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# A Technical, Musical, and Historical Analysis of Frederic Chopin's Etudes, Op. 10

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# BUTLER UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

## Honors Thesis Certification

Applicant Henry Raymond Bauer  
(Name as it is to appear on diploma)

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Analysis of Frederic Chopin's Etudes, Op. 10

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Thesis adviser(s)

Steve Robens

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Pedagogy

**A TECHNICAL, MUSICAL, AND HISTORICAL ANALYSIS  
OF FREDERIC CHOPIN'S ETUDES, OP. 10**

**A Thesis**

**Presented to the Department of Music**

**Jordan College of Fine Arts**

**and**

**The Committee on Honors**

**Butler University**

**In Partial Fulfillment**

**of the Requirements for Graduation Honors**

**Henry Raymond Bauer**

**April 29, 1996**

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## *Preface*

I began working on the Chopin Etudes, Op. 10, my sophomore year, 1994, as a requirement for the Upper Divisional Boards at Butler University. As I worked on two of the etudes, my teacher, Dr. Steve Roberson, and I thought that it would be a feat for me to learn all twelve of the etudes as an undergraduate. Therefore, I began to work on about two per semester and in the summer in order to complete them. By the middle of my senior year, 1996, I had managed to learn all of them.

While learning the etudes, I decided to write a paper discussing their musical and technical challenges that would serve as a guide in working through these challenges. This guide is intended for both performers of the etudes and teachers in helping their more gifted students. In reading through and studying this paper, having a score in front of you such as a Henle Urtext Edition or Alfred Masterworks Edition will be helpful, often I make reference to measure numbers in my discussion. I hope this proves to be a beneficial tool for you, as it has been one in my overall musical training.

I would like to express my appreciation to all of those who have helped me in my musical training. Especially my two piano teachers, Dr. Steve Roberson and Vera Wickline, for I am very much indebted to them for all of their help.

## *Chopin's Biography*

Frédéric Chopin was born on March 1, 1810, in a small town, named Zelazowa Wola, Poland. There has been some controversy on the exact date of his birth because of a baptismal certificate in the register at Brochów church. The register had his birthdate marked as February 22, 1810. However, other evidence suggests an alternative date, such as letters, one written by him and one from his mother, Justina, that speak of his birthdate as being March 1, 1810 (Hedley 3).

Chopin was the second child of four, having three sisters (Hedley 7). Being the only boy in the family, Chopin received his share of attention. He was described as being an intelligent and industrious individual as a youth (Sadie 292). When it was discovered that he had some musical talent, his parents found a piano teacher for him.

Chopin's father, Nicholas, was a professor at the Warsaw Lyceum and brought in boarders from the school where he taught. Many of the boarders who were brought in were of the noble or artistic classes. This contact with the boarders allowed Chopin to acquire manners and an air of refinement which was very uncommon for a "piano player" at that time (Hedley 8).

Chopin's first musical experiences at the piano were primarily self-taught. He later began study with Adalbert Zywny, a violinist and a competent pianist (Hedley 10). At age nine, Chopin gave his first musical performance, a charity concert, which was a great

success (Jonson 21). As Chopin entered high school, he began studying with Jozef Elsner, the director of the Warsaw Conservatory at the time. His training lasted about three years during which time, he learned about theory, thorough bass, and composition.

About this same time, Chopin fell in love with an opera singer, Constancia Gladkowska. At first he loved Constancia from a distance because he was nervous and uncertain about how she would take to him. Chopin would pour his soul into the piano which can be understood from the beautiful melodies that he wrote, such as Etude Op. 10, No. 3 which was composed around this time. Finally Constancia and he met, but he never really told her how he felt. Although they did exchange rings before Chopin left Warsaw, they did not make any promises to each other. This period marked one of the happiest times in Chopin's life. Unfortunately, Constancia later married and did not learn until after some time how much she meant to Chopin, which caused Chopin the first loss of love in his life (Hedley 30). This incident appeared to be an indicator as to Chopin's unrequited quest for love.

From 1830-31, Chopin spent a brief time in Vienna giving public performances and dealing with publishers, but it was not a very successful period of time. He faced many disappointments particularly with the publisher, Haslinger, who did not publish several of Chopin's works as he had promised. After that time, Chopin acquired an attitude of not allowing people to take advantage of him (Hedley 37).

From Vienna, Chopin moved to Paris. Along the way, he stopped in Stuttgart where he learned of the Russians' capture of

Warsaw . This news threw him into a rage which compelled him to write the "Revolutionary" Etude Op. 10, No. 12 (Sadie 294). He then pushed on to Paris and arrived in the fall of 1831 (Jonson 22).

When Chopin first arrived in Paris, he wanted to study with Kalkbrenner. Chopin played for him and received a response that he would have to take a course of study lasting three years with Kalkbrenner. Chopin was not certain if he wanted to take three years and end up being an imitation of Kalkbrenner. After consulting with his father and Elsner, he decided not to study but to attend a few of Kalkbrenner's classes (Hedley 45).

As Chopin played concerts in Paris, he gained many new friends in literary and musical circles, some of whom were Franz Liszt, Hector Berlioz, Ferdinand Hiller, Vincenzo Bellini, and Giacomo Meyerbeer. Chopin maintained close friendships with many of them even though he did not always care for their music (Sadie 294).

Financially, Chopin supported himself by giving lessons to people of the highest social circles. He made a great deal of money by doing this and was considered to be the most fashionable teacher in Paris. Symbols of his wealth were present in the clothing that he wore and the fact that he had a servant which was very uncommon in those days for a musician (Hedley 53).

In the fall of 1835, Chopin experienced his second serious love, in Dresden. Maria Wodzinski was actually a childhood friend and was much younger than he. Again he did not express his love for her in words, but let his music be his medium (Hedley 61). There was a long period of time which passed before he actually professed his love for Maria. During this time Chopin had two bouts with influenza

in December of 1835 and again in the winter of 1836-37. Because of Chopin's poor health, Maria's father and uncle felt that Chopin would not be a suitable husband for Maria. Thus for a second time, Chopin experienced love and then was left distraught.

At age twenty-seven, Chopin met Aurore Dudevant, whose pen name was George Sand. Chopin was not impressed by her the first time he met her mainly because he was still in love with Maria. Eventually, he succumbed to her charms and their relationship lasted about eight years, during which time, Chopin experienced a great deal of happiness and fulfillment. This was a time also marked by heightened musical imagination in his compositions. From 1838-39 a serious attack of influenza caused Chopin's first serious breakdown in his health. In order to improve his health, he and Sand decided to spend the winter in Majorca because they felt the weather there would be better for his health. Unfortunately, the winter was bad in Majorca that season and his health did not improve very much. After about eight years, Chopin and Sand's relationship ended because of squabbling between Sand's children. His health got progressively worse and he lost interest in composition (Sadie 298).

In April of 1848, Chopin could no longer teach in Paris because of the French Revolution. Therefore, he moved to England and began what was to be his last concert tour. In great suffering, he spent most of his time inside only to come out to perform a concert. His last performance took place on November 16, 1848 at Guildhall in London (Hedley 112).

Chopin was able to return to Paris in November of 1848 only to struggle with tuberculosis until his death. During this time, he did



some composing and also began to write a piano method, but unfortunately did not finish it (Hedley 114). His sister Louise from Warsaw came to visit him in order to take care of him. It was then at two o'clock in the morning of October 17, 1849 that Chopin died. Clésinger came that morning and made casts of Chopin's hands and face, and the painter, Kwiathowski, drew some pencil sketches of his head. Just before his death, Chopin managed to scribble on a piece of paper: "As this earth will suffocate me I beseech you to have my body opened so that I may not be buried alive." To follow his wish a postmortem exam was conducted and his heart was sent in an urn to Warsaw, where it was placed in the Church of the Holy Cross (Hedley 116).

Chopin's funeral took place on October 30th. Some of the events that took place at the funeral ceremony were the singing of Mozart's *Requiem* and the performing of Chopin's "Funeral March" from his B-flat minor Sonata. There were difficulties in obtaining permission to have women singers in the church service but permission was granted. The ceremony was followed by a long procession to the cemetery of Père-Lachaise. A year after Chopin's death, a monument, designed and constructed by Clésinger, was unveiled representing a weeping Muse with a broken lyre. The monument was placed at Chopin's grave along with some Polish earth (Hedley 117).

### *Chopin's Technical and Musical Style*

Chopin's style of playing was an innovation at his time. His playing marked a new era in piano music that completely altered the previous German approach. With the Etudes Op. 10, Chopin exploits his new style of composition and technical innovations.

Some of the main musical points which Chopin stressed in his playing and for his students were beauty of tone, smoothness of execution, and intelligent phrasing (Jonson 31). In his playing, he was not concerned about pleasing people, but more about pleasing himself. This is the main reason why he preferred the salon to the concert hall.

In his critique of Chopin's playing, Moscheles said that Chopin's *pianos* were very delicate so that when Chopin played *forte* there was no need for a harsh tone. In Chopin's melodies he imitated a singer and paid little heed to the accompaniment. Many times Chopin urged his students to listen to singers and also take voice lessons (Jonson 29).

Chopin recognized the hand for its varied power and strengths among the fingers (Samson 60). Most of the playing is done with a finger touch, but at times the upper arm must be employed. In regards to other components of the physical playing structure, the elbows should be kept close to the sides. With respect to fingering, the easiest possible fingering should be used. At times the thumb may pass under five or slide from a black key to a white key or from a white key to a white key. Equalization of the fingers and independence of the hands are necessary in playing (Schonberg 147).

Other strictures which Chopin followed and imposed upon his students were suppleness in the hands and wrists. Also a flat hand position should never be used. He felt that practicing demanded intensity and concentration; however, muscle fatigue should be avoided. In playing, nuance was much more important than equality of tone which was a change from the previous German approach (Schonberg 149-150).

According to Hipkin, Chopin employed the pedal a great deal in his music, which helped to create different colors within the music. His pedal indications, which were intended for the Pleyel piano do not always work effectively on the modern grand piano. A more thorough discussion of the use of the pedal in Chopin's music will follow in Etude No. 5. In regards to the *una corda*, it is primarily used on the modern grand piano to create a lighter sound similar to what the Pleyel piano would have produced.

Chopin established a revolutionary playing style, which brought a new style of technique to the piano world for future generations. The etudes are a prime example of this new style. In the following sections, each etude will be discussed in great detail as to its musical and technical difficulties. Also included are ways to work through the technical challenges in practice.

### *Etude No. 1 in C Major*

During the later months of 1830, this etude, the least emotional and one of the most technically difficult, was written. It is characterized by majestic grandeur through its prominent bass line

melody and sweeping tendrils of sound. The main dynamic marking is forte (*f*) throughout the piece. The harmonic flow is achieved by maintaining dissonant tension over extended periods (Samson 61). Ashton Jonson suggests that the dissonant harmonies be played fortissimo (*ff*) and the consonant ones played forte (*f*) (98). The pedal is essential in binding the two-bar harmonies together.

The right hand of this etude is entirely comprised of extended arpeggios that cover a span of about four and one half octaves. In the left hand there is a sustaining melodic line which moves around in primarily a circle-of-fifths progression. As the piece begins, it starts on a "C" then moves down to "F" steps up to "G" then down to "D." After "D" it moves to "G" then up to "C" concluding the first half of the beginning section. The rest of the piece continues to progress in this same fashion of either moving up or down in a direct circle-of-fifths progression or through stepwise motion to the fifth.

The form of this etude is ternary which is the form predominantly used for most of the etudes.

A	B	A	Coda
m.1 - m. 14	m. 15 - m. 48	m. 49 - m. 62	m. 63 - end

When the A section returns at m. 49 there is an exact repetition of the A section until the coda where it changes.

Throughout most of the piece a pattern is established in the ascending arpeggio and then a new pattern emerges in the descending arpeggio. However, there are a few places where the pattern is changed within the measure. There are also similar arpeggios that occur in different locations which are changed in the slightest ways. The performer must take note of these for fear of

sending him or herself to another section of the piece. One spot to take notice of is in mm. 3 and 11. In both cases an F major chord is outlined where in m. 3 the bass note is an "F" with the arpeggio pattern being C-A-C-F, but in m. 11 the bass has the third "A" followed by the arpeggio pattern C-F-C-F. These spots occur right after the C major arpeggio that begins each half section of the A sections. This same idea with the F major arpeggio appears exactly the same at m. 51 and m. 59.

Another place to watch out for, is at m. 4 where there is a descending A minor arpeggio pattern of E-C-A-C until the fourth beat. At the fourth beat the arpeggio pattern changes from an "E" to a "D." This idea also occurs at measures 8, 38, 40, 52, and 56. There are two sets of passages where similar chords are arpeggiated but there is a slight difference between them. For example in m. 23 an E dominant seventh chord is arpeggiated with the third omitted but then in the next measure the third is added but the seventh is left out. The spot similar to this is located at m. 65, although this time an E major arpeggio is used for the two measures. One other place where the similar chords are arpeggiated happens in mm. 29 and 69. Here a C dominant seventh is arpeggiated. In m. 29 the "B-flat" is brought in right away with the pattern C-G-B-flat-E, whereas in m. 69 the "B-flat" enters on the second half of beat three. All of these places are ones that a performer should make note of when working on this etude.

In regards to the tempo marking for this etude, Chopin writes *allegro*. The metronome marking indicated for this piece is 176 for the quarter note given by Chopin. However, Theodor Kullak felt that

152 for the quarter note was fast enough and is appropriate for the modern grand piano (Jonson 98). Chopin may have been able to play this etude at 176 because the Pleyel piano that he preferred had a very responsive and light action. In performing this piece it is important to make sure that there is a flow in the harmonic current with waves of sounds.

In order to play this piece, the difficulties of the extended arpeggios have to be overcome. A spreading and relocating of the right hand is needed in addition to a fairly large hand. The coordinated movements required are lateral movements of the whole arm, fingers, and wrist plus rotation of the upper arm at the shoulder. One other coordinated movement needed is flexion and extension of the elbow. In order to practice the right hand, one should begin by playing only the first pattern to learn the abduction of the fingers; and then by playing the whole ascending arpeggio pattern slowly working on a quick flexion of the thumb for a smooth relocation of the hand for the next pattern. Following that method, practicing the passage with a legato touch will help to feel the lateral movement of the upper arm (Hie 80).

For the left hand, von Bülow, captive of the late nineteenth and early twentieth misconception of weight in playing, said that the octaves should be struck fully with weight but without a harshness to the sound. In order to do this, he suggested a tightly-stretched hand that is raised before the notes sound (Jonson 98). The octaves should be played by a wrist motion downward to create a full sound that will carry for two bars.

*Etude No. 2 in A Minor*

Of all of the etudes, No. 2 is probably the most challenging, technically. Mastery of it is essential if one is to perform it well. It is based entirely upon the chromatic scale being played by the right hand fingers 3-4-5 with 1 and 2 playing various intervals underneath the scale.

This etude also has a three-part form with a coda attached to the end.

A	B	A	Coda
m. 1 - m. 18	m. 19 - m. 35	m. 36 - m. 44	m. 45 - end

All three sections begin with the ascending chromatic scale beginning on "A" and then descending from "D." In the A sections the scale continues to descend but in the B section it moves back up.

The interest in this piece is created by the contours of the arcs as they interact with harmony and phrase rhythm. The "basic shape" of the arcs reaches the peak on a weak beat before the halfway point of the four-bar phrases. In the descending lines there are minor undulations which can throw the phrasing off beat. When a repetition of a phrase occurs, the descending undulating line's peak varies from the previous phrase. In several places there are trills that have been written out such as in mm. 4 and 12 plus spots similar to these measures (Samson 63).

In the middle section, the textural and rhythmic scheme is left intact but the four-bar phrases become one-bar phrases. Also occurring are sequential patterns with harmony working in circle-of-fifths progression, in addition to periods of diminished chords.

Eventually the harmonic goal of the dominant is reached in m. 32. It is then used as a pedal tone, a low sustained bass note, while the right hand continues to do sequential patterning above it before allowing the return to the A section.

The third section returns to the original A theme until the last four bars. In the last four bars there is one long sweep up to the "C" three octaves above middle "C" which is the highest peak within the entire etude. This is then followed by another long sweep downward ending on a picardy third chord creating a glimpse of hope.

In playing this piece a light touch is demanded in order to obtain the velocity needed to perform it. The chromatic scale requires a Baroque style of fingering having three going over four or five, four going over five, and five going under three or four. The fingering marked by Chopin is the best fingering to use with minor adjustments possibly being made by the performer. In learning the etude, playing with a legato, deep finger touch at a very slow tempo is one way to practice. As one begins to play it faster a light touch is required with an impulse of the wrist which are dictated as the performer feels he or she needs the movement for relaxation within the long lines. For practicing the leaps in the left hand, one may begin by repeating each chord several times with a soft tone in order to learn the notes of each chord and the lateral movement of the forearm and hand. After learning the chords, the performer should play the passages slowly without looking at the keyboard which will help one to acquire distance judgement. In order to gain velocity, one should rapidly play the passages looking at the bass notes if necessary (Hie 127).



*Etude No. 3 in E Major*

No. 3 with its beautiful melody was one of the last of the etudes to be composed in August of 1832 (Samson 62). This piece is the most lyrical which is probably due to Chopin's love for singing that he always tried to recreate at the piano. Kullak described this piece as a tone-poem much like the nocturnes (Jonson 99).

Again this piece has three main sections; however, the middle section is the most contrasting of all the middle sections in the etudes. The first section is characterized by a lyrical tone whereas the second section is virtuosic in nature. The second section is marked *poco più animato* which gives it an excited character. This section keeps building in intensity until it reaches *ff*, after which the intensity is maintained by the markings *con forza* and then *con fuoco*. The music then returns to *f* for a passage marked *con bravura* with parallel sixths running along in contrary motion. This continues until the dominant is reached in m. 54 at the dynamic marking *f*. Then all of a sudden there is a sixteenth rest in both hands followed by a passage marked *p* that acts as a transition back to the A theme. The A theme continues to move along like the first A section but then dies away with the markings *rallentando e smorzando* at the end. This etude has a great deal of passion and fervor.

In deciding on the tempo marking, Chopin originally marked it *vivace* but then later changed it to *vivace ma non troppo*. When the etudes were published he changed it again to *lento ma non troppo* which is what is designated in modern scores. Although, he finally

decided on *lento ma non troppo* he wanted it to move along avoiding over sentimentality so that most scores have the eighth note denoted as 100.

For this etude the use of rubato is employed. In describing the way rubato is used, Chopin explained,

The left hand is the conductor, it must not wave or lose ground; do with the right hand what you will and can. Supposing that a piece lasts a given number of minutes; it may take just so long to perform the whole, but in the details deviations may occur (Schonberg 145).

Others who heard Chopin play, described his use of rubato. Hallé said that Chopin had entire freedom with the rhythm but it was still controlled and never capricious. Liszt in describing it said it sounded like the tempo was agitated, broken, and interrupted. The movement was flexible and languishing (Schonberg 144-145). Berlioz made the comment about Chopin's playing that he (Chopin) never bore the constraint of time neither could he play in time (Jonson 30). If what these artists say about Chopin's rubato is true then the expressive qualities of the piece are the foremost concern rather than maintaining a strict rhythmic pulse.

Double notes are the main challenge to overcome in this etude. The double notes in the first and last sections are to be played by the right hand with the top note being brought out. In order to bring out the top note, the right hand should lean slightly toward the top note. At m. 16, the right hand has consecutive chords with octave outlines which occur in other places within the piece. In working on these places one should play each part with a light touch carrying the arm weight from one chord to the next. This will help one to learn the

lateral motion plus the forward and backward movement of arms and hands. Then by playing the passage forte, repeating each chord several times, will help one learn the vertical movements and the exertion of arm weight (Hie 103). At mm. 46-53, there are consecutive double notes moving in contrary motion. The phrasing is marked with two-note slurs requiring a down-up motion with the wrist. To practice this section, lifting the whole arm after the two-note phrases will help the performer learn the finger position, evenness of weight distribution, lateral and vertical wrist movements, and the withdrawal of weight from the keys (Hie 91). Playing the passage at about *mp* with as little as necessary excess movement will help to accomplish a gain in velocity (Hie 92). There are trills in the bass in the transition section from mm. 54 to 60. These are short trills which are written out beginning with the principal note and playing the note above and then the principal followed by a leap.

*Etude No. 4 in C-sharp Minor*

This is the first of the etudes that presents an equal challenge for both hands. Previously, the right had contained the main technical difficulty, whereas, the left hand primarily maintained harmonic stability. This piece displays a Baroque style of writing where one hand has a constant sixteenth-note passage while the other hand has staccato chords. In describing this piece, Kullak said that the accentuation should be fiery (Jonson 101). The primary

accents used are *fp* and *fz*. Within this etude the dynamic level of *fff* is achieved, the loudest of any of the etudes except No. 12.

The B section has many contrasts to the outer A sections. For example in the B section, the hands join together on the sixteenth-note idea. Also at mm. 33-39, there is a heralding theme in the right hand which always begins on the second beat of the measure. A sequencing motive takes effect in m. 42 building up to the dominant in m. 45. After that there is a transition section in which the same motive is repeated that propels itself into the return of the A section at m. 51.

The etude concludes with a coda marked *con più fuoco possibile*. There are many large leaps in the left hand with the right hand playing a harmonic interval primarily an octave down to "C#." Then in mm. 77-78, there are large jumps down to "G#."

Technically speaking, the piece is mainly based upon stepwise, scalar motion that switches from one hand to the other. In order to practice the scalar motion, one should begin by playing slowly with a legato touch going down to the bed of the keys. Then practicing with a staccato touch will help to maintain evenness in the notes so that bunching does not occur. To play at a faster tempo, it will help if one uses a light touch with an impulse of the wrist at various points within the line.

Another technical aspect of this etude is arpeggios with large intervals such as in mm. 3 and 11 in addition to other similar places. In order to play these passages, the fingers should be extended and abducted with the wrist being held slightly high. In these particular places, one should play them very slowly making sure to hold the

second note as the third note is played. To reach the higher notes the wrists should lift slightly to accommodate for the shortness of the fifth finger.

The chords in the left hand in mm. 3 and 11 can be rolled for the sake of the large intervals that the hand has to reach. There is a rolled symbol in front of the first chord in m. 3 possibly suggesting that Chopin himself gives the license to roll the chords.

Consecutive octaves occur in several places as in m. 4. They should be practiced slowly so as to learn the lateral movements needed. These consecutive octaves also occur in m. 54

Another technical spot to work through is the section from mm. 35-44. The hands work in contrary motion with the left hand playing arpeggios that span a ninth and the right hand has a trill figure followed by a leap. Both hands should be practiced slowly with a heavy touch to learn the vertical movements. Then practicing the passage with an accent on the first of the four sixteenths will help one to learn the lateral movements necessary. In order to increase the tempo, a light touch should be used on the unaccented notes.

The left hand in mm. 33-34 and mm. 37-38 requires an impulse of the wrist on the accented note. The fingering shows a change of the finger on the repeated note which should be observed. By playing with the impulse of the wrist and a change of finger, tension will be relieved and the passage will become clearer.

An early nineteenth century musical technique employed by Chopin is a crescendo followed by a subito piano and another crescendo as in mm. 13 and 14. This crescendo subito piano effect

creates a feeling of frustration because of a denial of the climax to the phrase. This musical device is used a couple of times within this etude.

In m. 80, the descending arpeggio has a change of fingering marked on the the repeated "C#." A change of fingering within the right hand can be used or the left hand can play the repeated note. Using the left hand to play the note can eliminate the need to adduct the right hand on the note. Therefore the right hand can maintain its position throughout the descending arpeggio.

*Etude No. 5 in G-flat Major*

In a letter, Chopin described this etude as the least interesting of the etudes since it was written for only black keys and that it had little depth of emotion. Kullak called this piece an exceedingly piquant composition bubbling with vivacity and humor (Jonson 101).

This piece is composed primarily of four-bar phrases within the A sections (mm. 1-16, mm. 49-56). The A sections consist of two periods, each consisting of an antecedent and consequent phrase. The antecedent is exactly the same in both parts; however, the consequent phrase changes. In the first period, the last two measures go from A-flat minor to B-flat major harmony with the third of A-flat minor, "C-flat," in the bass moving down by step to "B-flat" root. Then in the second period there is an A-flat dominant seventh moving to D flat.

Within the B section (mm. 17-48), chromatic passing notes are used in the bass. Mainly beginning in m. 24, the bass begins on "C"

then moves up to "D-flat" then returns to "C" up to "D-flat" and "D-natural." The piece continues in this fashion until m. 33. At this point there is a pedal tone, "A-flat," which is the secondary dominant of the dominant, "D-flat." This sustained pedal tone lasts for eight bars and then reaches the dominant of "G-flat." From mm. 41-44, "D-flat" harmony is arpeggiated in the right hand while the left is embellishing the "D-flat" harmony in the bass through chromaticism.

At the coda section, in mm. 65-66 an improvisatory-like passage occurs with a rolled chord in the left hand followed by the right hand trickling downward, slowly and delicately. The measures are marked with the words *delicatissimo* and *smorzando*. Within these two measures a stark contrast is made from the rest of the piece. Continuing to the conclusion of the etude, a G-flat major harmony is maintained with diatonic passing tones happening in the right hand. The final measures of the piece conclude with a rush up to a high "G-flat," then plunges downward in octaves finishing with octave "G-flats."

In the A section, the right hand plays arpeggios with varying intervals. To practice the right hand, Hie suggests a legato playing in groups of twos rhythmically. Then in mm. 3 and 4 one should continue with a legato touch in order to learn the rapid alternation between the abduction and adduction of the fingers and to learn the lateral movement of the thumb (83-84). The left hand has repeated use of leaps which has been previously discussed in Etude No.2. At the conclusion of the piece, both hands have consecutive octaves on the black keys. In playing the octaves an impulse of the wrist should

be used on the first of each triplet. The hand must be in a fixed position to maintain the necessary stretch for octaves.

Chopin felt that the damper pedal was the most important tool a pianist could use for it was the most powerful, versatile, and subtle means of expression (Banowetz 180). On the modern grand piano, many of the pedal indications given by Chopin in the score present some difficulties because the modern grand piano pedal has different sustaining qualities from the Pleyel piano for which the pedal indications were intended. Therefore one must make some changes to the pedal indications given by Chopin in order to produce the same results that he achieved while playing the pieces.

There are many reasons why Chopin used the damper pedal. One reason was to connect final chords for the purpose of resonance rather than a legato sound. At the conclusion of this etude the pedal would be employed for resonance on the final two chords. For scale passages, the pedal should be depressed at the beginning of the scale and then released at the end of the scale to avoid dryness and to have brilliance. On the modern grand piano a fluttering or a quick up and down motion of the pedal may be necessary to create this same effect that occurred on the Pleyel piano. According to Chopin, harmonic tones are also pedaled through. Also at times the pedal was used to create a slight blurring effect in certain spots to give the music a multicolored and kaleidoscopic effect. Some other particulars about Chopin's use of the pedal are that the markings do not always agree with the phrase or slur markings and that the pedal is to be held through rests. There are times when when the release sign is omitted at the end of the piece (Banowetz 191-193).



On the modern grand piano, Joseph Banowetz provides some general suggestions in his book on pedaling on how to create the effects that Chopin had wanted. First of all, the pedal is changed after the beat. In playing staccato with the pedal, the attack should be the same as when not using the pedal. When the bass harmony cannot be sustained by a finger, the pedal should catch it. Most important of all the pedal should respect the bass. In the bass register, the pedalling should be lighter than in the treble with even a half-pedaling being employed. Half-pedaling may be used in the treble for color and a slight blurring. If a passage does not have pedal indicated, it should be regarded as having a special color (195-196).

*Etude No. 6 in E-flat Minor*

In No. 6, the mood is drawn inward for an introspective look at life. One comment from Ashton Jonson about this piece was that it leaves an impression of a dark, cloudy day until the E major chord at the very end lightens the gloom (101). The overall mood is one of darkness and sadness brought about by the E-flat minor key and the sixteenth-note effect in the middle voice.

The main challenge of this etude is the balancing of the three voices: melody, middle voice, and bass. The melody rises and falls while the middle voice winds around chromatically below the melody. The cohesion is found in the middle voice that continues through all three sections of the piece. At m. 16, the moving voice works its way downward in a heavy, *pesante*, manner as a cry of

great despair. Within m. 32, the climax occurs and then the music begins to slowly move down by step until the return of the A theme at m. 41.

Within the piece there are three places that are very similar. These places occur in mm. 7, 15, and 47. Each one begins with an F-flat major chord that is then resolved differently in each. The first one in m. 7 moves to a C-flat diminished chord and the second one in m. 15 resolves to a B-flat dominant seventh chord. Finally, the F-flat chord in m. 47 resolves to a B-flat major chord without the seventh.

The technical challenge facing a performer in this etude is the same as the musical challenge of balancing the three voices. The melody must be shaped while the middle voice meanders around in a subdued manner. Throughout the piece the middle voice switches between the hands, but primarily is contained in the left hand. To practice the middle voice, one should play with a heavy touch so the fingers can learn the notes and then play with a soft touch. The ending of the piece probably creates the most problem for keeping the middle voice legato. Using a fingering, which will keep the tones connected will help to achieve the legato sound that is necessary. For the last two measures, the pedal should be fluttered so that the resolution to E-flat major can be clearly heard from the meandering in the middle voice, which was in E-flat Minor

### *Etude No. 7 in C Major*

This etude is primarily a double note study for the right hand. In the left hand, there is a melody that rises to an "A-flat" then

descends chromatically. This melodic theme happens in pairs with the second of the pair being an extension of the first. The middle section is characterized by large leaps in the left hand beginning in m. 16. At m. 17, a circle-of-fifths progression begins to take shape. It begins with A major followed by D minor, then G major to C major and the D major to G major, the dominant of the tonic key "C." The dominant occurs as a pedal point at m. 26, then begins to return back to C major in a chromatic fashion. There is return to the A theme followed by a coda-like section. At the conclusion of the etude there is prolongation of the tonic which lasts for six measures.

The technical challenge which most faces the performer is the right hand double note figures with repeated notes. The lower voice note of the right hand is always repeated throughout the entire piece. In playing this etude the right hand must remain legato, which may be achieved by two different means. One is to do a change of fingering on the lower note usually a 2 to 1. The fingering written in the score most often suggests this change on the lower note. However, another method of playing the double repeated notes is to use a loose wrist with 1 on the bottom while the top voice is connected. Even though the bottom note will be broken, a legato-effect will occur because of a connection in the top voice. There is an up-down motion in the wrist in addition to a shift toward the outside of the hand for shaping.

The left hand must be played with a finger pedaling, meaning a fingering which will allow for the notes to be connected as smoothly as possible without the aid of the pedal. The pedal may be used lightly, but it must change constantly with the ever-changing

harmonies. Therefore, the fingering for the left hand must be done in a smooth manner. Within the middle section, the left hand has many leaps which may be connected by the pedal.

*Etude No. 8 in F Major*

In No. 8, the mood lightens from the previous etudes. The left hand bounces around while the right hand flows up and down the keyboard. Basically, the right hand works in stepwise or scalar motion throughout which is the unifying compositional device.

The outer two sections are in F major while the inner section is in D minor, the relative minor. During the middle section, the mood darkens which can be intensified by playing it very softly in contrast to the outer sections. In the first section, there is a repeat of the first half of the A theme (mm. 1-10) in mm. 15-24. The first time the A theme is presented, the second half ends up on G dominant seventh chord which is the secondary dominant in F major. The G dominant seventh resolves to C major which brings the piece back to a repeat of the A theme once more. At m. 24, the place similar in transition to m. 11, there is dominant-tonic relationship in F major. When the B section begins, the music is thrown into D minor creating a haunting effect. The beginning of the B section works in the same fashion as the A section. At m. 37 for the first time the hands join together in the sixteenth-note scalar motion. Then at m. 41, the hands work in a stepwise motion causing an uncertainty about where the music is headed harmonically. After the uncertainty subsides, the harmony lands on the dominant of D minor at m. 47. A sequence in the tenor

line follows, working its way upward, creating tension and excitement. Again Chopin creates a feeling of uncertainty until the A theme is heralded back. At the conclusion of the piece at m. 89, the music spirals downwards and then springs up to be followed by four rolled chords. These four chords: A major, D minor, C dominant seventh, and F major, give a sense of triumph and completion to the piece. It is interesting to note that the last four chords are the dominant and tonic of the middle and outer sections.

In practicing the right hand, a legato touch going deep into the keys is the best way to learn the vertical movement of the fingers. Then supplying an impulse of the wrist on the first of every four notes will help relieve tension. To play at a faster tempo, one should play with a light touch allowing for fluency (Hie 118-119).

Measures 53-56 present a problem for both hands in that there are large intervals at the end of the sixteenth-note passages that the hands cannot reach with a normal hand position. In a situation such as this which only lasts for a brief period, one can turn the wrist sideways to reach the large interval. After playing the interval the hand should immediately return to its previous position with the medial axis running between the second and third fingers. Normally, a sideways turn is not advisable for playing, but in this situation it is plausible since the hand is primarily in one position.

In mm. 89-92, there is a descending arpeggio figure in both hands. An accent, which is produced by an impulse of the wrist, is marked on the first of each group of four sixteenth notes. A slow deep finger touch is necessary in order to learn the vertical movements. The pattern should be grouped as the last three notes of

one beat plus the first note of the next beat. This is to allow for a sense of direct motion before a change in direction occurs.

An extended arpeggio takes place on an F major seventh chord. A quick flexion of the thumb is needed to allow for a smooth relocation of the hand. Four rolled chords follow the extended arpeggio requiring a high wrist and forearm with an expanded hand position. A slow playing of each chord will help one to learn the expansion of the hand and the coordinated movements necessary. By playing with different touches such as rapid and light, one can learn phrase release, velocity, and intensity (Hie 113).

The phrasing in the left hand is crucial in addition to a sparkling right hand. One must observe the accents, crescendo, diminuendo, and rests in order to create the effect Chopin had intended for the left hand to bounce along with excitement. In regards to the acciaccatura, it should be played on the beat. In mm. 48 and 50, the tenor voice must be brought out so that the sequence may be heard. A difficult passage for phrasing occurs in mm. 76-85. The moving voice in the left hand must be connected and have nuance by leaning toward the thumb

### *Etude No. 9 in F Minor*

This etude is believed to have been written especially for Ignaz Moscheles. The mood as Huneker described it is more petulant than tempestuous, having a morbid melody but not without accents of grandeur. The persistency in repetition acts as a foreshadow to Chopin's later, sadder years (Jonson 104). Closely related to the

nocturne style, the left hand part is widely spread, a technique Chopin was the first to begin extensively developing (Samson 68).

The left hand is characterized by large intervals throughout the piece which requires some stretching in the hand. In playing the left hand, the hand should be positioned so that the medial axis runs through the second finger depending on a person's handshape. The hand should maintain a dome shape at all times not allowing for a collapsed handshape. A slight crescendo bringing out the top notes is very important in creating the agitated feel this piece conveys.

In the right hand, the melody must drive the piece along. When there is a two-note slur as in m. 1, the first of the two notes should be slightly accented. As the line moves forward, the intensity keeps building, creating a feeling of restlessness ending the phrase with an accent. Then the phrase repeats with the same intensity. At m. 9, the music is marked *sotto voce*, producing an echo effect. The mood begins to lighten as the piece switches to major. Starting at m. 21 the intensity begins to build again by first the faster harmonic rhythm and the crescendoing melody. Then an *accelerando* is added with the melody being doubled in octaves and followed by a rest after the two-note slurs. Finally at m. 28, the climax is reached with the dynamic, *ff*, and the shortest note values that the right hand has had so far. A series of one-bar phrases follows in an echo-like effect. The first measure is marked *forte* and the melody is in octaves. Then all of a sudden the next bar is marked *pp* with the melody as single notes.

In the remainder of the piece, it basically works in the same manner as the first half. There is a return to the A theme, then a

build in intensity. Then a contrasting series of one-bar phrases occurs similar to the end of the first half. Concluding the piece, a tremolo occurs in both hands that fades away with a *smorzando*.

In several places of the right hand part consecutive octaves appear. In mm. 25-28, an impulse of the wrist should be used for each of the two-note phrases, creating a loud-soft sound. A legato playing of m. 35 and similar places is achieved by using fingers 4 and 5 and occasionally 3 to maintain a connection in the upper voices.

At the conclusion of the etude, both hands have a tremolo which should be played by the fingers rather than with a forearm rotation. The reason for using just the fingers is because the span is less than an octave and the passage is to be played with a controlled, quiet tone. The hand should lean toward the fifth finger with the thumb just being lifted slightly (Ortmann 187-189).

#### *Etude No. 10 in A-flat Major*

Von Bülow felt that this etude was a true feat for a pianist to accomplish.

He who can play this study in a real finished manner may congratulate himself on having climbed to the the highest point of the pianist's Parnassus (Jonson 104).

This piece is a study in perpetual motion requiring technical dexterity for both hands. As far as as the rhythm is concerned, there is a shift between doublets and triplets which causes a shift in accent patterns (Samson 69). The shifts in accent patterns give the etude



and exceedingly piquant style with fantastic charm according to Kullak (Jonson 104).

The etude begins with a doublet rhythm until m. 5, when the accent shifts to the first of the triplets through m. 8. A contrasting passage occurs in mm. 13-16 in which the articulation changes from legato to staccato with a dry pedal. The change to staccato gives a new and different color that is the first and only time that it appears in all of the etudes.

In m. 43, the texture changes in the left hand with large leaps being added. The top voice in the left hand moves its way upward chromatically from "D" to "G" with increasing intensity. After this buildup the harmony works its way back down through a series of suspensions in mm. 51-53.

Beginning with m. 55, there is a return to the A theme that soon takes a turn to a chromatically-based idea. Then in m. 69, a restatement of the A theme returns an octave higher in the right hand. At the conclusion of the etude, a V-I cadence occurs in the left hand while the right hand does an arpeggio with chords interspersed in it. A suspension finishes out the piece in the penultimate measure.

To produce the accents in the right hand, one must lean the hand toward the side on which the accent happens. For example, at the beginning of the etude the hand should lean toward the fifth finger. Within mm. 5-8, the accent alternates from the low note to the high note, requiring the hand to lean both ways.

In mm. 75-76, the right hand has an arpeggio that necessitates an adduction and relocation of the hand. The thumb replaces the

fifth finger on the "A-flat." A practice technique for the arpeggio is a slow, deep touch in order to learn the adduction and relocation of the hand.

*Etude No. 11 in E-flat Major*

This etude is a study in large rolled chords for both hands with many of the chords having stretches of tenths or larger. The melody is plaintive with a swaying of tones produced from the rolled chords (Jonson 105).

There are three main sections to this piece in A B A form. The A section is made up of two parts, followed by the B section in mm. 16-32. A return of the A section occurs with a coda beginning at m. 40. At the coda, the harmony moves chromatically in all of the voices. The ending is the most contrasting point of the study because of the sustained melody.

With respect to the melody, it is located in the top voice. Therefore, it must be played with a slight accent so that the key is depressed faster than the other keys. In practicing the rolled chords, one should play each chord slowly so as to learn the expansion of the hands and all coordinated movements. Then by playing legato, learning the weight-transfer of notes in the upper voice can be realized. The next step is to use a rapid, light touch in order to learn phrase release, velocity, and intensity (Hie 113).

*Etude No. 12 in C Minor*

As mentioned previously, this etude was written in September of 1831 as a response to the taking of Warsaw by the Russians. The piece commences with a crash of passionate surprise followed by a swirl downward of indignation and despair. In regards to the melody, it rises defiantly, proudly, and majestically (Jonson 106). The left hand creates a feeling of turmoil while the right hand rises triumphantly.

This piece is in a ternary form with a coda. The A section begins with an introduction that lasts for eight bars. There is then a phrase of two plus eight bars which is then repeated. The last four bars of the second phrase are modified. In the B section, two sets of four bar units occur. These measures then lead back to the repeat of the A theme. The A section again consists of an eight-bar introduction with a phrase of two plus eight bars. Triplet configurations in the melody form an embellishment of the first A section melody. This phrase is repeated as in the previous A section; however, this time the phrase consists of two bars plus four bars plus another four bars. The coda makes up the last eight bars of the piece. The first four bars of the coda are an augmentation of the A section melody. Then the last four bars are based upon the downward spiralling passage from the introduction (Abraham 41-42).

Technically speaking, the left hand begins with stepwise motion. In order to practice this passage, one should use a slow,

deep touch to learn the vertical movements and adducted hand positions. An accent should be placed on the beat with an impulse of the wrist. In order to play the passage faster, one should use a light touch (Hie 118).

In the right hand, there are primarily consecutive octaves or chords with octave outlines. To practice the chords, one should use a light touch to help learn the lateral and forward-backward movements of the hands and arms. Then one should play the passage forte, repeating each chord two to four times. This will help the performer in working out the vertical movements needed in the hands. Following this step, a fortissimo playing should be used to learn the extended lateral movements and the movements of the shoulder girdle (Hie 103).

Within the coda, the left hand has a finger tremolo requiring the second and fifth finger in mm. 78 and 80. The reason for using just the fingers is because the interval is only a fourth. One should first play this passage forte only using the fingers to learn the vertical movements. In order to then gain velocity, the performer should use a light touch while starting on the key surface.

### *Conclusion*

The etudes represent a technical and musical ingenuity. Chopin's ability to combine both technique and musical qualities together in one entertaining piece has not been quite surpassed by almost anyone. Each etude has at least one main technical challenge for a pianist to overcome.

It is evident how Chopin's life played an important role in his music. His love, his grief, and his anger are all captured as noted previously in many of the pieces. Emotions were indeed the main driving force in his reason for composing.

*Glossary*

**Abduction**-drawing away from a position near or parallel to the medial axis. To move apart.

**Adduction**-drawing toward or past the medial axis. To bring together.

**Axis**-straight line about which a body rotates. Transverse axis: crosswise axis. Longitudinal axis: lengthwise axis.

**Ball-and-socket-joint**-joint between bones that allows for rotation (shoulder, radio-ulnar, knuckle).

**Contraction**-muscular action produced by the contraction of thousands of muscle fibers. Movements occur when the contraction is transmitted to the tendons which are attached to the bones.

**Coordinated movement**-movement that fulfills the requirements of arm-weight, space, and time with a minimum waste of physiological energy. Mechanical aim of all movements is the production at the piano-key at the proper time and place of force sufficient to produce the desired tonal intensity, efficient movement.

**Curvilinear movement**-movement in curved lines.

**Extension**-unbending of a joint.

**Flexion**-bending of a joint.

**Force effects**-all pianistic effects are secured through variation in speed of force, increase in speed, if the mass remains constant, results in increase of force, conversely, increase in force, with constant mass, results in increase of speed.

**Hinge-joint**-joint between bones that allows motion in only one plane (elbow, wrist, lower finger joint).

**Humerus**-long bone of the upper arm.

**Intensity**-extreme degree of strength, force or energy.

**Lateral movement**-sidewise movement.

**Medial axis**-the imaginary line that runs from the elbow down the center of the forearm to the third finger when the arm is resting down at the side of the body in a pronated position.

**Multi-planar movement**-movement that occurs in two planes-horizantal and vertical.

**Pedal tone**-a long-held note, normally in the bass, sounding with changing harmonies in the other parts.

**Picardy third**-the major third as used for the final chord of a composition in a minor key.

**Pronation**-rotation of forearm and hand so the palm faces downward.

**Radius**-bone of the lower arm on the thumb side.

**Relaxation**-lengthening characterized by inactive muscle fibers or muscles.

**Relocation**-to shift the hand from one point to another on the keyboard.

**Rotation**-turning about an axis.

**Shoulder girdle**-bony arch that supports forelimbs.

**Spreading**-stretching outward of the fingers.

**Tremolo**-a rapid alternation between two or more tones

**Ulna**-bone of lower arm on finger side

**Weight-transfer**-misnomer of the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century about the shifting of weight from one finger to another to obtain a perfect legato touch which does not occur in fast playing.

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