

A Kalmus Classic Edition

A. M. R.

BARRET

SIXTEEN GRAND STUDIES

Edited by
MARTIN SCHURING

FOR OBOE

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Sixteen Grand Studies

by Apollon Marie-Rose Barret

edited by Martin Schuring

Apollon Marie-Rose Barret (1804–1879) was the solo oboist of London's Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden, for 45 years. He was also an innovative oboe designer, devising many mechanical and acoustical improvements still in use today. To illustrate the advantages of his new oboe design, built by the firm of Triébert in Paris, he published the second edition of his *Complete Method for the Oboe* in 1862. A facsimile of that book, now published by Boosey & Hawkes, is the *Barret Oboe Method* in common use today. While the facsimile provides a fascinating link with the past, its antiquated typography and many minor errors make it difficult to use, especially for younger students.

These **Sixteen Grand Studies** are extracted from the complete *Barret Oboe Method* available from the same publisher. The aim of the new edition is to present a clean copy of Barret's original text with the errors and inconsistencies eliminated. No further editing took place. In doubtful cases (there are some deliberate inconsistencies, to be sure), Barret's original was preserved. Frequently, more than one interpretation of the text is possible, so my editorial process is explained below.

In Barret's original, these sixteen studies are titled "Fifteen Grand Studies" with a sixteenth study inexplicably added. This sixteenth study is markedly more difficult than anything else in the book, so perhaps Barret wanted to write a culminating etude to show what a real virtuoso could do with the new oboe design.

Dynamics and Expression

In the preface to his second edition, Barret writes, "Unless differently marked, it is a general rule that in ascending passages we should increase the tone, and decrease it in descending passages." At least half, probably more, of the dynamic markings in the book are meant to emphasize this point, or to be "differently marked." Since Barret was writing for students, he painstakingly and repetitively marks the score. But, as a warning against excessive obedience to his instruction, he immediately continues, "It is a great error to make a 'nuance' on every note. Many persons practice this exaggeration, thinking it to be expression: they deceive themselves. It is but affectation, and only shows their want of real feeling the more strongly." So, it is clear that the graphic crescendos and diminuendos are meant to be played with subtlety.

Many of Barret's graphic diminuendos (as distinct from the **word** *diminuendo*) are not really intended to cause a reduction in tone, but rather to encourage an emphasis at the beginning of the diminuendo: like a deeper, longer accent. Seen this way, the repetitive series of diminuendos in measures 26–27 of Grand Study No. 6 makes sense. When Barret writes the words *crescendo* or *diminuendo*, however, he definitely wants a corresponding increase or decrease in sound. This usage sometimes results in curiosities: see measure 39 of Grand Study No. 3, with the crescendo and diminuendos occurring at the same time.

Although the book is carefully (even fussily) marked, Barret also points out, "In going from a pianissimo, to a fortissimo, and vice versa, an intermediate 'nuance' is necessary to avoid an abrupt transition . . ." Thus, it is reasonable for the player to add some crescendos and diminuendos not printed in the score. See, for example, measures 32–34 of Grand Study No. 6. Although the word *crescendo* does not appear, it is musically and historically correct to play each measure a little louder to prepare the forte in measure 35.

Often, the graphic marks in the facsimile are very small, or of inconsistent size, making it difficult to determine

whether a mark is meant to be an accent or a diminuendo. In these doubtful cases, I have written accents when the mark indicates a meter shift (for an example, see measures 50–51 and 54–55 of Grand Study No. 16) and written diminuendos when the purpose is expressive.

Often, two or more places in the same piece appear to be parallel but receive slightly different treatments. In these cases, I began by examining the surrounding material. Often, other subtle changes advise against making the passages consistent. But, in cases where everything appears identical except for a missing accent or slur, I have restored it. Dozens of cases of missing staccato dots, missing dynamics, inconsistent slurs, and so forth, have been corrected silently without comment where appropriate.

For the most part, the arrangement of measures, lines, and pages is the same as the Boosey & Hawkes facsimile, except in cases of illegible crowding. This has added a few extra page turns to the book, but I felt the improvement in legibility was worth it.

Grace Notes

Although Barret is quite explicit in his preface about the execution of the different graces, his *Oboe Method* employs three different notations without apparent reason. Grace notes appear as slashed eighth notes, un-slashed eighth notes, and un-slashed sixteenth notes. In this edition, all single grace notes are presented as slashed eighth notes.

Performance and Practice Suggestions

Many page turns do not occur in musical places. In these instances, the student is encouraged to memorize a measure or two before or after the page turn to give a musical resolution to the phrase. Some of the etudes continue too long for performance in one breath to be feasible (Grand Study No. 15, for example). In these cases, it is permitted to stop (in a musical place!), breathe, and resume.

Students could enhance the benefit of these etudes by also transposing them up or down a semitone. This added step develops the essential discipline of playing in a key rather than reading individual notes.

Most important, though, is not merely to learn the notes of the etudes. One of the remarkable features of this book is its rare combination of pedagogical organization and musical value. All the pieces are useful; several are truly beautiful. Appreciate the beauty, and remember that the pieces are exercises: they are meant to teach you something. Each piece is meant to teach you something slightly different. Think about it, and try to discover what it is you are meant to learn. Then, your practicing and study will be much more rewarding.

I will not be as confident as Barret when he stated, "I have carefully revised this Edition of the method, and the few errors which were before uncorrected have now entirely disappeared." Any errors that still remain are entirely mine.

Martin Schuring
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Sixteen Grand Studies

Allegro. ♩ = 112

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