

12 ÉTUDES CARACTÉRISTIQUES, OPUS 2, BY ADOLF VON HENSELT:

A PEDAGOGICAL GUIDE WITH PRACTICAL EXERCISES

FOR SELECTED ETUDES

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Adolf von Henselt (1814–1889) was one of the most renowned German pianists and composers of his day. The majority of his compositions are for the piano, one of his most successful being the set of Piano *Études*, Op. 2. It consists of twelve etudes, each of which is designed for developing a particular technique. Henselt’s etudes are as demanding as Chopin’s and Liszt’s, so this pedagogical guide is designed for advanced-level students. Henselt uses many finger extensions and stretches larger than an octave, which may be difficult for smaller hands to play, but proper flexibility and relaxation should enable all students to play them. This dissertation describes the specific technique for six selected etudes and provides exercises to help students learn each technique effectively. The selected etudes—Nos. 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, and 11—were chosen to cover all three technical levels of less-advanced, advanced, and very advanced as well as a variety of musical styles and technical challenges.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES	v
LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES.....	vi
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Purpose.....	1
1.2 Significance and State of Research.....	2
CHAPTER 2 BIOGRAPHY AND OVERVIEW OF ADOLF VON HENSELT’S PIANO ETUDES, OP. 2.....	8
2.1 Brief Biography of Adolf von Henselt.....	8
2.2 Overview of Adolf von Henselt’s Piano Etudes, Op. 2.....	10
CHAPTER 3 CHALLENGES OF EACH ETUDE AND PRACTICAL EXERCISES	12
3.1 Etude No. 1	13
3.2 Etude No. 2	17
3.3 Etude No. 3	21
3.4 Etude No. 6	27
3.5 Etude No. 9	30
3.6 Etude No. 11	33
CHAPTER 4 CONCLUSION.....	37
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	38

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Poetic tag for each etude in Henselt's Op. 2	11
Table 2. Henselt's etudes, Op. 2, and their technical challenges	12

LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Example 1. Adolph Henselt, Etude, Op. 2 No. 1, mm. 1–4; this edition is in the public domain ..	4
Example 2. Frédéric Chopin, Prelude, Op. 28 No. 24, mm. 1–7	5
Example 3. Henselt, Etude, Op. 2 No. 6, mm. 1–4.....	5
Example 4. Franz Liszt, <i>Grandes études de Paganini</i> , S. 141 No. 5, mm. 1–3	6
Example 5. Henselt, Etude, Op. 2 No. 9, mm. 1–3.....	6
Example 6. Robert Schumann, <i>Carnaval</i> , Op. 9, “Paganini,” mm. 1–4.....	6
Example 7. First exercise for Etude No. 1	13
Example 8. Second exercise for Etude No. 1.....	14
Example 9. Third exercise for Etude No. 1	15
Example 10. Fourth exercise for Etude No. 1.....	16
Example 11. Fifth exercise for Etude No. 1.....	16
Example 12. Sixth exercise for Etude No. 1	17
Example 13. Henselt, Etude, Op. 2 No. 2, mm. 1–4.....	18
Example 14. Henselt, Etude, Op. 2 No. 2, mm. 17–20.....	18
Example 15. First exercise for Etude No. 2	19
Example 16. Second exercise for Etude No. 2.....	19
Example 17. Third exercise for Etude No. 2.....	20
Example 18. Fourth exercise for Etude No. 2.....	21
Example 19. Alternative fingering for Etude No. 2	21
Example 20. Henselt, Etude Op. 2 No. 3, mm. 1–4.....	22
Example 21. Henselt, Etude, Op. 2 No. 3, mm. 48–50.....	22
Example 22. Suggestion for hand redistribution in Etude No. 3	23
Example 23. First exercise for Etude No. 3	23
Example 24. Second exercise for Etude No. 3.....	24

Example 25. Henselt, Etude, Op. 2 No. 3, (a) mm. 1–2 and (b) 35–36.....	25
Example 26. Third exercise for Etude No. 3.....	26
Example 27. Fourth exercise for Etude No. 3.....	26
Example 28. First exercise for Etude No. 6.....	27
Example 29. Second exercise for Etude No. 6.....	28
Example 30. Third exercise for Etude No. 6.....	29
Example 31. Fourth exercise for Etude No. 6.....	30
Example 32. First exercise for Etude No. 9.....	31
Example 33. Second exercise for Etude No. 9.....	32
Example 34. Third exercise for Etude No. 9.....	32
Example 35. Fourth exercise for Etude No. 9.....	33
Example 36. Henselt, Etude, Op. 2 No. 11, mm. 1–4.....	34
Example 37. First exercise for Etude No. 11, m. 3.....	35
Example 38. Second exercise for Etude 11, m. 3–4.....	35
Example 39. Third exercise for Etude No. 11, mm. 3–4.....	36
Example 40. Fourth exercise for Etude No. 11, mm. 3–4.....	36

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

This dissertation provides a pedagogical guide to the *12 Études caractéristiques*, Op. 2, by Adolf von Henselt (1814–1889). Many piano teachers and students are unfamiliar with his etudes, despite their pedagogical value for developing technical skills and musical understanding. His etudes are as technically demanding as those of Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849) or Franz Liszt (1811–1886), and this guide is designed for advanced-level students. Throughout the etudes, Henselt uses tenth chords, arpeggios with stretches larger than an octave, repeated notes, octave legato, fast scale passages, consecutive octaves, and fingering extensions. Although these technical aspects may seem inaccessible at first, the etudes are worthwhile and effective practice will enable the advanced pianist to master them.

Heinrich Neuhaus (1888–1964), a great pianist and the teacher of many famous pianists such as Sviatoslav Richter (1915–1997), Emil Gilels (1916–1985), and Radu Lupu (1945–2022), states that difficulties can be solved by making the problem easier.¹ For Neuhaus, tricky, problematic, obscure, or seemingly unattainable passages can be made easy, simple, clear, and accessible and this is my aim in creating this pedagogical study: to make Henselt's etudes clear, simple and accessible. To achieve this aim, my dissertation first offers an overview of the technical and musical challenges that the composer targets in each etude and then focuses on how to solve them. The dissertation shows how to practice technical difficulties productively and offers suggestions, including practical exercises for selected etudes. To help students understand how to practice the etudes better, the dissertation breaks down some of the difficult passages into

¹ Heinrich Neuhaus, *The Art of Piano Playing* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1993), 125.

practical steps and describes them step by step. Finally, it includes a list of Henselt's etudes by level of difficulty, to help instructors assign each etude to their students appropriately.

1.2 Significance and State of Research

Henselt and his contributions to the etude repertoire have been somewhat overlooked. His works garnered some interest in the 1970s with two dissertations about his piano etudes. These studies mention Henselt's life as a pianist, teacher, and composer in addition to an overview of each etude in matters such as form, structure, key, and compositional style.² However, neither of them focuses on the difficulties that the composer targets in each etude. A focused pedagogical discussion is needed, one which offers suggestions on how to solve the challenges and that guides students to practice the etudes productively. This dissertation hopes to fill that gap and in the process, encourage pianists to learn his challenging etudes, the rewards for which will be seen in the student's technical and musical growth.

Achieving good technical skill is necessary to be a great pianist. Hans von Bülow wittily describes how "There are three things necessary for the pianist; the first is technique, the second is *technique*, and the third is TECHNIQUE."³ Rachmaninoff also stresses its importance:

Technical proficiency should be one of the first acquisitions of the student who would become a fine pianist.... The technical ability of the performer should be of such a nature that it can be applied immediately to all the artistic demands of the composition to be interpreted.⁴

² Daniel Richard Miller, "The Life and Works of Adolph Henselt." (MA thesis, California State University, 1978); Daniel Martin Graham, "An Analytical Study of Twenty-Four Etudes by Adolph von Henselt." (DMA document, Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University, 1979).

³ James Ching, *Piano Playing* (London: Bosworth, 1946), 6.

⁴ Sergei Rachmaninoff, "Ten Important Attributes of Beautiful Pianoforte Playing," *Etude Magazine*, March 1910; available from <https://etudemagazine.com/etude/1910/03/ten-important-attributes-of-beautiful-pianoforte-playing.html>; accessed 29 October 2022.

Etudes are one of the methods often employed by pianists and instructors as a way to develop technique. Certainly technique can be built up in any repertoire. But playing etudes is an efficient way to target specific technical skills, since they typically are written to address a particular technical difficulty. Etudes tend to repeat a technique-building formula frequently, enabling students to concentrate on the challenge.⁵ This laser focus on a specific difficulty is something Robert Schumann (1810–1856) felt was crucial; he describes the need for a precise target when practicing, in order to develop a particular technique and master a certain difficulty, whether rhythm, expression, scales, or anything else.⁶

It is difficult to overstate the value of etudes for technique building. However, they can also have their downside. The simple and repetitive structures of etudes may lead students to become exhausted and unmotivated.⁷ Also, etudes must not be considered solely for their technical yields. As Neuhaus himself said, it is impossible to achieve good results and to learn to play well through ceaseless mechanical exercises without any artistic content.⁸ Sensitive dynamics and pleasing melodic shape within a musical concept are vital for technique.⁹ Therefore, it can be more valuable to study etudes that have a good balance between technical features and musicality.

Henselt's etudes involve both technical challenges and a distinctively musical character. For this reason, his Op. 2 is valuable as a pedagogical tool. Rachmaninoff recognized Henselt's

⁵ József Gát, *The Technique of Piano Playing* (London: Collet's, 1974), 233.

⁶ Edith A. H. Crawshaw, "Studies," *Musical Times* 71, No. 1045 (1 March 1930), 233–36; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/914800>.

⁷ William S. Newman, *The Pianist's Problems* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1986), 69–70.

⁸ Neuhaus, *Art of Piano Playing*, 89.

⁹ Gát, *Technique of Piano Playing*, 233.

output, saying that “his etudes are so beautiful that they should rather be classified with pieces like the etudes of Chopin.”¹⁰ Wilhelm von Lenz echoes this same sentiment when he states that:

Henselt paints pictures of deep feeling within small frames, and his mastery of the medium enables him—through polyphony, positions, extensions, and generally—to make the most of every technical possibility of the instrument, to give interest to compositions in which the original idea was of slight value.¹¹

Moreover, studying Henselt’s etudes may provide a foundation for performing works by other Romantic composers such as Chopin, Liszt, and Rachmaninoff, since they share many of the same technical and musical challenges. For example, Henselt’s Op. 2 No. 1 consists of arpeggios with stretches larger than an octave in the left hand. This arpeggiated pattern in the left hand is constantly moving, while the relatively simple melody is played by the right hand. Such a pattern is also found in Chopin’s Prelude Op. 28 No. 24. See Ex. 1 and Ex. 2.

Example 1. Adolph Henselt, Etude, Op. 2 No. 1, mm. 1–4; this edition is in the public domain¹²

The image shows a musical score for Adolph Henselt's Etude, Op. 2 No. 1, measures 1-4. The score is in 2/4 time, marked "Allegro molto agitato e grandioso" with a tempo of quarter note = 92. The left hand features a complex arpeggiated pattern with large intervals, while the right hand plays a simple melody. The score includes dynamic markings like "mf" and "f", and performance instructions like "rapidamente".

¹⁰ Rachmaninoff, “Ten Important Attributes.”

¹¹ Wilhelm von Lenz, *The Great Piano Virtuosos of Our Time* (New York: Regency Press, 1971), 77.

¹² Adolf von Henselt, *Twelve Characteristic Concert-Studies, Op. 2* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1902).

Example 2. Frédéric Chopin, Prelude, Op. 28 No. 24, mm. 1–7

The image shows the first seven measures of Frédéric Chopin's Prelude, Op. 28 No. 24. The tempo is marked "Allegro appassionato". The music is in 6/8 time and B-flat major. The right hand plays a melodic line with slurs and fingerings (1, 4, 1). The left hand plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth-note chords, starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a "Red." (rehearsal) mark.

Henselt's etude Op. 2 No. 6, likewise, consists of two-note chords played by the right and left hands alternating. Its tempo marking is followed by the indication *Con leggerezza quasi zeffiroso*, which means to play lightly, like a gentle breeze. Its main characteristic is a pattern of lightly running chords of sixteenth notes, resembling Liszt's *Grandes études de Paganini*, S. 141 No. 5. See Ex. 3 and Ex. 4.

Example 3. Henselt, Etude, Op. 2 No. 6, mm. 1–4

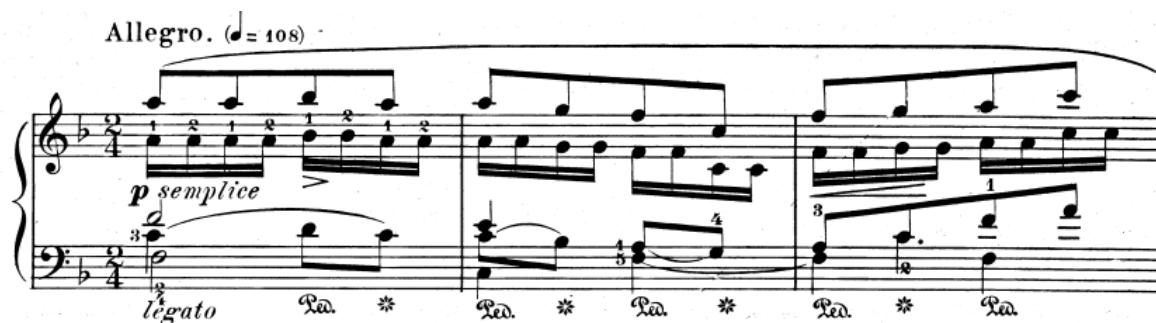
The image shows the first four measures of Henselt's Etude, Op. 2 No. 6. The tempo is marked "Allegro. Con leggerezza quasi zeffiroso" with a quarter note equal to 88 (♩. = 88). The music is in 3/8 time and D major. The right hand plays a rapid sequence of two-note chords with slurs and fingerings (1, 4, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 5, 2, 1, 3). The left hand plays single notes with a "staccato" marking and "Red." (rehearsal) marks. Dynamics include *pp* and *m.s.* (mezzo-soprano), and the articulation is *legatissimo*.

Example 4. Franz Liszt, *Grandes études de Paganini*, S. 141 No. 5, mm. 1–3



The main technique of Henselt's etude Op. 2 No. 9 also can be found in Schumann's *Carnaval*, Op. 9, "Paganini." In both pieces, the right hand plays two voices; the melody is played in the top voice of the right hand in eighth notes, while repeated sixteenth notes in the bottom voice of the same hand are played by the thumb or second finger. The repeated sixteenth notes must be played lightly; the melody, legato. See Ex. 5 and Ex. 6.

Example 5. Henselt, Etude, Op. 2 No. 9, mm. 1–3



Example 6. Robert Schumann, *Carnaval*, Op. 9, "Paganini," mm. 1–4



Henselt's etudes develop techniques found in the broader virtuosic repertory. They are without a doubt demanding, yet they have enough of their own musical appeal to hold the interest of advanced-level students. In the following chapter, Henselt's reputation and stature as one of the great pianists of his day is discussed. And while the difficulties found in his etudes may seem formidable, Chapter 3 clarifies, step by step, the individual challenges, offering a comprehensive study plan to master them.

CHAPTER 2

BIOGRAPHY AND OVERVIEW OF ADOLF VON HENSELT'S PIANO ETUDES, OP. 2

2.1 Brief Biography of Adolf von Henselt

Adolf von Henselt (1814–1889) was a German pianist and composer. Although he wrote a few vocal and orchestral works, his compositions are mostly for the piano and his influence on the piano world of his time was considerable. He was born in the Bavarian city of Schwabach, where his father was a cotton manufacturer.¹³ His family moved to Munich in 1817, and he immediately started taking piano and violin lessons. In 1832, he began studies with Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778–1837), a famous pianist and a former student of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) and Muzio Clementi (1752–1832). However, Henselt moved to Vienna only eight months after commencing study with Hummel.¹⁴ There he studied composition with Simon Sechter (1788–1867), who was also a teacher of Anton Bruckner (1824–1896).¹⁵ During his Vienna period, Henselt expanded his piano-playing skills, practicing ten hours every day.¹⁶ In 1838, he moved to St. Petersburg, where his influence on “a most successful generation of Russian pianists” was considerable.¹⁷ The lyrical style of his music impressed listeners in Russia and inspired many Russian pianists.¹⁸ According to Marie Lipsius, Henselt virtually stopped performing in public in the 1850s, focusing more on teaching, and at the same time his

¹³ *Grove Music Online*, s.v. “Henselt, (Georg Martin) Adolf,” by Richard Beattie Davis.

¹⁴ Miller, “Life and Works of Adolph Henselt.” 2–3.

¹⁵ Georg Predota, “Adolf von Henselt.” *Interlude*, 17 November 2014; available from <https://interlude.hk/adolf-von-henselt/>, accessed 29 October 2022.

¹⁶ Miller, “Life and Works of Adolph Henselt,” 3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁸ Davis, “Henselt.”

enthusiasm for composing disappeared: he wrote to Liszt that writing did not satisfy him anymore.¹⁹ His students included Anton Herke (1812–1870) and Nikolai Zverev (1833–1893), who were the teachers of Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881) and Alexander Scriabin (1872–1915), respectively.²⁰

As a pianist, Henselt was “nervous” and “shy” about performing in public.²¹ He gave few public performances over the course of his life and as few as three recitals during the last thirty-three years.²² According to Alice Diehl, Henselt’s stage fright may have stemmed from his first public performance, where he had a memory slip, fled from the stage, and refused to return.²³

When Henselt could control his nerves, he succeeded in leaving an amazing impression and despite his performance challenges he was admired by piano luminaries of his generation. Liszt told his pupils to “Find out the secret of Henselt’s hands” and wished that “I could have had velvet paws like that.”²⁴ Schumann viewed Henselt as a powerful pianist “who possesses the most equally developed hands, of iron strength and endurance, and capable of softness, grace and singing quality.” Bettina Walker, who was one of his students, described his touch with the words “crystalline,” “sea,” “pearl,” “chalice,” and “flower.”²⁵ In addition to his velvety tone, his hand extensions and flexibility were a significant feature of a technique that amazed other musicians.

¹⁹ Miller, “Life and Works of Adolph Henselt,” 16.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

²¹ Harold C. Schonberg, *The Great Pianists* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 209–11.

²² *Ibid.*, 211.

²³ *Ibid.*, 212.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 214.

His hands were not exceptionally large, and he had relatively short fingers. But he practiced hand extensions constantly, resulting in his ability to stretch “his right hand B–E–A–C–E and his left hand C–E–G–C–F.”²⁶ This skill led him to use wide-spread chords, wider arpeggios, and big jumps around the keyboard in his compositions. These features are readily found in such representative works as his Piano Concerto in F minor, Op. 16 (1847) and Etudes Op. 2 (1837) and Op. 5 (1838).

2.2 Overview of Adolf von Henselt’s Piano Etudes, Op. 2

Henselt’s set of twelve Piano Etudes, Op. 2, was published in 1837. He dedicated the work to King Ludwig I of Bavaria, who helped finance his studies in Weimar and Vienna.²⁷ Henselt’s etudes Op. 2 and Op. 5 are regarded as “Songs without Words” (to use Mendelssohn’s term),²⁸ and each etude of Op. 2 has a French tag expressing the mood (See Table 1). In Henselt’s day, the main purpose of writing etudes was to help students improve their piano technique, but his etudes surpass mere technical exercises and reflect a good balance between musical expression and technique, like Chopin’s *Études*, Op. 10, published a few years earlier. His works were apparently influenced by Chopin and Liszt, displaying both Liszt’s virtuosity and Chopin’s velvety style. But at the same time he pushes the genre to a new level, demanding pianists to explore advanced techniques.

²⁶ Schonberg, *Great Pianists*, 214.

²⁷ Miller, “Life and Works of Adolph Henselt,” 18.

²⁸ Lenz, *Great Piano Virtuosos*, 81.

Table 1. Poetic tag for each etude in Henselt's Op. 2²⁹

No. 1	<i>Orage, tu ne saurais m'abattre!</i> (Storm, thou canst not subdue me!)
No. 2	<i>Pensez un peu à moi, Qui pense toujours à vous!</i> (Think a little of me, Who always thinks of you.)
No. 3	<i>Exauce mes vœux!</i> (Grant my wishes!)
No. 4	<i>Repos d'amour.</i> (Love's repose.)
No. 5	<i>Vie orageuse.</i> (Stormy life.)
No. 6	<i>Si oiseau j'étais, A toi je volerais!</i> (If I were a bird, To thee I would fly!)
No. 7	<i>C'est la jeunesse, qui a des ailes dorées!</i> (It is youth that has golden wings!)
No. 8	<i>Tu m'attires, m'entraînes, m'engloutis!</i> (You draw me in, compel me, engulf me!)
No. 9	<i>Jeunesse d'amour, plaisir celeste, Ah, tu t'enfuis! Mais la mémoire nous reste.</i> (Springtime of love, celestial pleasure, Ah, you ran away! But your memory remains with us.)
No. 10	<i>Comme le ruisseau dans la mer se répand, Ainsi, ma chère, mon Coeur t'attend.</i> (As the rivulet flows out into the sea, So, my darling, my heart longs for thee.)
No. 11	<i>Dors-tu, ma vie?</i> (Sleepest thou, my life?)
No. 12	<i>Plein de soupirs, De souvenirs, Inquiet, hélas! Le Coeur me bat.</i> (Swelling with sighs, Of memories, Worried, alas! My heart is beating.)

²⁹ English translations by the author.

CHAPTER 3

CHALLENGES OF EACH ETUDE AND PRACTICAL EXERCISES

In this chapter, exercises for the six selected etudes are presented, with explanations. To help teachers assign an etude to their students appropriately, Table 2, which lists the various technical challenges of each etude, is provided as a reference.

Table 2. Henselt's etudes, Op. 2, and their technical challenges

Difficulty	Etude	Main Challenges
Less Advanced	No. 4	Melodic line in the left hand, left hand extensions
	No. 7	Octave legato in the right hand
	No. 11	Large stretch in the left hand
Advanced	No. 3	Evenness of the sixteenth notes while the top note in the right hand is "singing" the melody
	No. 6	Consecutive two-note chords
	No. 8*	Repeated notes, repeated chords
	No. 9	Lightness of the thumb for repeated notes
	No. 10	Fast passages, large stretches
	No. 12	Alternating chords/octaves between the hands
Very Advanced	No. 1	Rapid arpeggiated pattern with large extensions
	No. 2	Large stretch between fingers
	No. 5*	Fast sixteenth notes with consecutive use of fourth and fifth fingers

* Recommended for bigger hands that can reach tenths, because of the consecutive tenths.

3.1 Etude No. 1

Example 1 shows the first four measures of Henselt's Etude No. 1. Its main difficulty is the large extension of the left hand. The arpeggiated figure with an extension of more than an octave keeps ascending and descending. The thirty-second notes are played constantly and rapidly throughout the piece, while the right hand has the main melody in octaves. The keys to mastering these arpeggiated figures with large hand extensions are relaxed thumb movement and a flexible wrist in the left hand. Example 7 below shows an excerpt from the first exercise, which is designed to help students relax their thumb and wrist. Students should avoid making an accent on the thumb. Since this exercise is designed for a smooth change of hand position, it is suggested that the hand should be turned to the next position at the same time as the note F is played by the thumb. This should be practiced very slowly, as Neuhaus says, "watching to ensure that the necessary movements of hand and wrist are executed smoothly, evenly, and without a jolt."³⁰ The hand should stay as close as possible to the keys to reduce unnecessary movements.³¹ Each measure should be repeated many times until it can be played without tension.

Example 7. First exercise for Etude No. 1

³⁰ Neuhaus, *Art of Piano Playing*, 107.

³¹ *Ibid.*



The second exercise (see Ex. 8) is designed for students to learn the distance between the stretched notes as well as the rotation of the wrist. Hold down the note A with the second finger and use the rotation with the first and fifth finger to play the two stretched notes by moving the hand from left to right and right to left.³² To avoid stiffness and fatigue, a flexible and relaxed rotatory position needs to be maintained.³³ For relaxation of wrist, finger, arm, and hand, this exercise can be practiced quietly and slowly, watching carefully that these body parts do not have tension or unnecessary movement. Although the practice should be slow, preparation for the next note should be made as quickly as possible by moving horizontally, not vertically.

Example 8. Second exercise for Etude No. 1³⁴



The third exercise (see Ex. 9) is to practice the distance between the stretched notes using different rhythmic patterns. As the students learn the exact interval of the two outside notes, played by the first and fifth finger, the middle note follows easily. Instead of thinking of

³² Alfred Cortot, *24 Preludes of Chopin*, trans. David Ponsoyby (Paris: Maurice Senart, 1930), 77.

³³ György Sándor, *On Piano Playing: Motion, Sound and Expression* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1981), 79.

³⁴ Cortot, *24 Preludes of Chopin*, 77.

each note individually, it can be helpful to consider the middle note as a group with the next note. Since eventually the left-hand passage should be played fast, there will be little time to prepare every single note. The hand position should be prepared as a chord and played like a roll, but evenly. When practicing this exercise, it is recommended that the first measure be repeated until it can be played without tension, then the second measure should also be repeated in the same manner. After that, the middle note should be added as a chord. Finally, the figure should be played as a broken chord. The same practice pattern should be applied to the rest of the piece. The author suggests initially practicing the first version without the middle note throughout the piece, and only when the student can play it comfortably moving forward to the chord version. When the chord version can be played throughout the piece smoothly, the broken-chord version is ready to be practiced.

Example 9. Third exercise for Etude No. 1

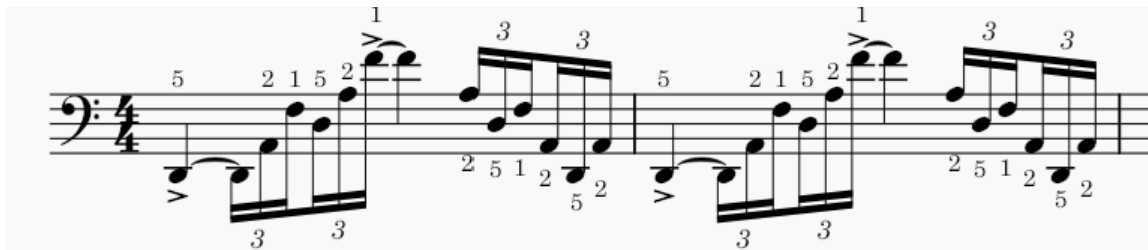
The first version

The chord version

The broken-chord version

As mentioned above, attention to the lightness and relaxation of the thumb is important. Even though the technical challenge is in the left hand, students should remember that the melody is not in that hand. The left hand only creates the agitated mood. Thus, students should give more attention to playing lightly and rapidly than to playing each note independently and clearly. This should be kept in mind when practicing the fourth exercise (see Ex. 10). The fast sixteenth notes should be practiced as fast and lightly as possible. Students may use the longer accented notes to relax before playing the fast-running notes.

Example 10. Fourth exercise for Etude No. 1



After all four exercises have been practiced measure by measure, the left hand is finally ready to practice with the right hand in the next two exercises (see Ex. 11 and Ex. 12), as a simplified version of the etude. While students are focusing more on the melody, the left hand should be played lightly, *piano*, and relaxed. Once Ex. 11 can be played without tension throughout the piece, students can move on to Ex. 12.

Example 11. Fifth exercise for Etude No. 1



Example 12. Sixth exercise for Etude No. 1

The image shows a musical score for a piano exercise. It is in 4/4 time and consists of two systems of two staves each. The first system shows the right hand playing a melody of quarter notes and eighth notes, while the left hand plays a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and sixteenth notes, including triplets. The second system continues the same pattern. The piece ends with a final chord in the right hand.

There are four measures in the middle of the piece in which this main technique should be executed by the right hand while the left hand has the melody. The same six exercises are then applied to the right hand. Teachers should listen carefully and watch the students' left hand to determine which measures and exercises should be practiced again. The first exercise is needed for students whose thumb is not yet light and relaxed. The second exercise is suggested for students who are still struggling with wrist rotation. For students who hit many wrong notes, especially with the first and fifth fingers, the third exercise can be repeated for learning the position of each note better. Only the measures in which students have technical issues need to be practiced.

3.2 Etude No. 2

Example 13 shows the first four measures of Henselt's second etude. Its main difficulty is the use of broken chords, which requires large stretches in each finger of the right hand. The same technique is applied to the left hand in the middle of the etude (see Ex. 14).

Example 13. Henselt, Etude, Op. 2 No. 2, mm. 1–4

Allegro moderato. ($\text{♩} = 112$)
Graziosa e marcata la melodia

(a) *p* *sempre legato tranquillamente*

Example 14. Henselt, Etude, Op. 2 No. 2, mm. 17–20

con affetto

ff *m. d.*

15609

Intervallic stretches do not exceed an octave, but the difficulty is that the stretches should be executed by fingers 4–5, 2–5, 3–5, or 3–1. The right hand is more difficult to execute than the left hand, because it has both melody and large finger stretches. Thus, the author recommends

that students practice the right hand first and then apply the same practice pattern to the left hand. The main keys for mastering this technique are the flexibility of fingers 4–5 and 3–5 and the use of rotary motion using wrist, arm, as well as finger to play the notes accurately with the fifth finger.

Example 15 is an exercise to stretch fingers and to train the muscles to learn the distance between the first and last notes in each beat. It is a big stretch for students with small hands, but they should try to connect every note as much as possible, stretching their fingers slowly instead of jumping between each note, since Henselt wrote that the first notes of each beat are held longer than a sixteenth note (see Ex. 13). This does not mean that students should force themselves to play each note perfectly connected, but rather, hold as long as possible and release when necessary.

Example 15. First exercise for Etude No. 2



After learning the distance between the first and last note of each beat in the first exercise, the stretches between the third and last note should be practiced (see Ex. 16). Unlike the first exercise, this exercise can be executed by jumping instead of stretching. Students should be conscious of how far they need to move to play the top note accurately with the fifth finger. Using wrist and arm movement will be helpful.

Example 16. Second exercise for Etude No. 2



The third exercise (see Ex. 17) is a combination of the first and second exercises. While holding the fourth finger as long as possible, the thumb should be released as soon as it is played, and the fifth finger should be ready to play. The reason why the middle note is longer than the others is to give students time to practice the rotation of the wrist. As soon as the thumb is played, focus carefully on the wrist movement. Move to the left with the thumb and to the right with the fifth finger, making a circular motion using the fourth finger as a pivot.

Example 17. Third exercise for Etude No. 2



After the third exercise, the middle note with the second finger can be included (see Ex. 18). Playing the chord version first will help students to focus more on finger stretches of the fourth and fifth fingers and on the wrist movement. Practicing the broken-chord version will be the last step before playing the passage as written. Hold the fifth finger a little longer than the other three notes to allow time to check that the fingers and wrist are relaxed. Stay even longer on the fifth finger to allow more time to relax, if needed.

Example 18. Fourth exercise for Etude No. 2



The chord version



The broken-chord version

It is recommended that Ex. 18 be practiced with the left hand throughout the etude (see Ex. 11), before playing it as written. Listen and watch carefully for the parts that need more practice. If students are too tense while playing some parts, teachers can advise using the thumb instead of the second finger (see Ex. 19).

Example 19. Alternative fingering for Etude No. 2



3.3 Etude No. 3

In the first four measures of Henselt's third etude (see Ex. 20), the main difficulty is to play the sixteenth notes of the broken chords evenly in both hands while the top note in the right hand is playing the melody. It is quite challenging for both hands. The right hand has to stretch more than a tenth while holding the top note with the fifth finger. The left hand must play the extended broken chords smoothly and sometimes stretch more than an octave to play the bass

notes. In addition, the left hand needs to leap to play the bass notes in octaves starting from m. 48 (see Ex. 21).

Example 20. Henselt, Etude Op. 2 No. 3, mm. 1–4

Example 21. Henselt, Etude, Op. 2 No. 3, mm. 48–50

The main solution for mastering the technical challenges in Etude No. 3 is to minimize unnecessary movements, staying as close as possible to the keyboard. The author suggests practicing both hands together for evenness of the sixteenth notes, listening for a smooth connection from one hand to another. To make the notes even, Ex. 22 is a suggested hand redistribution, especially for small hands that cannot reach a tenth easily. Switching two notes

between the hands shortens the distance between the right-hand fingers 1 and 5. It also helps students to better focus on the melodic line.

Example 22. Suggestion for hand redistribution in Etude No. 3

The musical score for Example 22 shows a piano piece in 3/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The right hand (L.H.) plays a melodic line with notes circled in red, and the left hand (R.H.) plays a bass line with notes circled in blue. The piece is marked 'p' (piano) and 'con passione dolorosa' (with passion and sorrow). The tempo is marked 'And.' (Andante). The score consists of four measures, each with a 'ped.' (pedal) marking below the bass line.

The first exercise for Etude No. 3 (see Ex. 23) is designed to achieve evenness and smoothness of the sixteenth notes. As shown in the example, it is recommended to practice backwards from the bass note. Begin with two notes only and increase one at a time. Playing fewer notes helps students to discover their problems more easily. Students should place their fingers on the keys as close as possible by overlapping each note, which can also help them to make the sound smoother. Each measure should be repeated until it can be played without bumps, listening carefully. Practicing in tempo is suggested, but softly and lightly.

Example 23. First exercise for Etude No. 3

The musical score for Example 23 shows the first exercise for Etude No. 3 in 3/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The exercise consists of two systems of four measures each. The first system shows the right hand (L.H.) playing a melodic line and the left hand (R.H.) playing a bass line. The second system shows the right hand (L.H.) playing a melodic line and the left hand (R.H.) playing a bass line.

The second exercise (see Ex. 24) is to practice the leaps of the left hand that appear from m. 48 (see Ex. 21). To successfully master the intervals of these leaps, it is necessary to practice the left hand alone before playing both hands together. Practice the thumb only prior to playing the bass note in octaves. When you jump from the second finger to the thumb, move horizontally, staying as close as possible to the key. Repeat the first measure until the bass note can be played accurately without any hesitation. Add one more note as a chord as in the second measure in the thumb-only version and practice the last measure of that version. After mastering the thumb's position, practice the octave version. Students should focus more on the thumbs, as if they are playing the thumb-only version, and every measure should be repeated until it can be played without hitting wrong notes.

Example 24. Second exercise for Etude No. 3

The thumb-only version

The octave version

The third exercise (see Ex. 26) is designed to facilitate the accuracy of the notes in the left hand. Since the hand position needs to be changed almost every two notes while playing the broken chords, it is easy to hit wrong notes. For the section in which fewer than five of the sixteenth notes should be played by the left hand, see Ex. 26 (a). See Ex. 26 (b) for the sections in which six of the sixteenth notes should be played by that hand. Example 25 is designed to help

students understand the pattern of the exercise. As you can see, it includes the bass note of the next beat, but students can simply play in octaves whenever the interval between two notes exceeds an octave. This helps students to focus more on the hand position than on stretching. When practicing this exercise, students can use the fingerings that they will use when playing the whole etude as written.

Example 25. Henselt, Etude, Op. 2 No. 3, (a) mm. 1–2 and (b) 35–36

marcato e portando la melodia
p
con passione dolorosa

(a) mm. 1–2

tiss. p

(b) mm. 35–36

Example 26. Third exercise for Etude No. 3



(a) Example of mm. 1–4



(b) Example of mm. 35–36

After the student has practiced all three exercises above, the author suggests one last exercise (see Ex. 27) before playing the whole etude as written. This exercise is designed to coordinate the melody with the skills practiced in the three preceding exercises. Remember to use the same fingerings that will be used when playing it as written, in both hands.

Example 27. Fourth exercise for Etude No. 3



3.4 Etude No. 6

The main challenge of this etude is to play consecutive two-note chords alternately in both hands along with the leaps of the left hand (see Example 3 above, on page 5). This technique appears throughout the etude. Dynamics are mostly *pp* with the indication *legatissimo*. The tempo marking *Con leggerezza quasi zeffiroso* also indicates to play lightly, like a gentle breeze. To perform this etude successfully, students should be fully relaxed in their body, especially in the arm. While playing with a light touch, students should keep in mind that the melody is in the top notes, which need to be highlighted with relatively stronger fingers. As a first exercise, the entire etude should be practiced in block chords (see Ex. 28). By considering four notes as one group, the etude becomes simpler and more accessible, psychologically and physically. Pressing one block chord instead of playing two two-note chords gives students more time to relax. Also, practicing this way helps students to better understand the harmonic progression. Every second beat of each measure should be executed by the left hand. Practice slowly.

Example 28. First exercise for Etude No. 6



The second exercise (see Ex. 29) is for consecutive two-note chords in both hands. This can also be practiced with hands separately, if needed. However, it would be better to play two hands at the same time, giving thought to relaxing one hand when the other hand is played. To

successfully master this technique, it is important for students to relax fingers, arm, and wrist. It is impossible to play this exercise without the assistance of flexible wrist and arm, due to the repetitive chord pattern. Practice slowly, feeling the movement of arm and wrist. The left hand can be practiced in a lower register, as in Ex. 29, to avoid conflict with the right hand. This will allow students to focus on relaxation. After each measure, students can pause to relax if necessary.

Example 29. Second exercise for Etude No. 6



The third exercise for Etude 6 is intended to develop hand coordination in the same register when there is conflict between the hands. Since both hands share the same register, each hand should move away from the key as soon as it is played. Students should avoid not only making an accent on the second note of each beat but also playing those *staccato*, because Henselt put *legatissimo* at the beginning of the etude (see Example 3 above, on page 5). Example 30 shows three related exercises to address hand coordination: Practice the right hand as written and the top notes only in the left hand (a); Practice the lower notes only in the right hand and the left hand as written (b); and finally, practice both hands as written but without the bass note in the left hand (c). Execute everything in this exercise softly and lightly, taking care of the movement of the thumb and second finger.

Example 30. Third exercise for Etude No. 6

Musical notation for exercise (a). It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature has five sharps (F#, C#, G#, D#, A#). The treble staff contains a sequence of four measures, each with a bass note followed by two sixteenth notes. The bass staff contains four whole rests, one in each measure.

(a)

Musical notation for exercise (b). It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature has five sharps (F#, C#, G#, D#, A#). The treble staff contains a sequence of four measures, each with a bass note followed by two sixteenth notes. The bass staff contains four whole rests, one in each measure.

(b)

Musical notation for exercise (c). It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature has five sharps (F#, C#, G#, D#, A#). The treble staff contains a sequence of four measures, each with a bass note followed by two sixteenth notes. The bass staff contains four whole rests, one in each measure.

(c)

The last exercise (see Ex. 31) aims for flexible movement of the left hand when leaping. By adding one extra beat between the bass note and the two sixteenth notes, students can practice relaxing before playing the sixteenth notes. The wrist should move up when playing the bass note and move down when playing the sixteenth notes as one group in one downward motion. Moving up and down should not be seen as separate movements. Rather, the combination of up and down makes a big circle, and each measure of Ex. 31 should be played as one circular gesture. If students have problems finding the bass note accurately, they can practice the bass notes with only thumbs first, as in the third etude (see Example 24 above, on page 24). Practice

the distance between bass note and sixteenth notes with the thumbs, since they are closer to the sixteenth notes than the fifth fingers, and the fifth finger will follow without much effort.

Example 31. Fourth exercise for Etude No. 6



After practicing all the exercises above, the first exercise (Example 28) should be repeated. Begin with a slow tempo at first, and increase the tempo as you become comfortable. Remember to prepare each chord before it is played. This is accomplished by turning the head to the right to look at the higher register while playing the bass note in octaves with the left hand. When playing the last beat of each measure, students should prepare their left hand by looking to the left. Preparation with the hand and head should be executed quickly, even when practicing slowly.

3.5 Etude No. 9

Example 5 shows the first three measures of Henselt's Etude No. 9. As shown in the example, the lower note of the right hand is constantly repeated while the top note of that hand is held in an octave as a melodic line. The melody should be played by either the fourth or fifth finger of the right hand and at the same time the repeated notes should be executed by either the thumb or second finger of the same hand. This is the challenge of this etude, requiring a good combination of a delicate *legato* and a light detachment in a single hand. Whether students use the thumb only or alternate with the second finger for the repeated notes,

they should be careful not to be tense or create unnecessary accents. In the middle of the work, the same technique is executed by the left hand while the right hand plays the chord, as the left hand did at the beginning. Students can apply the same exercises to the left hand.

Example 32 is an excerpt from the first exercise designed to practice repeated notes. In this exercise, the top notes should be practiced in octaves instead of playing the lower notes only. The top notes become the leader and the lower notes follow, played as softly and lightly as possible. Instead of pressing the keys all the way down for the lower notes, touch them slightly. Raising the wrist higher can also be helpful. After practicing Ex. 32 (a), double the notes, as shown in Ex. 32 (b). Practice slowly at first and increase the tempo gradually. The student should practice doubling the notes throughout the etude, until it can be played without a break. Remember that this etude is not agitated or stormy like the first etude, but melodic and beautiful. Try not to be aggressive, although this technique is not easy at all. Instead, focus on playing melodically.

Example 32. First exercise for Etude No. 9



(a)

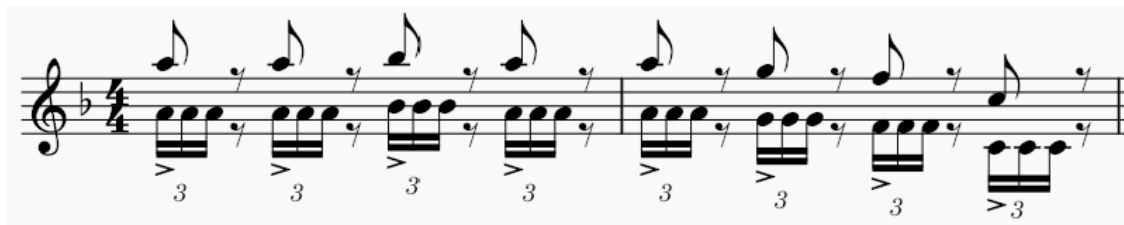


(b)

The second exercise (see Ex. 33) involves practicing repetitions of lower notes. Students need to decide whether they will use finger 1 only or alternate fingers 1–2 when performing this etude, then practice using the fingering in question. Using only the thumb is recommended for

pianists with small hands, so that they can play the melody with a better *legato*. When practicing Ex. 33, put a small accent on the first note of the repeated notes and use a bounce for the next two notes. The three repeated notes should be played with one gesture instead of hitting the key three times. After the three repeated notes are practiced, the two repeated notes will become easier.

Example 33. Second exercise for Etude No. 9



Example 34 is also helpful for practicing repeated notes. By practicing the repeated notes twice as fast as they should be played, students will be prepared mentally and physically. While practicing this exercise, make accents on the top notes and play the lower notes lightly and quickly. Students should practice Ex. 34 (a) first, then move on to (b) as they become comfortable with the repeated notes. When playing Ex. 34 (b), focus on the top notes, listening to the melodic line.

Example 34. Third exercise for Etude No. 9



(a)



(b)

After practicing all the exercises above with hands separately, one last exercise (see Ex. 35) is suggested for hand coordination. Before performing the whole etude as written, playing the melody with only the chords of the left-hand line can help students to listen to the melodic line and shape it without having to focus on the technical difficulties.

Example 35. Fourth exercise for Etude No. 9



3.6 Etude No. 11

In Etude 11, the melody is played by the right hand in octaves, accompanied by the left hand with extended broken chords, as shown in Ex. 36. The difficulty of the etude lies in the awkward hand position of the left hand and the octave legato of the right hand. The left hand should not disturb the melodic line of the right hand but must support it with a full sound while playing evenly, softly, and delicately. To successfully execute these features, an exercise to relax the thumb of the left hand is necessary. Since only one chord is repeated in the first two measures, the next measure or two will be used as an excerpt for each exercise.

Example 36. Henselt, Etude, Op. 2 No. 11, mm. 1-4

Example 37 is an exercise for rotation of the wrist as well as relaxation of the thumb. When practicing this exercise, hold the thumb on the key as long as possible. This will help students to make an even sound, avoiding an accent on the thumb. Overlapping each note and playing with flat fingers instead of fingertips, which helps to lower the wrist, can be also helpful. Every pattern that includes the thumb in the middle should be practiced, both ascending and descending. Each pattern is practiced separately. When students can play the first measure of Ex. 37 (a) smoothly, practice the next pattern, which is the second measure of Ex. 37 (b). After practicing it throughout the etude, add one note to the first beat of each pattern, as seen in Ex. 37 (b). Adding one note causes more tension, which needs to be released. Both exercises should be done slowly, listening carefully to ensure that every note is even and the left hand is relaxed.

Example 37. First exercise for Etude No. 11, m. 3

(a)

(b)

Example 38 is an exercise designed to practice each pattern of ascending and descending arpeggios. Holding the last note of each pattern a little longer provides enough time for students to relax, so that each pattern can be practiced accurately without any tension. Students can use their own fingerings; but whichever fingerings they use, they must not make accents on the notes played by the thumb. Students should practice slowly at first, but then work up to playing the etude in performance tempo. This enables students to find out quickly which pattern is not even enough. For those patterns, Ex. 37 should be repeated.

Example 38. Second exercise for Etude 11, m. 3–4

In the third exercise (see Ex. 39), ascending and descending arpeggios are combined into one group, eliminating the bass note. By providing a short break instead of playing the bass note, students can focus on the thumb relaxation and wrist rotation. After mastering this exercise thoroughly, students can then add the bass note. When they do, considering the bass note as separate from the following group of seven sixteenth notes, as in Ex. 39 (b), will make the left hand easier.

Example 39. Third exercise for Etude No. 11, mm. 3–4

(a)

(b)

Students should remember that the point of practicing the left hand for evenness and smoothness is to support the right hand better. It is important to keep in mind that the main melody is in the right hand. While holding the long value of the note in the right hand, it is easy to be distracted by the left hand, because of its technical difficulty. It is a good idea to practice by subdividing the right hand while playing the left hand as written (see Ex. 40).

Example 40. Fourth exercise for Etude No. 11, mm. 3–4

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Adolf von Henselt's etudes involve a variety of techniques, and studying them establishes a foundation for performing works by other Romantic composers such as Chopin, Liszt, and Rachmaninoff. While a number of studies of his piano works exist, none of the existing resources provides practice suggestions for his etudes. Although his works may seem inaccessible, because of the large number of technical challenges such as finger extension, fast passages, octave legato, and stretches larger than an octave, these challenges can be solved by making difficult passages simpler. By breaking down the main challenge of each etude into smaller fragments, this dissertation can help students to understand the music better and learn the technique successfully. Although the dissertation provides exercises for Etudes nos. 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, and 11 only, the author hopes that the rest of the etudes can be prepared by applying similar exercises to them.

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