

Notes to the Edition

As students of John de Lancie at the Curtis Institute of Music, our lesson fare was predictable and consistent: Barret, Brod, Ferling, Gillet, Graduation. These materials formed the basis of everything we were taught about music and oboe and life. So, it is not surprising that as an adult, I still remember every nuance of almost every phrase.

This project has its origin in a conversation Mr. de Lancie and I shared during a lesson. He thought that perhaps the Ferling studies had at one time been furnished with bass lines just as the Barret and Brod studies were. The bass lines of those etudes were invaluable for analyzing phrase structure and determining musical direction, and we referred to them frequently.

I forgot that conversation until a few years ago, when I noticed what seemed to me too many courtesy accidentals printed in the Ferling studies I was teaching. As just one example, in measure 59 of study No. 32, the "E" had a natural sign in front of it (this edition has removed some of the most redundant of these accidentals, including the one in question). Why is this E-natural marked when the nearest E-sharp is nine measures earlier? Could these accidentals be explained by chromatic notes and cross-relations in an expunged bass lines? I set out to find the earliest possible version of the Ferling etudes to see for myself.

Finding the original publication proved to be quite easy. The British Library had a copy which they sent me; my friend Sandro Caldini found a print with minor differences in the library of the Conservatory of Milan. The Italian copy appears to be newer than the British Library copy which is listed in their catalog as originating from ca. 1835, published in Braunschweig by J. P. Spehr.

Alas, there was no bass line—it turned out that Ferling was merely unusually careful about cautionary accidentals. But, there was a striking number of textual differences between the original publication and the editions in current use. The most immediately noticeable difference is the absence of metronome markings, but there are literally hundreds more. There are far fewer expressive marks than we have become accustomed to seeing, although there are some extra accents and articulations which we are not accustomed to seeing.

The musical usage in the 1830's clearly required more independence from the performer than is demanded today. Throughout the book, large dynamic contrasts occur without an intermediate crescendo or diminuendo indicated. Sometimes, these nuances appear to be appropriate, sometimes not. It is fascinating to decide, and there will not necessarily be only one right answer.

As oboists, we are fortunate to have so many slow and lyrical etudes. The slow studies by Ferling are among the very best of these, demanding a level of imagination, control, and stamina that challenges players of all levels. As we have grown accustomed to the heavily edited texts in common usage, we have given up some measure of the imagination required. But now, with fewer expressive markings indicated, the performer can make a much wider variety of interpretive decisions, allowing the studies to fulfill their real mission of teaching musicianship as well as instrumental control.

For the most part, this edition is a clean copy of the original print. Where there are apparent omissions of slurs, these have been added as dotted slurs. Where there are omissions of other marks such as grace notes or articulations, these have been given in parentheses.

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Special Preface for Saxophone Players by Dr. Timothy McAllister

I am honored to contribute a special mention to Professor Martin Schuring's new edition of W. F. Ferling's 48 (infamous!) Studies, Op. 31. For many years, Ferling's etudes have been linked to the saxophone community and curricula worldwide, due mostly to the Southern Music edition—with its marketing being directed towards "Oboe or Saxophone"—and later, Marcel Mule's edition published by Alphonse Leduc in 1946. It is widely known that the Southern publication was adapted by Albert Andraud (1884-1975) from an earlier version published in France attributed to oboist Louis Bleuzet (1871-1941) of l'Opera de Paris and the Conservatoire de Musique; however, it is unclear whether Andraud was the first to suggest the studies' use for the saxophone. Nevertheless, with Ferling being a contemporary of Adolphe Sax (one wonders if Ferling ever heard Sax's most famous instrument) and Marcel Mule—Sax's legendary successor at the Conservatoire—having established the Studies firmly in his teaching, these remarkable works have seemed to become forever linked to the saxophone as well.

One would be hard pressed to find a university-trained saxophonist, or advanced high school student for that matter, who hasn't tackled the Ferling. I, myself, can remember many wonderful lessons in high school and various band camps on the 48 Studies, which also served year after year as required audition material in my home state of Texas for the All-State Band and for my school's chair placement auditions. My private teacher, Ralph Burton, was a pupil of the renowned saxophonist/pedagogue Eugene Rousseau, who himself worked with Mule. Ralph stressed the importance of working in the Ferling, and I always felt a direct connection to an interpretation and approach that Mule might have employed with the Ferling. The musical and technical concepts we discussed have formed the foundation of my own teaching ever since.

What is particularly striking about Professor Schuring's edition is its simplicity, clarity, and reference to performance practice of the 1830s. As saxophonists, we can learn a great deal from this new 'urtext' and establish our own link to the work's Nineteenth-century roots and the desire by the composer for informed, yet individual, interpretations by the performer. The style and character of Ferling's writing isn't unlike that which we encounter—and often overlook as saxophonists—within our own literature of the period, particularly the music of Berlioz, Meyerbeer, Kastner, Singeleé, Arban, Klosé, or Demersseman; a style permeated by an artistic *bravura*, yet light and almost whimsical in nature.

Students of all ages and levels must be careful not to promote an overly-contrived, modern approach to these studies in an attempt to be profoundly musical, but rather should stress the importance of line, purity of sound, flawless execution, and intelligent choices. The implementation of vibrato, for instance, must not overshadow the architecture of the gestures nor the inherent lyricism of the phrases themselves. A *forte* marking is less about playing loudly and more about demonstrating a full-bodied, projected tone. An accented note is meant to be merely highlighted or weighted, not seen as an aggressively, 'tongued' note. Prof. Schuring's comments regarding expressive markings and staccato notes, in particular, are equally appropriate for the saxophonist.

Some specific technical points I focus on in these etudes include producing a rapid, efficient staccato; multiple fingering options based on context—such as the B \flat /A \sharp arpeggiations using 1–4, 1–5 combinations (see #16, m. 17), the chromatic F \sharp /5 'flip' (#16, m. 5), additive fingerings to improve the color of short tube fundamentals such as 'covered' C \sharp (octave key + 3–4–5–6) (#13) or the addition of low B for note endings at *pp* dynamics (#13, m. 34) to improve intonation—and the development of 'short' or false fingerings in certain etudes such as middle D (using c2 +/- 2), D \sharp /E \flat (c2, c3 +/- 2), and E (c2, c3, c5 +/- 2) as a means to eliminate the register break, if appropriate, or when needing to play incredibly soft with a more delicate timbre.

Most importantly, in linking this music to a pedagogical continuum, we cannot forget this music was conceived for the oboe; therefore, it is my belief we should attempt to seek out expert teachers of the instrument for advice and commentary. Play these etudes for an oboist and don't be afraid to hear what they have to say. Their professional experience and teaching lineage allows for a more critical ear, and can only improve how we, as saxophonists, may view our own playing. These are truly classical studies operating within a tradition, as a whole, which is much deeper than our own.

48 Studies for Oboe (or Saxophone)

Op. 31

Wilhelm Franz Ferling
Edited by Martin Schuring

Adagio con espressione.

1 *p* *crescendo*

6 *f* *p*

11 *crescendo*

15 *f*

20 *p* *cresc.*

25 *f* *ad libitum* *rit.* *pp*

Moderato risoluto.

2 *f* (>)

4 (>)

7 (>)

10 (>)

13 (>)

16 (>)