

FOREWORD

I am truly honored and privileged by C. F Peters' wish to publish these études. To me this is a clear indication that the work of the pianist-composer is still considered relevant, despite being somewhat outside of time and looking backward stylistically. There are comparatively very few pianists left today who are compelled to practice the art, even though there has been a resurgence of it within the last couple of decades. This collection represents the best kind of contribution I can make to help perpetuate it.

Despite the fact that these études were written completely out of order, and over a period of almost twenty-five years, I have tried to shape this cycle into a satisfying whole. Since it can be separated in two halves if one looks at composition dates -- on both sides of a span of 12 years during which I didn't write any -- it might be tempting to try to look for stylistic differences between these two periods, but I can assure you this would be a waste of time.

In addition to the publication of Étude No.12 many years ago, more than half of this collection has been previously available, circulating among pianists and interested parties for a number of years. However, previous incarnations of some of the earlier Études (namely nos. 1, 3, 9 and 12) are now obsolete, since I have made a significant number of changes and improvements. Some of these changes were motivated by a wish for greater playability and pianistic comfort, while others are of a purely compositional nature. One example of the latter kind occurs in bar 21 of the fugue in Étude No.12, where the right hand is transposed a whole step up; the change results in something much more harmonically plausible, and it's what I'd meant in the first place anyway.

One aspect of these pieces that I need to insist on is that, although they are of considerable difficulty and will be primarily regarded by performers as pianistic challenges, they are at least as much compositional studies as anything else. Their degree of harmonic, textural, and contrapuntal subtlety should not be overlooked or demoted in favor of pure prowess display. They are also obviously character pieces, so it should go without saying that their emotional essence should not be underplayed or ignored; for example, it would be a little strange to hear either nos. 6 or 9 played without any sense of humor! And although this should be obvious, I don't think I would be wrong in insisting that these pieces not be approached with the aim to conquering their pianistic problems alone; reducing them to pure exercises would be utterly meaningless and definitely against my wishes.

This collection is evenly divided between original pieces and arrangements.

1 - Triple Étude (after Chopin) (1992) Page 1

Between 1894 and 1914 Leopold Godowsky published his extraordinary collection of Studies on Chopin's Etudes; these are fifty-four in number. There is evidence, judging from back-cover listings in early editions of these pieces, that a further eleven studies were at least conceived and very possibly even written out. One of these was to have been a contrapuntal combination of Chopin's op.10/2, op.25/4, and op.25/11, a tantalizing idea to be sure. It has always been the desire of many die-hard pianophiles to find out how in the world Godowsky was able to pull off such a bizarre compositional stunt while having the end result remain musically coherent. There has been hope that the manuscript still exists, but the greater likelihood is that it was lost or destroyed during World War II, along with the other unpublished studies.

The present étude was written at the suggestion of my friend Donald Manildi who, on the basis of my reworking of op.10/5 (Étude no.10 in this volume) thought somehow that I could perhaps come up with something approaching Godowsky's contrapuntal feat. I took great pleasure in writing this little piece, especially after realizing that the first eight bars fit so well together. It gets considerably more complicated afterwards, since all three studies have widely different structures and harmonic rhythms; thus it becomes necessary for one of them to dominate at any time, while the other two are made to conform to it. All three of them do precisely that here, in turn.

It goes almost without saying that this étude should be played with the utmost articulation clarity; the various elements from each study should always be as clearly discernible as possible, even when relegated to the background.

(Those of you expecting *Étude no.1* to have been my arrangement of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Flight of the Bumblebee* -- as it indeed was for many years -- need not strain their eyes looking for it here; I've excluded it from this collection, purely on aesthetic grounds. To my mind, this *Triple Étude* is a much better piece.)

for Don Manildi

Étude No. 1: Triple Étude (after Chopin)

(Op. 10, No. 2, Op. 25, No. 4, and Op. 25, No. 11, combined)

Marc-André Hamelin (1992)

Allegretto scherzando ♩ = 108-112

PIANO

sempre legato

p

legato possibile

quasi senza pedale e sempre con somma chiarezza

3

5

7

for Jay Reise

Étude No. 3: after Paganini-Liszt

Marc-André Hamelin (1993)

Allegretto comodo ($\text{♩} = 176-192$)

PIANO

p scherzando
tutto staccato

6

a tempo

p

secco, e rit. pochiss. staccato sempre

11

16

8^{va}

L.H.

for Averil Kovacs and François Luguenot

Étude No. 4:
Étude à mouvement perpétuellement semblable
(d'après Alkan)

Marc-André Hamelin (2005)

Presto (♩ = 176) tempo giusto sempre

PIANO

p

staccato

5

10

14

The image shows a page of musical notation for a piano étude. It consists of four systems of music, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system starts with a piano (PIANO) marking and a dynamic marking of *p*. The bass clef part begins with a *staccato* marking. The tempo is indicated as Presto (♩ = 176) tempo giusto sempre. Measure numbers 5, 10, and 14 are marked at the beginning of their respective systems. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and articulation marks like slurs and staccato.