozza wrote on his *Aria* (published by Leduc) that it

---

<sup>104</sup> At 1:48 of the masterclass recording Bernold plays an extract of the 4<sup>th</sup> movement of Franck's Sonata in A major to demonstrate the joyous and childlike melodies of the final movement in the transcription.

<sup>105</sup> Bernold has published his own pedagogical technique books - <https://www.philippebernold.com/masterclasses.html>

<sup>106</sup> Appendix 3 - Mel Bonis, *Flute Transcription of Violin Sonata*, ed. Martina Rosaria O'Connell (2024).

was to be performed on ‘Sons reels’ (real sounds). Transcriptions between the two instruments are a prominent feature of this musical genre. As previously mentioned, Franck’s Sonata in A major, as well as Massenet’s *Méditation de Thaïs*, were transcribed by flautist Paul Taffanel and published by Eroïca Publications. French Romantic composers reworked their own compositions; Bonis took her solo piano work *Danse Sacrée* and created both a piano two-hand and orchestral version of the score in 1898, with the flute playing the principal melody.<sup>107</sup> Bonis’s serenade for cello and piano also exists as a violin and piano version.<sup>108</sup> With the development of the chromatic harp, Bonis reworked her *Nocturne* (originally scored for string trio and harp) for the newly developed harp, oboe, French horn, and cello; she entered and won the Société des Compositeurs annual competition in 1899.<sup>109</sup>

### 3.3 Critical Adjustments: Crafting a Performance Edition

In this section, practical adjustments made to the transcription to create a performance edition that enhances interpretation while staying true to the composer's intentions are outlined. As both editor and performer of this work, various aspects are meticulously examined, including rehearsal marks, time signature changes, tempo markings, treatment of upbeats, octave transposition considerations, utilisation of top C and exclusion of low B, adaptation of double stops and pizzicatos, addition of cautionary accidentals, removal of piano pedals, and considerations for phrasing and articulation. Each adjustment aims to make the score more accessible and musically coherent for performers while honouring the composer's vision and instrument capabilities.

---

<sup>107</sup> L’association Mel Bonis, “Oeuvres pour musique de chambre,” Mel Bonis, 2020, <https://www.mel-bonis.com/FR/Catalogue/>

<sup>108</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré -2023, 96.

<sup>109</sup> Christine Géliot, *Mel Bonis, the woman and the Composer*, Not published English translation by Dilys Barré -2023, 96.

### 3.3.1 Rehearsal Marks

In the 2002 Kossack Edition, rehearsal marks are absent, a departure from the original 1923 publication which included them as numerical values. Given the chamber music nature of the work, their inclusion is vital in this performance edition. To distinguish them from bar numbers, letters were chosen instead of figures, a practice endorsed by Elaine Gould in her music notation guide 'Behind Bars.'<sup>110</sup> However, with more than 26 rehearsal marks in total, exceeding the alphabet's limit, the final movement necessitated the use of "additional letters." While Gould acknowledges the impracticality of this, I deemed it advantageous for enhancing rehearsal efficiency across the entire piece.

### 3.3.2 Time Signature Changes

According to Elaine Gould's book 'Behind Bars', the definition of an alternating time signature is "a fixed pattern of alternating meters". This is notated by placing a '+' sign between time signatures at the start of a composition.<sup>111</sup> The first movement of Bonis's sonata has a time signature that alternates between 9/8 and 6/8. At the beginning of the sonata's solo violin part in the 2002 Kossack Edition, we see two-time signatures with a '+' symbol between them.<sup>112</sup> The omission of a time signature in the piano score is likely an editing error.<sup>113</sup> The usage of the '+' symbol implies that the time signatures alternate in a pattern, which is not the case in this sonata where they alternate irregularly. The first nine bars are in 9/8 with bars ten to twelve in 6/8 before converting back to 9/8 again. Using Gould's guide, a hyphen (-) should take the place of the '+' symbol.<sup>114</sup> The original 1923 piano score has a blank space between the 9/8 and 6/8. The violin score is missing from the family archives and therefore cannot be referenced for this research.

---

<sup>110</sup> Elaine Gould, *Behind Bars*, (Edition Peters, 2011), 485.

<sup>111</sup> Elaine Gould, *Behind Bars*, (Edition Peters, 2011), 179.

<sup>112</sup> Mel Bonis, *Sonate pour Violon et Piano*, ed. Wolfgang Kossack (Germany: Edition Kossack, 2002).

<sup>113</sup> Mel Bonis, *Sonate pour Violon et Piano*, ed. Wolfgang Kossack (German: Edition Kossack, 2002).

<sup>114</sup> Elaine Gould, *Behind Bars*, (Edition Peters, 2011), 179.

In my transcription, I decided to label all the alternating bars with a time signature to enhance the fluency of score reading for the performer. The time signatures, while both compound in nature, influence the development of phrases. Bonis uses, on several occasions, the 6/8 to end a phrase (bars 10, 40, 67, and 96) or to create an interlude between the larger 9/8 sections (bars 3, 27, 15, 73, 94, and 117).<sup>115</sup>

As previously mentioned there are amendments to the time signature in the final movement. This decision was aimed at optimising the ease of performance. In the third movement, the 5/4 section which begins in bar 11 is divided by dashed bar lines of 3/4 and 2/4 similar to the fourth movement. In bar 17 there is a one-off common time bar which is then followed by the alternating 2/4 and 3/4 pattern, while this is marked in the Kossack piano score it is not marked in the flute score. In bar 37 of the score, the time signature 12/8 is introduced and remains as such till the end of the movement. There is an incorrect common time inserted in bar 56 of the Kossack score which is then resolved in bar 62 with a reinstatement of the 12/8 time signature. In my transcription, these have been rectified with bars 56 and 57 being the only two in the last section marked as 4/4.

### 3.3.3 Tempo markings

The tempo marking for the first movement is Moderato with no indication of a beat per minute (bpm) metronome marking. The only movement in the entire sonata with a numerical tempo reference is the third movement with a clear ‘Lento crotchet equals 46 beats per minute’ marking. Bonis’s piano work, entitled *Barcarolle-Étude* has a tempo marking of Moderato - dotted crotchet equals 80 beats per minute; the time signature is 3/8.<sup>116</sup> The first movement of her 1904 Cello Sonata in common time is marked Moderato ‘quasi andante’

---

<sup>115</sup> Appendix 3 - Mel Bonis, *Flute Transcription of Violin Sonata*, ed. Martina Rosaria O’Connell (2024).

<sup>116</sup> Mel Bonis, *Bacarole-Étude*, ed. Leduc (Paris, 1893).



with a tempo marking of crotchet equals 69 beats per minute.<sup>117</sup> The work entitled *Epithalame* for two female voices and piano, also in common time, is similar with a tempo marking ‘Moderato quasi andante;’ however, the bpm is now 80 crotchets per minute. This indicates that even with the same written tempo marking, Bonis had different ideas of how fast or slow she wanted her works performed. This indicates that the performer has a certain amount of artistic freedom in choosing their performance tempo particularly as the virtuosic ‘Scherzo’ second movement presents different challenges on violin and flute. There is a limited amount of recordings available for this work. The professional recording by Toccata Classics with a CD entitled “First Ladies – Three Romantic Violin Sonatas” takes the tempo of dotted crotchet equals circa 65 beats per minute.

### 3.3.4 Upbeats

In the second and third movements, an indication suggests that the single-line instrument begins with an upbeat. However, this fact is not theoretically acknowledged in the final bar of the movements. The bar numbers in the Kossack edition indicate that it is not an upbeat opening. In the interest of the performer, the inclusion of a crotchet rest in the second movement helps to establish an inaudible downbeat in which the melody can springboard off. Reminiscent of the Romantic sonata style, in Reinecke's *Undine* Sonata, a similar upbeat idea is present, where the piano plays a downbeat E minor chord before the flute enters with an undulating melody. When the melody returns in the transcription at rehearsal mark N (bar 106) the piano plays a D major chord on the downbeat of the bar. The concept of incorporating crotchet rests is also replicated at rehearsal marks K and L. It is also seen in the smaller extracts of this melodic motif of four quavers in bars 214 and 216 and the recapitulation (R) and stretto section. In the third movement, the insertion of a quaver rest in

---

<sup>117</sup> Mel Bonis, *Sonate Piano et Violoncelle*, ed. Demets (Paris, 1905).

the opening bar, which is later found in the second full bar of both the 1923 and 2002 editions, ensures that the single-line instrument does not play the three quavers as a triplet. However, despite this adjustment, the first bar technically serves as an upbeat, as it does not contain four crotchet beats. This indicates that inaccuracies are present in the bar numbering of the third movement in the Kossack Edition, such as bar 6, which fails to indicate an upbeat and should be labelled as bar 5.

### 3.3.5 Octave Transposition

In this sonata, certain passages exceed the flute's range. For instance, bars 208 to 210 of Movement 2 exemplify this issue. Additionally, in various instances, maintaining balance within the flute and piano ensemble necessitates octave adjustments. It's not always the violin line that shifts an octave higher; sometimes, the flute must descend an octave. For example, in bar 252 transitioning into 253 of the second movement, while the flute can comfortably play this passage, descending to the D just above middle C poses challenges as it approaches the instrument's lower limit.

### 3.3.6 Usage of Top C and Exclusion of Low B

Marcel Moyse's *Exercise Journaliers* and *Grands Exercices Journaliers de Mécanisme* by P. Taffanel and Ph. Gaubert are widely used technique books for flautists. Moyse emphasises that "the low and high registers of the flute are generally practised less than the middle register, in which the majority of music is written for any instrument."<sup>118</sup> However, both of these books lack exercises for the fourth register C, despite composers like Sergei Prokofiev writing for the fourth register D in his 'Classical Symphony' as early as 1917. In contrast, Bonis's flute sonata and her one-movement work 'Piece' feature only a top B. However, the

---

<sup>118</sup> Marcel Moyse, *Exercices Journaliers*, (Paris, Leduc, 1923), II.

'Scherzo,' discovered posthumously, extends up to a fourth register C in bar 36.<sup>119</sup> My transcription includes the high C in the first movement. Bernold notes that this 'C' was omitted from the technique exercises renowned in the French Flute school to ensure ease of playing, as achieving notes above the 'B' in the third register can be challenging.

The low B key on a flute is typically not found on beginner instruments but is present on more advanced, open-hole flutes with a low B foot joint. The addition of the low B foot joint is commonly regarded amongst flute sellers as being of benefit to not only the low register but the tuning of the third and fourth ones also. During a workshop, Dowdall remarked that excluding the low B in this sonata, particularly in the third movement, aims to make the work accessible to more players. This decision challenges performers to create a folk-inspired soundscape without relying solely on a register. Bernold disagreed with the octave transposition omitting this 'B' below middle C, as it significantly alters the timbre that the composer had in mind. He suggested having two versions of the third movement, one including the low B for those with the appropriate foot joint.

### 3.3.7 Double Stops and Pizzicatos

The flute, being a single melody-line wind instrument, cannot replicate string techniques such as pizzicato and double stopping. While an extended technique involving singing and playing simultaneously might address double stops, it wouldn't align with the authenticity of the French Romantic musical period. In the second movement, the original double stops of notes A and F sharp are transformed in the flute transcription to grace note A to harmony note F sharp, with the D major chord in second inversion (bar 4) held in the piano line, ensuring the double stop harmony remains intact. This approach recurs in bar 53, where the flute line plays grace note F sharp to harmony note D sharp, while the piano accompaniment remains

---

<sup>119</sup> Mel Bonis, *Scherzo*, ed. Kossack (Germany, 2008).

unchanged. Similarly, in bar 109, the three-note double stop is converted to a grace note E which is tied to a harmony note C sharp, with the piano maintaining its original duration.

The original pizzicato markings in the second movement are transposed two octaves higher to achieve a lighter timbre on the flute, accompanied by a tenuto marking. This adjustment is evident in four instances: bars 9-10, 18-20, 147-152, and the final triple note pizzicato in bar 257. The final note in the flute, an octave above Bonis's original writings for violin, features a grace note A to harmony note F sharp, echoing a similar musical moment at the beginning of the movement in bar 4. In Section 3.1, I explained how Tanada, suggested that this adjustment of the pizzicato was not replicated in the flute line of the 4<sup>th</sup> movement but rather inserted into the left hand of the piano line.

### 3.3.8 Addition of Cautionary Accidentals

As previously mentioned, Bernold commented on this unfamiliarity for flautists journeying through these multiple sharp or flat key signatures. With the performer in mind, it is important to signpost this harmonic development as best as possible using cautionary accidentals. These were also included in the piano score which is a musically demanding line in itself. It has several different clef changes and indications, to shift hand positions e.g. *m.d.* (main droit – right hand) to *m.g.* (main gauche – left hand).

### 3.3.9 Phrasing and Articulation

Tenuto markings are incorporated throughout the sonata to enrich phrasing, particularly in sections featuring wide intervals or ensemble voicing demands. In movement two, these markings are placed on the down beats of bars 165 to 167 to align with the crotchets in the left hand of the piano. Breath marks are a common feature in performance editions or transcriptions edited by flute players, as demonstrated in Sir James Galway's 1991 'Great Performer's Edition' of César Franck's 'Sonata in A Major for Flute and Piano'. While these

breath marks provide valuable guidance, they can also pose challenges for performers.

Through his teaching, Galway emphasises the significance of personalised breathing plans for a performer, cautioning against a one-size-fits-all approach. In my transcription, breath marks are thoughtfully positioned to offer suggestions rather than strict instructions. These are also to show a deviation from the original violin phrasing and articulation. For example, movement one includes a definitive breath mark in the final four bars, which features a challenging third register C sharp for tuning. This performance edition marking is to also facilitate the coordination with the placement of the piano's right-hand chord and the lower F sharp in the left hand.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis aimed to reassess the musical legacy of Mel Bonis, achieving significant milestones in the process. Through the first comprehensive analysis of her correspondence with publisher Vittorio Carrara, this study sheds light on Bonis's interactions regarding her compositions, a topic of particular personal significance as I transcribed her work. Additionally, a detailed examination of her *Sonate pour Violon et Piano*, contextualising it with her compositions *Suite pour Flûte, Violon et Piano* along with her autobiographical piece *Eleve toi mon Ame* enhances our understanding of her compositional style and historical importance.

The creation of a flute transcription of her Violin Sonata represents a notable contribution to her repertoire and the romantic flute repertoire overall. Furthermore, by incorporating my identity as a flute player and performing the transcription in workshops and for the world premiere, this research gains a new practical dimension. The extensive investigation into both Bonis's life and career, combined with my personal correspondence with her great-granddaughter, enriches our understanding of this remarkable composer.

## Bibliography

Baker, Theodore, Slonimsky, Nicolas. *Dictionnaire Encyclopedique des Musiciens*. Paris: Robert Laffont, 1995.

Black, Gerou, Gerou, Tom. *Essential Dictionary of Orchestration*. 3rd ed. Los Angeles: Alfred Publishing, 1998.

Daum, Jenna. 2013. "Mel Bonis: Six Works for Flute and Piano." Doctoral of Musical Arts, Arizona State University, 2013. <https://keep.lib.asu.edu/items/151833>

Domange, Melanie. *Souvenirs et Reflexions*. Évian: Nant d'Enfer, 1974.  
<http://www.bruzanemediabase.com/fre/Documents/Temoignages/Bonis-Mel-Souvenirs-et-Reflexions>

Domange, Pierre. *Mel Bonis (Madame Albert Domange) Compositeur de Musique Biographie - Oeuvres*. 1947.  
<http://www.bruzanemediabase.com/fre/Documents/Archives/Mel-Bonis-Madame-Albert-Domange-.Compositeur-de-musique.-Biographie-OEuvres-Pierre-Domange>

Fausser, Annegret. *La Guerre en dentelles: Women and the "Prix de Rome" in French Cultural Politics*, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Volume 51, Spring (1998): 89-90.

Fauquet, Joël-Marie. *César Franck*. Paris: Fayard, 1999.

Géliot, Christine. "Compositions for Voice by Mel Bonis, French Woman Composer, 1858-1937." *National Association of Teachers of Singing* (2007.) 47-57.

Géliot, Christine. *Mel Bonis Femme et "Compositeur" (1858 - 1937)*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Condé-en-Normandie: Corlet, 2022.

Géliot, Christine. *Le nom de plume*, 10<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

Glick, Dorothy. "Paul Taffanel and the Construction of the French Flute School." Degree of Master of Music, University of Kansas, 2014.

<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/213407112.pdf>

Gould, Elaine. *Behind Bars*. Alfred Music, 2011.

Grier, James. *The Critical Editing of Music: History, Method of Practice*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Halstead, Jill. *The Woman Composer*. England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1997.

Jardin, Étienne. *Mel Bonis (1858-1937): Parcours d'une compositrice de la Belle Époque*. Palazzetti Bru Zane, 2020.

Phillips, Julian. *La Belle Époque: An Essay*. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1982.



Kossack, Wolfgang. "Edition Kossack." *Pan Journal of the British Flute Society* Volume, 41 (November 2022) 39.

Bonis, Mel. "Oeuvres pour musique de chambre." Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> April 2023.  
<https://www.mel-bonis.com/FR/Catalogue/>

Neuls-Bates, Carol. *Women in Music*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996.  
<https://archive.org/details/womeninmusicanth0000neul>

Sadie, Julie Anne, Samuel Rhian. *The Norton/Grove Dictionary of Woman Composers*. Music Library Association, 1996. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/900111>

Padilla, Geraldine Margaret. "*A Study on the Compositional Style of the Flute Chamber Works of Mel Bonis*." Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts, The University of Southern Mississippi, 2018.  
<https://aquila.usm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2598&context=dissertations>

Pendle, Karin. *Woman & Music: A History*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Indiana University Press, 2001.

Rosenman, Rachel Harlene. "A Rosary Among the Roses: Tracing Pastoral Allusions and Spiritual Resonances in Chamber Music by Mel Bonis." Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Departmental Honours in Music and French Studies, Wesleyan University, 2017.  
<https://digitalcollections.wesleyan.edu/object/ir-967>

Stokes, Jeffrey. 2021. *First Ladies Three Romantic Violin Sonatas*. London: Toccata Next.

Todd, William. "A Transcription of César Franck's Sonata in A major for the Bartone Saxophone." Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts, University of Texas, 2011.

<https://www.scribd.com/document/336390036/oxfordwt32223-pdf>

Vogel, Annette Barbara, Durval, Cesetti. *First Ladies Three Romantic Violin Sonatas by Elfrida Andree, Mel Bonis and Ethel Smyth*. Elfrida Andree, Mel Bonis and Ethel Smyth. Toccata Next TOCN 0012, 2021, CD.

## Appendix 1: Post World Premiere photo with Christine Géliot



## **Appendix 2: Critical Apparatus**

<p><b>Movement One – Flute Score</b></p> <p>Time Signature: Addition of Time Signature (Absent from 2002 Kossack Edition) Removal of Alternating Time Signatures to have fixed time signature at the beginning of every changing bar</p> <p>Rehearsal Markings: Addition of Rehearsal Marks (absent from 2002 Kossack Edition), usage of Letters ( A - J) rather than in numerical figures seen in 1923 Publication</p> <p>Bars 1-2: Removal of right-hand piano cue and addition of left-hand piano cue (Absent in 1923 Kossack Edition) Bar 8: Change of cresc. to cresc. ----- ( widely spaced dashes to identify the duration of the dynamic change) Bar 9: Addition of <i>mf</i> dynamic at the start of the bar Bar 10: Change of <i>f</i> dynamic to <i>ff</i> Bars 11-12: Removal of right-hand piano cue Bar 14: Removal of right-hand piano cue Bar 20: Removal of natural sign to cancel out double sharp in line with contemporary practice (Gould pg. 81) Bar 22: Change of cresc. to cresc. ----- ( widely spaced dashes to identify the duration of the dynamic change) Bars 23-26: Addition of a diminuendo Bars 27 to 28: Removal of right-hand piano cue Bar 29: Note change - Inclusion of Kossack 2002 D sharp as part of a triplet, not present in the 1923 version Bar 32: Change of cresc. to cresc. ----- ( widely spaced dashes to identify the duration of the dynamic change)</p>	<p>Bar 40: Removal of right-hand piano cue Bar 41: Adjustment of Duplet rhythm from crotchets to quavers Bar 43: Addition of a tenuto mark on the first note of the bar and a crescendo throughout the whole bar Bars 48 to 50 (1<sup>st</sup> Crotchet B flat): 8va Bar 48: Addition of B fingering suggestion (+ = thumb &amp; - = long/normal fingering) Bar 56: Advisory breathe mark Bar 57: Addition of <i>ff</i> dynamic Bars 58-59: Removal of right-hand cue, the addition of left hand of the piano line Bar 60: Inclusion of Crescendo in 1923 publication Bar 65: Change of cresc. to cresc. ----- ( widely spaced dashes to identify the duration of the dynamic change) Bar 67: Addition of <i>ff</i> dynamic Bars 71 to 72: Removal of right hand piano cue Bar 80: Removal of 8va Bar 81: Removal of right-hand piano cue Bar 87: Removal of <i>p</i> dynamic and addition of <i>mf</i> Bars 90 (D flat of first beat) to 93: 8va and removal of cautionary f natural accidental repeated twice in same bar (1923 edition) Bars 94 to 95: Removal of right-hand piano cue Bar 98: Change of cresc. to cresc. ----- ( widely spaced dashes to identify the duration of the dynamic change) Bar 108: Addition of cautionary accidental on F sharp Bar 110: Inclusion of crescendo in 1923 publication (omitted in Kossack 2002) Bar 112: Addition of <i>ff</i> dynamic</p>	<p>Bars 113 to 115: 8va Bar 116: Removal of right-hand piano cue Bars 117 to 119: 8va Bars 119 to 121: Change of cresc. to cresc. ----- ( widely spaced dashes to identify the duration of the dynamic change) Bar 126: Removal of right-hand piano cue Bar 129 Addition of Piano dynamic seen in the 2002 Kossack Edition Bar 133: Change of cresc. to cresc. ----- ( widely spaced dashes to identify the duration of the dynamic change) Bars 141 to 142: Removal of tie and addition of a breathe mark</p> <p><b>Movement One – Piano Score</b></p> <p>Time signature: Addition of Time Signature (Absent from 2002 Kossack Edition) Removal of Alternating Time Signatures to have fixed time signature at the beginning of every changing bar</p> <p>Rehearsal Marks: Addition of Rehearsal Marks (absent from 2002 Kossack Edition), usage of Figures rather than in Numbers seen in 1923 Publication</p> <p>Bar 1: Change of stem direction of first quaver D and last D crotchet Bar 2: Change of stem direction of first quaver D and last D crotchet Bar 7: Addition of F sharp on the last dotted crotchet in the LH ( F sharp in 2002 Kossack Edition, F natural in 1923 first publication) Bar 15: Duplet crotchets corrected to Duplet quavers</p>
--	--	---

<p>Bars 24 to 26: Removal of 8va Bar 32: Clarification of formatting for dotted unisons Bar 48: Tie direction Bars 71 to 72: Removal of 'V' (upbow accent markings in LH of piano) Inclusion instead of horizontal accent as the single line melody instrument is a wind instrument rather than a string) Bar 78: Phrasing the connection of ties (D sharp dotted crotchet to quaver ( Beat 2) (correct in 1923 and incorrect in 2002) Bar 89: Note correction of last crotchet E natural to E sharp (omitted from both editions) Bar 92: Correction of minim to dotted minim Bar 127: Removal of natural after double sharp (Contemporary formatting - Gould) Bars 132 – 134: Removal of legato pedalling - not needed in the notation, it appears for this first time in the movement only at the end and the accurate position of the symbol is ineffective as a performance guidelines Bar 138: Correction of performance direction '<i>mp</i> suivez' (as in the 1923 edition, incorrectly formatted and illegible in the 2002 version)</p> <p><b>Movement Two – Flute Score</b> Rehearsal Markings: Addition of Rehearsal Marks (absent from 2002 Kossack Edition), usage of Letters (K - R) rather than in numerical figures seen in 1923 Publication</p> <p>Upbeat: Addition of a crotchet rest in Bar one which is suspected to be upbeat but not indicated as so in the final bar of the movement</p>	<p>Bar 4: Removal of double stop and addition of a grace note A to F sharp Bars 9-10: Pizzicato changed to tenuto crotchet notes two octave higher Bars 11 to 17: up two octaves to join with proceeding line Bars 18 to 20: up two octaves Bar 53: Removal of double stop and addition of a grace note F sharp to D sharp Bars 84 to 87: Up an octave Bar 131: Usage of the suggested 8va and printed an octave above Bars 147 to 152: Pizzicato changed to tenuto crotchet notes two octave higher Bars 165 to 167: Addition of tenutos on down beats of the bar to match with piano LH crotchets Bars 208 – 210: 8va Bars 230 - 238: 8va Bars 252 - 253: 8va Bars 255 - 256: Removal of 8va Bar 257: 8va and Removal of pizzicato and addition of a grace note A to F sharp</p> <p><b>Movement Two – Piano Score</b> Bars 4-5: Extension of chord till Bar 5 to facilitate missing double stop in Flute Line</p> <p><b>Movement Three – Flute Score</b> Rehearsal Markings: Addition of Rehearsal Marks (absent from 2002 Kossack Edition), usage of Letters (S-W) rather than in numerical figures seen in 1923 Publication. Upbeat: Addition of a quaver rest in Bar one which is suspected to be an upbeat bar but not indicated as so in the final bar of the movement. Bar Numbers: Correction of Bar numbers</p>	<p>Bars 1 – Beat three of Bar 12: Up an octave Bar 14: Time signature addition of 3 crotchets in a bar Bar 16: Time signature addition of 2 crotchets in a bar Bar 17: Time signature addition of 3 crotchets in a bar Bar 18: Time signature addition of 2 crotchets in a bar Bar 19: Time signature addition of 3 crotchets in a bar Bars 23 – Bar 34 (Beat One): 8va Bar 31: Removal of the 'a tempo' so that the tempo moves on to ensure 12/8 at Figure U is not too slow with the three quavers Bar 41: Correction of D to D sharp (missing from Senart Edition but Correct in Kossack Edition) Beat two of 41 to 45: 8va Bar 45: crescendo to rehearsal mark V Bar 46: subito piano Bar 51: Tempo 1 from the 3 beat of the bar rather than down beat of bar 52 Bars 56-57: addition of 4/4 time signature Bars 67 to 69: Up an octave</p> <p><b>Movement Four – Flute Score</b> Time Signature: Removal of 1/4 time signature and replaced with alternating 3/4 and 2/4 which is found in both Kossack and Senart Scores Rehearsal Markings: Addition of Rehearsal Marks (absent from 2002 Kossack Edition), usage of Letters (X-GG) rather than in numerical figures seen in 1923 Publication</p>
---	---	---

<p>Bar 1 -13: Removal of Pizzicato, transposed up the octave, removal of double stops and addition of grace notes. Change of the dynamic from <i>f</i> to <i>p</i></p> <p>Bar 31: <i>F</i> dynamic is marked as a <i>mf</i> in the Kossack and is missing in the Senart Edition</p> <p>Bar 32: Inclusion of D sharp which is missing from scores (not connected to the tie and needs to be added again)</p> <p>Bar 35: 'Più Piano' illegible in the Kossack Edition</p> <p>Bars 38 to 40: Up the octave - not pizzicato, grace notes, dynamic to piano</p> <p>Bar 47: Up an octave (to echo down beat of piano in that bar)</p> <p>Bar 50: Removal of Pizzicato addition of staccato and <i>P</i> dynamic</p> <p>Bar 67: D sharp missing in the Kossack Addition</p> <p>Bar 75: Removal of Pizzicato addition of staccato and <i>mf</i> dynamic</p> <p>Bars 104-105: Removal of Pizzicato addition of staccato and <i>mf</i> dynamic</p> <p>Bar 106: Removal of 8va</p> <p>Bar 138: Breathe mark (up bow) excluded</p> <p>Bar 122: Change of C sharp to enharmonic D flat in light of D flat major Key Change</p> <p>Bars 149 – 150: Up the Octave</p> <p>Bars 153-164: Up the Octave</p> <p>Bar 181: Dodecuplets</p> <p>Bar 225: Correction of first note to a crotchet (minim in Senart Edition)</p> <p>Bar 239: Removal of 8va</p> <p>Bars 264 – 270: Removal of 8va</p>	<p>Bar 270: Addition of Tie from beat one to two</p> <p>Bar 289: 8va of the last beat</p> <p><b>Movement Four – Piano Score</b></p> <p>Bar 38: Addition of staccato articulation in the LH</p> <p>Bar 46: Octuplet in the piano RH</p> <p>Bar 53: Removal of Pedal marking and 'una chorda' ( Kossack)</p> <p>Bar 179: Addition of a rest</p> <p>Bars 185 – 187: Correction of three quaver groups to triplets</p> <p>Bar 232: Placing of the 'A' from the bass clef into the right hand</p> <p>Bar 233 – 234: Crescendo Dynamic</p> <p>Bars 271 – 272: Removal of Pedal</p>	
---	--	--