

Towards a Historically Informed Performance of Chopin's Op. 10 Études

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Abstract

In the 1970s, historically informed performance practice became a major movement which involved performers and musicologists alike. Earlier, historically informed performances and scholarship focused on Baroque repertoires as well as music of the Renaissance and earlier periods, whereas later studies expanded this scope to include Classical, Romantic, and Modern works, although much work remains to be done in this regard. With regard to Frédéric Chopin's works, specifically his Op. 10 Études, make an ideal focal point for this type of study: they are of both musical and pedagogical interest, and research gives an insight into manifold aspects such as current performance traditions at the time, instrument construction and playing techniques. Recent research has addressed some of these issues in isolation, but no scholar has yet discussed historically informed performance in relation to this set of pieces.

Chapter 1 provides a background survey of the historically informed performance movement and demonstrates how a historically informed performance offers one option for performers to interpret piano repertoire. In Chapter 2, the focus turns to Chopin, examining his musical training and career with regard to his individual style and contributions to the genre of the piano etude. In Chapter 3, common performance variables, including articulation, dynamics, tempo and ornaments, are discussed from a historical standpoint and illustrates each of the variables by reference to passages from this set of twelve studies. Chapter 4 consists of specific case studies that apply information from all of the preceding chapters. By studying existing primary sources as well as performing the études on Chopin's own pianos, this dissertation explores how these works might have been performed in Chopin's time while providing a set of guidelines for pianists with which they may develop their individual interpretation of Chopin's first set of études.

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Over and above, I would like to thank all my devoted teachers, who passed on a wealth of knowledge and experience and helped me develop as an artist. Without my first piano teacher Mary Toy, from whom I first garnered a love for the instrument, I would not be the pianist that I am today. I have been very fortunate to have continued studying with some of the greatest teachers including John O' Conor, who guided me through my doctorate performance preparations and past teachers Edmund Battersby and Menahem Pressler, who offered so much advice and insight throughout my piano career. I would also like to thank friend and colleague Evelyne Brancart for her expertise and advice.

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Introduction

I am, in music, a modernist ... But I realize that true art has no oldness or newness, that all periods of human life produce great art, and that artistic culture depends upon a knowledge of the past, an understanding and love of the past ...¹

It is this understanding of the past that is at the heart of historically informed performance (HIP), a movement that intricately intertwines musicology and performance, and that initially focused on re-discovering old music. Yet, with time, the centre of curiosity shifted, creating increasing interest in the study of music in its original form, in a way that it might have been performed at the time of its composition or première. One of the movement's leading figures was Arnold Dolmetsch, who strove to build replicas of early instruments in his workshop, and whose book *The Interpretation of the Music of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* was a milestone in the field of HIP as early as 1915.²

HIP is fuelled by the interest in knowing the performance conditions and the styles and conventions that may have influenced the process of composition.³ Thus scholars approach music with the criteria and aesthetics that were prevalent when the musical piece was conceived; they focus on a representation of the work that is as 'authentic' as possible, to emphasise the qualities that differ from a modern aesthetic and

¹ Percy Grainger, extracts from letters written to Arnold Dolmetsch; quoted in Brian Blood, 'The Dolmetsch Story', *Dolmetsch Online* <<http://www.dolmetsch.com/Dolworks.htm>> [accessed 1 June 2015].

² Brian Blood, 'The Dolmetsch Story', *Dolmetsch Online*, <<http://www.dolmetsch.com/Dolworks.htm>> [accessed 15 February 2015].

³ Andrew Parrott and Neal Peres Da Costa, 'Performance Practice', *The Oxford Companion to Music. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press) <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e5090>> [accessed 15 February 2015].

modern techniques and instruments. In order to arrive at a performance that is historically informed, extensive research on behalf of the performer is necessary, utilising numerous means that range from the use of period instruments specifically for early music, to historical evidence in letters, treatises and printed music, examining parameters such as tuning, tempo, rhythm, phrasing, articulation and dynamics. The tuning of an instrument, for instance, can be a crucial characteristic of the period in which a musical composition was created. From the nineteenth century onwards, equal temperament, where semitones are equal in size and an octave is considered the only pure interval, began to spread widely. In early music, however, musicians preferred the mean tone or other irregular tunings that would sound unfamiliar to modern ears, and that would greatly influence the composition⁴ – a feature that still had an influence on composing and performing in the early to mid-nineteenth century.⁵ Tempo indications can provide the precise speed as intended by the composer; however, this is not always straightforward, as the intended execution of performance notes such as *rubato* changed in the course of time, became more flexible, and again require historical documentation in order to assert their exact shape.⁶

Working towards HIP has been a recognised and reputable branch of musicological research for decades, period ensembles are numerous, period instruments readily available, and many insightful critical and *Urtext* editions of works are available.⁷

⁴ Lalage Cochrane, 'Equal Temperament', *The Oxford Companion to Music*. *Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press) <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e2297>> [accessed 16 February 2015].

⁵ Jonathan Bellman, 'Towards a Well-Tempered Chopin', in Artur Szklener (ed.) *Chopin in Performance: History, Theory, Practice* (Warsaw: The Fryderyk Chopin Institute, 2005), 26, 35.

⁶ Parrott and Peres Da Costa, 'Performance Practice'.

⁷ For example, Fryderyk Chopin, *Etudy Op. 10, 25*, ii, edited by Jan Ekier (Warsaw: PWM, 2000); Frédéric Chopin, *Etudes Op. 10*, edited by Paul Badura-Skoda (Vienna: Wiener *Urtext* Edition, Schott,

And, yet, much work remains to be done in this regard. Where the efforts of HIP were concentrated mainly on Baroque repertoire in the beginning, later studies have expanded the scope to include Classical, Romantic, and Modern works – those of Frédéric Chopin, for example. Chopin’s compositions are a fixture in programmes of piano recitals and scores are printed abundantly, from popular miniatures such as the ‘Minute’ Waltz Op. 64, no. 1 to his Ballade No. 4 and three sets of Études, which are some of the most defining and enduring compositions in Chopin’s piano repertoire. Despite their popularity and familiarity, these works, and specifically the set of Études Op. 10, make an ideal focal point for an examination under the aspects of HIP. Their modern performances are greatly influenced by the various sources in which they have been preserved, but also the construction of the instruments on which they were composed must be taken into account when preparing their performance, as well as playing techniques and style. Recent research has addressed some of these aspects in isolation, but no scholar has yet discussed historically informed performance of this set of pieces.

This thesis takes a closer look at the Études Op. 10 in an attempt to establish a set of guidelines towards a historically informed performance. For a comprehensive picture of the movement, chapter one provides a background survey of the HIP movement and demonstrates how it offers a means through which performers can interpret piano repertoire in an authentic fashion. It explains technique and how students move beyond technical competence and develop knowledge of styles, musico-historical context, and expressive performance, how they must apply themselves to meticulous study of the sources in order to create individual readings of a piece and to approach

1973); Frédéric Chopin, *Etudes*, edited by Ewald Zimmermann (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2006).

true interpretative artistry. As Thurston Dart describes it: ‘The written text must never be regarded as a dead laboratory specimen; it is only sleeping, though both love and time will be needed to awaken it. But love and time will be wasted without a sense of tradition and of historical continuity.’⁸

The focus is then turned to Chopin in chapter two with an examination of his musical training and career in light of his contributions to the genre of the piano étude.

Owing to his immense influence on modern performance practice and his contribution to the historical development of piano technique, his piano music presents a rewarding opportunity to study the elements of interpretation in action by more closely illuminating those aspects of performance commented on in detail in source material such as letters, reviews and scores. This chapter also outlines the nature of the instruments he used when the *Études* were written, both in construction and in their characteristics when played.

Chapter three discusses performance practices of the early nineteenth century, before examining Chopin’s Op. 10 *Études* more closely in comparison to predominant trends of the time. It touches upon matters of articulation as well as Chopin’s close attention to the various nuances of sound that are produced by individual fingers, resulting in fingering that is at times unusual. From discussion of the use of pedal, it then moves its focus towards phrasing and the equally important interpretative decisions about tempo and rhythm. The guidance Chopin himself provided in this regard is then analysed, from straightforward metronome markings to the particular character of his *rubati*. In their nature as teaching material, these études provide

⁸ Thurston Dart, *The Interpretation of Music* (London: Hutchinson’s University Library, 1967), 165.

numerous examples of techniques and expressive elements that also apply to most, if not all, of Chopin's works for piano and therefore can point towards historically informed performance of many of his works.

Chapter four is devoted to detailed case studies of the third and fourth pieces of the opus, chosen for their contrasting characters and musical material. Their in-depth analyses in accordance with the elementary aspects established in preceding chapters, based on existing primary sources and the documentary evidence, shall outline a set of options according to which pianists can master the technical challenges of highly virtuosic compositions as well as developing their individual, HIP interpretations of Chopin's *Études Op. 10*.

Chapter 1

Critical Concepts in Piano Performance

Piano performance is a demanding art, requiring performers to assimilate knowledge of piano technique as well as musical, cultural and social context, while developing an individual approach to performance. Ideally, knowledgeable teachers transmit this information to their students, and the students engage with the works to develop their own interpretations of the compositions being studied. The renowned piano teacher Marianne Uszler writes:

The teacher must know which skills relate and how they do so, and be able to communicate that understanding so others are led to achieve their own synthesis of interdependent skills. The process of becoming a teacher is the process of developing a rich accumulation of insights and the means to share them.¹

While Uszler does not detail which types of insights a teacher must develop, it could be argued that these insights range from the purely technical to the stylistic. For example, a teacher must be able to develop coordination and playing mechanics in his or her students. A teacher must also be able to convey stylistic differences, demonstrating how playing Johann Sebastian Bach is different from playing Johannes Brahms, or how playing Robert Schumann's *Kinderszenen* is different from playing *Carnaval*. Other insights, related to questions of music history and interpretation, are discussed below.²

¹ Marianne Uszler, *The Well-Tempered Keyboard Teacher* (New York: Schirmer Books, 2000), 226-227.

² See pages 8-12.

According to James Bastien, the key personal qualities of a successful instructor include knowledge, personality, enthusiasm and self-confidence.³ While these qualities are required of any artist who seeks mastery of the instrument, their application in piano instruction is critical. Without self-confidence, few will move past the basics of technical competence; without enthusiasm for the subject, fewer will devote the time to cultivate the necessary depth of insight; and personality allows the instructor to communicate effectively, making the transfer of knowledge and insight to the student possible.

This chapter considers what discrete concepts Uszler's 'accumulation of insights' comprise and how each element contributes to the successful interpretation of a musical work.⁴ It also examines common obstacles to interpretation – such as the limitations of the printed score and an over-emphasis on the editions with which performers are most familiar – that an experienced instructor must prepare their students to overcome.

Technique versus Technical Competence

Technical competence is a basic requirement for any pianist, but the goal of piano instruction is to harness technical mastery, style and expressive performance together to foster the development of the student as an artist. True technique is understood to be a holistic application of these elements in performance.⁵ Technique can be taught by first instilling the 'artistic image' of the music in one's students; that is, the content, meaning and emotional content of the music, analysed with music

³ James Bastien, *How to Teach Piano Successfully* (San Diego: Neil A. Kjos Music Co., 1995), 3.

⁴ Uszler, *The Well-Tempered Keyboard Teacher*, 226-227.

⁵ Heinrich Neuhaus, *The Art of Piano Playing*, trans. K. A. Leibovitch (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1973), 2.

theoretical tools.⁶ In this respect, evidence gleaned from musicological research can also be quite illuminating. With this image in mind as a goal, the student develops technique by synthesising his or her understanding of style, technical performance and expression. This synthesis is the first step in interpreting a piece of music.

Interpretation

Communicating the nature and responsibilities of interpretation is a pedagogical challenge. According to Stefan Reid:

Interpreting music is ... a highly subjective process and resistant to prescriptive recommendations. Whereas the advice offered in the pedagogical and psychological literature contains specific instructions for the development of technical expertise, interpretative advice is, not surprisingly, often more varied and less detailed.⁷

Because interpretation is subjective in nature and resistant to prescriptive or imitative pedagogical approaches, a piano instructor might begin guiding the student through interpretation by attempting its definition, examining the concepts associated with interpretation and considering the demands interpretation places on the artist.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, to interpret a work is ‘to bring out the meaning of (a dramatic or musical composition, a landscape, etc.) by artistic representation or performance.’⁸ At its most basic level, interpretation is the act of performance. Any pianist who performs a piece can be said to be interpreting it; in the most limited sense of the word, there can be no inherently incorrect interpretation

⁶ Ibid., 2.

⁷ Stefan Reid, ‘Preparing for performance’, in John Rink (ed.), *Musical Performance: A Guide to Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 106-107.

⁸ ‘Interpret’, *Oxford English Dictionary Online* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/98205>> [accessed 10 March 2013].

save one marred by errors of textual competence. But this narrow consideration of interpretation clearly does not capture its true meaning for the artist. There is far more at stake in the performance of a composer's work than playing the correct notes in order.

In fact, interpretation differs from performance in one major respect. A performance is a unique event that can occur only once, although it may be reproduced with recordings. An interpretation, on the other hand, represents a set of decisions that a performer can repeat on subsequent performances.⁹ These decisions run the gamut from the choice of tempo that governs the piece or movement to the way an individual note is to be struck. In interpreting a work, performers are faced with how to translate the notes and musical signs on the score into an auditory medium. Performers must also consider how to communicate their ideas effectively to their audiences.

In discussing musical interpretation, Stephen Davies and Stanley Sadie provide another important component of its definition. They define interpretation as 'the rendering of a musical composition, according to one's conception of the author's idea.'¹⁰ This concept of interpretation, with its reliance on the composer's intentions, is quite commonplace for pianists, even those who fall largely outside the sphere of academia.¹¹ For example, Alfred Brendel states the responsibility of the interpreter as

⁹ Stephen Davies and Stanley Sadie, 'Interpretation', *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press)
<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13863>> [accessed 1 March 2013].

¹⁰ Davies and Sadie, 'Interpretation'.

¹¹ Richard Taruskin is quite critical of the performer's consideration of the composer's intentions. He contends that one can never know precisely what a composer intended in any given piece of music. Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

follows:

What, then, should the interpreter do? Two things, I believe. He should try to understand the intentions of the composer, and he should seek to give each work the strongest possible effect. Often, but not always, the one will result from the other.¹²

This does not mean that the performer becomes a clear conduit for the intentions, emotions and experiences of the composer. The intentions of the composer must, of physical necessity, be translated and filtered through the awareness of the performing artist, as Brendel elaborates:

To understand the composer's intentions means to translate them into one's own understanding. Music cannot 'speak for itself'. The notion that an interpreter can simply switch off his personal feelings and instead receive those of the composer 'from above', as it were, belongs to the realm of fable. What the composer actually meant when he put pen to paper can only be unraveled with the help of one's own engaged emotions, one's own senses, one's own intellect, one's own refined ears. Such an attitude is as far removed from sterile 'fidelity' as it is from transcription-mania. To force or to shun the 'personal approach' is equally questionable; where this does not come of itself, any effort is in vain.¹³

Brendel believes that the act of interpretation requires performers to translate the composer's intentions to fit with their own ideas and personal world view. He also realises that the intensely subjective experience of that translation will somewhat change the work. In that sense, interpretation is a collaboration between composer and performer, across time, resulting in what Claudio Arrau describes as a 'synthesis of the world of the composer and the world of the interpreter.'¹⁴ This conception of collaborative interpretation not only appears in writings of performers such as

1995), 97.

¹² Alfred Brendel, *Alfred Brendel on Music* (London: JR Books, 2007), 29.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁴ Joseph Horowitz, *Arrau on Music and Performance* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1999), 121.

Brendel and Arrau, but also appears in academic studies on interpretation, including Davies and Sadie's discussion of interpretation mentioned above, as well as in scholarly works that address interpretation in a historical context, for example, those written by Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell and by John Butt.¹⁵

In the Romantic era, this collaboration between performer and composer was mostly one sided, with the input of the composer largely ignored: 'people played everything "the way they felt"', their minds scarcely accessible to arguments of historical propriety.'¹⁶ This performance tradition held true, whether the Romantic-era interpreter was performing music from his or her own era or music from a previous one. Peter Walls refers to this style of performance, in which 'the musical work has, in a sense, become a vehicle for the performer's personal agenda', as 'appropriation'. Walls sets up a dichotomy between this appropriation and actual interpretation, in which a performer considers the composer's meaning as he or she performs the work.¹⁷ As will be shown later, notions of 'historical propriety', which allowed the intentions of the composer to figure more prominently in the collaborative process, did not concern performers until the twentieth century.¹⁸

Many modern instructors, though certainly not all, stress a knowingly subjective immersion in the music; as Daniel Barenboim elaborates:

The task of the performing musician, then, is not to express or interpret the music as such, but

¹⁵ Davies and Sadie, 'Interpretation'; Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell, *The Historical Performance of Music: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); John Butt, *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹⁶ Brendel, *Alfred Brendel on Music*, 26.

¹⁷ Peter Walls, 'Historical performance and the modern performer', in John Rink (ed.), *Musical Performance: A Guide to Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 18.

¹⁸ See page 13.

to aim to become part of it. It is almost as if the interpretation of a text creates a subtext for itself that develops, substantiates, varies and contrasts the actual text.¹⁹

This collaboration requires interpreters to exhaustively determine the composers' intentions in every detail, as channelled through the interpreters' own subjective experiences and contexts. Ignace Jan Paderewski articulates the experience thus:

In order to arrive at this result, however, the composition must be dissected in minutest detail. Inspiration comes with the first conception of the interpretation of the piece. Afterward all details are painstakingly worked out, until the idea blossoms into the perfectly executed performance.²⁰

If the interpreter achieves true insight into the work, the performance, in Paderewski's view, 'ought to sound like a spontaneous improvisation; the greater the artist the more completely this result will be obtained.'²¹

There is not, however, one 'true' interpretation of a work. In fact, in Romantic-era works, and in Frédéric Chopin's works in particular, multiple interpretations remain true to the spirit of the era.²² The potential for multiple interpretative possibilities, particularly when exploited by a single performer, can lead to the improvisatory quality sought by Paderewski. Adding the notion of a composer's intentions to the definition of interpretation raises some important questions; these questions have been addressed by practitioners of the historically informed performance movement.

¹⁹ Daniel Barenboim, *Everything Is Connected: The Power of Music* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008), 52.

²⁰ Ignace Jan Paderewski, 'Ignace Jan Paderewski', in Jeffrey Johnson (ed.), *Piano Mastery: The Harriette Brower Interviews* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2003), 12.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

²² Marissa Silverman, 'A Performer's Creative Processes: Implications for Teaching and Learning Musical Interpretation', *Music Education Research* 10 (2008), 262.

Historically Informed Performance

At its most basic level, historically informed performance, or HIP,²³ involves the intersection of musicology and performance.²⁴ The roots of this movement, which grew out of nineteenth-century historicism, were in place by the beginning of the twentieth century, when the publication of critical editions and *Urtexts* proliferated.²⁵ From the production of critical scores, the movement branched into ‘authentic’ performance. These types of performances, largely on period instruments, had become commonplace by the 1970s.²⁶ During this early stage of HIP, certain publications in the field arose, such as Edward Dannreuther’s *Musical Ornamentation*; Arnold Dolmetsch’s *The Interpretation of the Music of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*; and Wanda Landowska’s *La Musique Ancienne*. Additionally, the German organ movement, which initiated interest in old instruments, as well as the founding of the Basel Schola Cantorum not only drove forward a movement that aimed at the exploration of original sources and manuscripts, but also aimed at bringing their findings into practice.²⁷ During the 1950s, Vienna became an important centre for the exploration of performance practice with Joseph Mertin and his disciple Nikolaus Harnoncourt, who was particularly interested in Baroque music and became one of the pioneers of the historically informed performance movement.²⁸

²³ While the origin of the term ‘historically informed performance’ is difficult to trace, it became widely used following the publication of John Butt, *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

²⁴ Lawson and Stowell, *The Historical Performance of Music*, 2.

²⁵ John Butt, ‘Authenticity’, *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press) <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/46587>> [accessed 1 March 2013].

²⁶ Butt, ‘Authenticity’.

²⁷ The school required students to study continuo, ornamentation, and notation among other courses. Dorotta F. Somorjay, ‘Musicology and Performance Practice: In Search of a Historical Style with Bach Recordings’, *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 69 (2000), 78.

²⁸ Dorotta F. Somorjay, ‘Musicology and Performance Practice’, 79. Even as a student, Harnoncourt

An important milestone for HIP came in 1973, with the publication of the journal *Early Music*.²⁹ This academic journal solidified the connection between music scholarship and performance and perhaps made HIP a more reputable pursuit in the eyes of academics. More support for historically informed performances came from the recording industry. Encouraged by the market for recordings of ‘authentic’ performances, HIP expanded in the 1980s to include music from other eras.³⁰ In the 1980s, focus turned to Classical and Romantic works, primarily from the symphonic and operatic repertoires.³¹ The expansion of HIP’s focus continues even to the present day.

In the 1980s and 1990s, scholars scrutinised HIP, particularly the concept of ‘authenticity’ with which it was so closely aligned. According to Laurence Dreyfus, the goal of ‘authenticity’ gave early practitioners of HIP something to strive for. With their objectivist perspective, most of these early performers approached music from a scientific standpoint, accumulating empirical evidence to support their playing styles.³² A small number of these performers went a step further and took their research questions, and the evidence gleaned from their research, as a starting point for developing their own interpretations of the pieces. This change in approach signalled a dramatic shift in HIP, a shift that Dreyfus lauded:

‘But one does not discover the real advances of Early Music, as most would have it, in the outward signs of historicity – the “original” instruments, verifiable performing forces, or text-

challenged the monotonous performance style and interpretation that was dominant during the 1950s and 1960s. His musing about stylistic issues prompted his curiosity about the possibility of a different performance practice of Baroque music.

²⁹ Lawson and Stowell, *The Historical Performance of Music*, 13.

³⁰ Butt, ‘Authenticity’.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

³² Laurence Dreyfus, ‘Early Music Defended against its Devotees: A Theory of Historical Performance in the Twentieth Century’, *The Musical Quarterly* 69 (1983), 299.

critical editions – but in the revised operations in the minds of the players.’³³

Questioning the sources and what they mean, in short, interpreting them, is an essential component of the current state of HIP.

Historically informed performances can encompass a wide variety of variables. Some practitioners advocate using period instruments and performing techniques. Others focus their attention on the work’s primary sources. Another option is to look at a musical work from the vantage point of the composer, examining the reasons why the composer wrote the particular work the way he or she did. Finally, some proponents of HIP aim to recreate the original performance of the work from the standpoint of the original audience, attempting to unearth how musical works were experienced.³⁴

Stylistic Knowledge

In piano pedagogy, initial instruction may concern itself with the correct pitches, rhythm and fingering, but a student with enthusiasm and interest will soon desire deeper, more personal insights into the performance of a work. Before getting to the minutiae of a historically informed performance, teachers and students must have a grasp of the subtleties of style in the work being studied. Here, the word ‘style’ assumes numerous meanings. Lawson and Stowell conceive of ‘style’ in a broad sense, with the term referring not only to a composer’s individual characteristics, but also musical elements associated with particular genres, instruments, cities and historical periods.³⁵ This inclusive definition suits performers well as it encourages

³³ Ibid., 304.

³⁴ Butt, ‘Authenticity’.

³⁵ Lawson and Stowell, *The Historical Performance of Music*, 42.

them to broaden the knowledge base that can inform their performances.

Insights into stylistic performance require a depth and breadth of knowledge on the part of the instructor. Indeed, as Marissa Silverman notes in her study on teaching musical interpretation, ‘Enabling student performers to create musically informed, artistic, and personal interpretations of musical works is one of the most challenging and elusive aspects of music education.’³⁶ Without extensive knowledge of musical style, it will not prove possible to guide students in their quests to develop personal interpretations.

Knowledge of style is both difficult to quantify and imperative to the artistic success of one’s students. Alexander Goldenweiser states:

It is very hard to define exactly what we understand by artistic style, but this does not at all mean that the actual concept of style is superfluous, or that it involves some purely fictitious quality. It is also wrong to think that musical style is contained not so much in the work itself as in its actual performance – anyone who plays music by a good composer with his own original style must realize this.³⁷

Studying the context of a particular composer’s works can help in the development of stylistic insight with regard to his or her compositions. This context comprises biographical information, knowledge about contemporaneous artistic trends from other art forms, understanding of prevailing ideas about performance practice as well as observations on how art works were perceived by artists during the composer’s lifetime. Additionally, piano students and teachers can learn much about a

³⁶ Silverman, ‘A Performer’s Creative Processes’, 249.

³⁷ Alexander Goldenweiser, ‘Advice from a pianist and teacher’, in Christopher Barnes (ed.), *The Russian Piano School: Russian Pianists and Moscow Conservatoire Professors on the Piano* (London: Kahn & Averill, 2007), 54.

composer's style by studying his or her other compositions across all genres, from orchestral works and operas to string quartets and songs.

Placing Music in Context

Researching the environment in which a work was composed, both in terms of biography and social history, often provides clues to a more historically informed performance. Additionally, a student who is aware of not only the stylistic characteristics of a composer, but also of the broader musical era (with its own performance conventions, style and instrument construction) in which the work was created, will be rewarded with a richer and deeper understanding of the work itself. According to Vladimir Horowitz, this includes awareness of the broader artistic culture. He writes: 'The musician must immerse himself in the cultural period that produced the work he studies and plays. He should be acquainted with the painting, poetry, and music of the times – all music, not just piano repertoire.'³⁸

To this end, an instructor cultivates 'an unflinching interest in the subject of Music ... drawing fresh knowledge from every available source.'³⁹ As a pianist, the instructor spends thousands of hours at the keyboard, honing a mastery of the instrument. However, technical mastery does not, in itself, open the artist to stylistic insight; researching the composer's life and context allows for progress. Research 'opens up new vistas' by giving access to deeper insights into composers, their styles and the artistic environments in which they worked.⁴⁰

³⁸ Vladimir Horowitz, 'Vladimir Horowitz', in Elyse Mach (ed.), *Great Contemporary Pianists Speak for Themselves* (New York: Dover Publications, 1991), 116.

³⁹ Victor Booth, *We Piano Teachers* (London: Skeffington, 1946), 13.

⁴⁰ Reginald R. Gerig, *Famous Pianists and their Technique* (New York: Robert B. Luce Inc, 1975), viii.

With a broad knowledge base, instructors will be better able to guide their students in their own investigations into historical context. In this way, students can come to integrate all aspects of formal musical training. As Silverman notes, performance, pedagogy and research-based studies in higher education have traditionally been separate domains.⁴¹ Piano teachers cannot assume that their students will connect the information learned in their music theory and music history classes with the repertoire they are learning in their lessons. A well-informed piano teacher, however, can aid the students in integrating this knowledge. Additionally, curricular changes seem to be headed in a promising direction. John Rink acknowledges that ‘more and more universities and conservatoires offer courses encouraging the interaction of theory and practice, rather than their traditional separation.’⁴²

Expressive Performance

One issue that was debated frequently as the ‘authentic’ performance movement gained popularity in the 1970s and 1980s was the appropriateness of expression in historically informed performance.⁴³ Some proponents of ‘authentic’ performance practice seemed to have shied away from making expressive decisions in their performances. Dreyfus, contrasting these ‘authentic’ performances with more mainstream performances of nineteenth-century music, notes that reviews of ‘authentic’ performances focused on the work while reviews of mainstream performances focused on the performers and their interpretations. Critics appear to have understood that interpretation was not a concern for the majority of performers

⁴¹ Silverman, ‘A Performer’s Creative Processes’, 252.

⁴² John Rink, ‘The state of play in performance studies’, in Jane W. Davidson (ed.), *The Music Practitioner: Research for the Music Performer, Teacher and Listener* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 37.

⁴³ Lawson and Stowell, *The Historical Performance of Music*, 9.

involved in HIP at the time.⁴⁴ Performers and scholars today have more fully embraced the definition of interpretation presented earlier.⁴⁵ In interpreting a work, historically informed performers question the nature of the sources, the composers' intentions, the sound qualities of period instruments and the advice gleaned from treatises. Deciding what to do with this information and developing an interpretation requires making a series of choices from an almost overwhelming number of possibilities. The collection of choices a performer makes is by nature expressive; it reflects the individual thought process of the performer and how he or she feels about the piece of music being performed.

Although researchers in the field of music education have been interested in learning how pianists learn expressive performance, their studies have not yielded much insight. The information some researchers have found suggests that observing the performances of other artists is highly effective.⁴⁶ Instructors have long employed demonstration, also known as modelling, as a teaching tool to this end, playing passages and encouraging their students to learn through imitation. As Edwin Hughes explains:

There are so many things in piano playing which cannot be put into words, and the teacher must constantly illustrate. How can one teach the interpretation of a Chopin nocturne, for instance, by merely talking about it? Through imitation one learns rapidly and surely, until one reaches the point where the wings of one's own individuality begin to sprout.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Dreyfus, 'Early Music Defended against its Devotees', 317-318.

⁴⁵ See pages 8-12.

⁴⁶ Reid, 'Preparing for performance', 107.

⁴⁷ Edwin Hughes, 'Some essentials of piano playing', in Jeffrey Johnson (ed.), *Piano Mastery: The Harriette Brower Interviews* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2003), 52.

More recent writings on expressive performance, however, indicate that modelling is perhaps not the most effective teaching strategy. In a study on how instructors teach expressive performance, Robert Woody found that, in general, teachers utilise either a verbal approach, in which they describe the expressive qualities they seek, or a modelling approach, in which they demonstrate their sought-after expressive qualities.⁴⁸ He found that students whose teachers regularly modelled expressive performance spent more time on expression during their practice sessions. This extra time, however, is not necessarily productive as the student ‘would need to process and remember a large amount of aural performance information.’⁴⁹ The time needed to process the information takes away from the amount of time available for actually practising expression. Woody hypothesises that future research could show that instructors who are able to explain expressive concepts verbally – that is to translate felt emotions into precise musical terminology – might produce better results.⁵⁰ The possibilities inherent in more concise verbal explanations could, by extension, also apply directly to interpreters. That is to say, if a performer spent more time thinking about what, how and why he or she wanted to express a given nuance, he or she might be able to more effectively bring out that nuance in his or her playing.

In a later research study, Woody tested three different methods of teaching expression: modelling, verbal instruction that included specific musical instruction and verbal instruction that included metaphors and imagery. While the students were able to learn from all three types of instruction, the third provided interesting results. The students thought deeply about the provided metaphors and imagery, and they

⁴⁸ Robert H. Woody, ‘Learning Expressivity in Music Performance: An Exploratory Study’, *Research Studies in Music Education* 14 (2000), 19.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

found ways to translate these images into concrete musical properties such as articulation, tempo and dynamics.⁵¹

In the early twentieth century, Carl Seashore remarked on qualities – which he described as a ‘deviation from the regular’ in timing, articulation, volume and intonation – that contribute to the expressive performance of a passage.⁵² Recent research has demonstrated that it is indeed possible to quantify which distinct elements of the score are varied in the expressive performance of a passage.

Researchers in this field of study have focused on the use of expressive musical properties such as *diminuendi*, *rubato*, *ritardandi* and *accelerandi*.⁵³ Performers who are interested in expressive performance can focus their attention on these musical properties, as they are the ones that are most readily perceived by the audience.

While remaining faithful to the composer’s indications, an authentic and expressive performance of a work consists of more than playing the correct notes and dynamics in sequence.⁵⁴ A thorough grounding in knowledge of style is required to guide the performer in the correct quality of sound, phrasing, emotional involvement, pedalling, fingering and colour.⁵⁵ A well-informed instructor can bridge the gap between felt emotions and precise musical indications.

⁵¹ Robert H. Woody, ‘The Effect of Various Instructional Conditions on Expressive Music Performance’, *Journal of Research in Music Education* 54 (2006), 21.

⁵² Carl E. Seashore, *Psychology of Music* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1938), 9.

⁵³ Eric Clarke, ‘Expression in performance: generativity, perception and semiosis’, in John Rink (ed.), *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21.

⁵⁴ William Brown, *Menahem Pressler: Artistry in Piano Teaching* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 65.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

A relatively new field of study termed ‘performance studies’ in most music departments considers the intersection of scholarship and performance from a number of different perspectives. An outgrowth of HIP, performance studies encompasses three domains: HIP, the psychology of performance, and analysis and performance.⁵⁶ A truly interdisciplinary field, performance studies investigates musical performance from a scholarly perspective. By drawing on resources from other disciplines within musicology, performers can create informed, convincing interpretations of the musical works they perform, for instance, music iconography, theory, and organology. The first aims at studying images in art, manuscripts or other types of visual imagery where literature is scarce and draws conclusions on what instrumentation or music was played, in what circumstances, how were they played and in what context.⁵⁷ The second can illustrate the musical material, structure, and its principles and process of composition. Organology, on the other hand, gives a precise idea of the instrument itself, its construction, history, design and relation to performance.⁵⁸

Obstacles to Historically Informed Performances

Even the most knowledgeable instructors and performers will face difficulties as they develop historically informed interpretations. Composers often worked with specific instruments that differ in important ways from modern instruments. These instruments may not be widely available for performers to play on, and there might

⁵⁶ Rink, ‘The state of play in performance studies’, 38.

⁵⁷ Tilman Seebass, ‘Iconography’, *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press) <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13698>> [accessed 3 February 2015].

⁵⁸ Laurence Libin ‘Organology’, *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press) <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/20441>> [accessed 3 February 2015].

not be a detailed written record of period performance techniques associated with that particular instrument. There might be multiple versions of the score that are associated with the composer, in the form of drafts, autograph manuscripts, publisher's proofs and first editions, all of which differ with respect to certain musical details.

Even when scholars can agree on a definitive version of a score, this score will not provide a clear road map for a historically informed interpretation. Piano instruction begins, of necessity, by grounding the student in knowledge of musical symbols. In Brendel's words:

To read music correctly does not only mean to perceive what is written down but also to understand the musical symbols. Though the correct perception of these symbols is only a starting point, the attention given to it is of decisive importance to the process that follows: a faulty foundation endangers the stability of the whole edifice.⁵⁹

Samuil Feinberg stresses the importance of notation yet further, writing that a thorough assimilation of the score renders all other performance indications self-evident.⁶⁰ Pianists who are most scrupulous in following the musical text often achieve proportionate results.⁶¹

Scores, however, are notoriously imprecise. Notations may not carry the same meaning for today's performers as they did for performers of the composer's time.⁶²

Walls compares changes in the meanings of musical notation to the changes in

⁵⁹ Brendel, *Alfred Brendel on Music*, 32.

⁶⁰ Samuil Feinberg, 'Beethoven's "Appassionata": A performer's commentary', in Barnes, *The Russian Piano School*, 23.

⁶¹ Feinberg, 'Beethoven's "Appassionata"', 40.

⁶² Lawson and Stowell, *The Historical Performance of Music*, 2.

languages over time: ‘We need to recognise that, just as the pronunciation and meanings of words change over time, apparently standard musical notation has subtly different meanings depending on where and when it was written.’⁶³ Additionally, composers may not have notated every detail they sought in the performances of their works. If a particular detail would have been governed by performing conventions of the composer’s era, he or she would have simply expected the performer to execute it, even if it were not notated in the score.⁶⁴ Butt mentions figured bass as an example of a type of notation that composers purposely left incomplete.⁶⁵ In the case of figured bass notation, for instance, composers had the capability of notating in much more detail than they did. This lack of notation, when notational conventions existed to provide the performer with more information, can signal performance situations in which variables were desired, where composers did not want to have the exact same sound with each performance. Modern performers, then, are charged with the task of questioning why the notation might not be as complete as they are accustomed to. For example, they might question why pedal markings do not appear consistently throughout a piano piece when a composer had the resources to notate this aspect of performance.

While the primacy of the text as a guide to interpretation cannot be understated, mechanistic reproduction of the score is just as damaging to a historically informed performance as gratuitous departure from it. ‘To play its notes, even to play them correctly,’ writes Josef Hofmann, ‘is still very far from doing justice to the life and

⁶³ Walls, ‘Historical performance and the modern performer’, 18.

⁶⁴ Davies and Sadie, ‘Interpretation’.

⁶⁵ Butt, *Playing with History*, 106.

soul of an artistic composition.’⁶⁶ These mechanistic performances appeared with some frequency at the outset of the historically informed performance movement and were said to ‘threaten the pursuit of individual artistic convictions to an unprecedented extent.’⁶⁷ Criticising this trend in early historically informed performances, Richard Taruskin noted that the performer-scholars focused all of their attention on uncovering “‘What was done”, not “What is to be done”, let alone “How to do it””.⁶⁸ In more recent years, historically informed performer-scholars have moved away from mechanistic, *Urtext* playing styles, which Rink says turned ‘the performer into little more than a museum curator whose main task is to dust the exhibits left by the great composers without really touching, let alone altering, them.’⁶⁹ These mechanistic performances lie on the opposite end of the spectrum from those that Walls would term ‘appropriation’.⁷⁰

Even with careful attention to nuances of the musical score, there are several ways in which interpreters may fail to achieve the necessary subjective connection to a composer’s intent. By adhering too strictly to the printed score, or specific editions of the score, the performer can get cut off from a work’s expressive elements; conversely, editorial modifications uninformed by a meticulous study of the extant sources undermine a ‘historically informed’ performance.

⁶⁶ Josef Hofmann, *Piano Playing: With Piano Questions Answered* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1976), xvi-xvii.

⁶⁷ John Rink, ‘Authentic Chopin: history, analysis and intuition in performance’ in John Rink and Jim Samson (eds), *Chopin Studies 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 214.

⁶⁸ Taruskin, *Text and Act*, 201.

⁶⁹ Rink, ‘The state of play in performance studies’, 38.

⁷⁰ See page 11.

Any interpretive artist is liable to overlook the inherent imprecision of musical notation.⁷¹ Indeed, as Stanley Boorman notes, ‘The written or printed musical text is an object to be mistrusted at every turn.’⁷² Performers cannot take any notation for granted. They must question the meaning of dynamic markings, articulations, ornaments and pedal markings. Many of the standard notations meant different things in previous eras, and some of these notations may stem from editors and performers, not from the composer. As such, one’s insight into a work must not be stunted by the unconscious influence of the editions with which one has grown up; every generation of artists is born into its own context, which may or may not aid authentic interpretation.⁷³

Horowitz summarises the need to explore beyond notation in the following terms:

You have to open the music, so to speak, and see what’s behind the notes because the notes are the same whether it is the music of Bach or someone else. But behind the notes something different is told and that’s what the interpreter must find out. He may sit down and play one passage one way and then perhaps exaggerate the next, but, in any event, he must do something with the music. The worst thing is not to do anything. It may even be something you don’t like, but do it! The printed score is important, but the interpretation of it has been the object of my life study.⁷⁴

Instructors must instil in their students an awareness of the limitations of the printed score. Interpretation requires much more than replication of structure; indeed, it is fallacious to assume that knowledge of a work’s structure can ‘automatically give

⁷¹ Brendel, *Alfred Brendel on Music*, 26.

⁷² Stanley Boorman, ‘The musical text’, in Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (eds), *Rethinking Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 403.

⁷³ Brendel, *Alfred Brendel on Music*, 25.

⁷⁴ Horowitz, ‘Vladimir Horowitz’, 116.

them insight into the work's character, atmosphere or spiritual state.⁷⁵

This chapter establishes a prescriptive array of critical concepts for piano instruction. In developing technique, students move beyond technical competence and develop knowledge of styles, musico-historical context, and expressive performance.

Applications of technique, coupled with the meticulous study of a composer's intent, allow them to approach true interpretive artistry as described above in the words of Thurston Dart;⁷⁶ it takes passion as well as knowledge about past traditions in order to give life to a piece of music.

On this basis, the following chapter further investigates these ideas as they pertain to the work of Chopin. Owing to his immense influence on modern performance practice and his contribution to the historical development of piano technique, his piano music presents a rewarding opportunity to study the elements of interpretation in action.

⁷⁵ Brendel, *Alfred Brendel on Music*, 77.

⁷⁶ See page 3.

Chapter 2

Chopin's Musical Background and the Op. 10 Études

While Chopin received some musical training in Warsaw in his childhood, he did not have the advantage of a knowledgeable piano teacher. From 1816 to 1821, he studied with Wojciech Zywny,¹ from whom he developed an interest in Johann Sebastian Bach and Viennese Classical composers, particularly Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.² Chopin's interest in Bach and Mozart continued throughout his life and reveals itself in his intricate, clear polyphonic textures.³ He did, however, probably only learn little in terms of actual piano technique from Zywny, whose primary instrument was the violin, and to whom Halina Goldberg refers as 'a quite ineffectual teacher.'⁴ It may have been this lack of technical training Chopin's father was referring to when he reminded the composer that 'you know the mechanics of piano-playing occupied little of your time and that your mind was busier than your fingers.'⁵

Following his years under Zywny's tutelage, Chopin studied with Józef Elsner, who laid his interpretive foundations by teaching the young musician the basics of

¹ Wojciech Zywny (1756-1842), a Czech violinist and pianist, had studied with Jan Kritek Kuchar (1756-1829), a pupil of J. S. Bach. As a friend of the Chopin family, Zywny spent a considerable amount of time in the household, visiting and teaching Chopin almost daily. Shu-fen Viola Chen, 'A Performer's Analysis of the Four Ballades by Frédéric Chopin' (DMA Dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 4; Jonathan Bellman, 'Frédéric Chopin, Antoine de Kontski and the *Carezzando* Touch', *Early Music* 29 (2001), 399; Halina Goldberg, *Music in Chopin's Warsaw* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 107.

² Kornel Michałowski and Jim Samson, 'Chopin, Fryderyk Franciszek', *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51099>> [accessed 23 November 2012].

³ Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 285.

⁴ Goldberg, *Music in Chopin's Warsaw*, 107; Bellman, 'Frédéric Chopin, Antoine de Kontski and the *Carezzando* Touch', 399.

⁵ Nicholas Chopin to Fryderyk Chopin, 27 November 1831 in Fryderyk Chopin, *Selected Correspondence of Fryderyk Chopin*, trans. and ed. Arthur Hedley (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), 94.

harmony, music theory and composition.⁶ Elsner spearheaded the campaign that led to the creation of the Institute of Music and Declamation, otherwise known as the Warsaw Conservatory, in 1821.⁷ Elsner encouraged Chopin to study at the Conservatory and Chopin received instruction at this reputable institution from 1826 to 1829, in a period of time in which it flourished.⁸ Elsner was a highly regarded composer who worked primarily in large forms, such as operas and masses.⁹ Chopin himself was not drawn to these genres, and Elsner did not force the young composer to follow in his footsteps. Instead, recognising the budding innovative talent, Elsner allowed Chopin to pursue his natural inclinations.¹⁰

While the young Chopin was taking private composition lessons with Elsner, he also broadened his stylistic experiences, studying the organ with Wilhelm Würfel.¹¹ Chopin began these lessons in 1822 and continued studying with the organist throughout his years at the Conservatory. He developed considerable proficiency at the organ and took a position as organist at the Visitation Nuns' Church of the Protection of St Joseph.¹² While he may have been able to bring his very own interpretations, even though mere accompaniment, before the public, his studies with Würfel did not add to his piano technique, neither did studies with Elsner, who instead granted his student creative freedom. Despite a number of musical teachers

⁶ Michałowski and Samson, 'Chopin'. Józef Elsner (1769-1854) was the esteemed director of the Warsaw Conservatory. A Silesian, Elsner was one of a number of foreign musicians who established themselves in Warsaw in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Goldberg, *Music in Chopin's Warsaw*, 6.

⁷ Goldberg, *Music in Chopin's Warsaw*, 16.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 16 and 107.

⁹ Alan Walker, 'Chopin: The Voice of the Piano', *The American Music Teacher* 59 (2010), 20.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹¹ Goldberg, *Music in Chopin's Warsaw*, 33. The Czech organist Wilhelm Würfel (1790-1832) was a staff member at the Warsaw Conservatory. Jonathan Bellman, *Chopin's Polish Ballade Op. 38 as Narrative of National Martyrdom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 45.

¹² *Ibid.*, 33.

he thus was largely self-taught in technical matters,¹³ which in turn may be the reason why, through his own personal studies, he developed an idiosyncratic playing style that was considerably different from other contemporaneous techniques.

Chopin's taste, knowledge and style were also strongly influenced by his exposure to local concert life. In his youth, he absorbed much musical knowledge from events of a rich cultural and artistic life in his vibrant home town Warsaw, which, in addition to the numerous aristocratic salons, featured an opera house, smaller theatres and numerous concert organisations.¹⁴ It did not have as active a concert life as Vienna or Paris, where the composer would later spend some time, but the young Chopin did have opportunities to hear renowned virtuosi such as Hummel and Paganini as they passed through the town.¹⁵ In these concerts, he became familiar with the popular types of music that were being composed and performed in larger European cities. It is also very probable that Chopin saw Maria Szymanowska play in Warsaw, and he certainly planned to attend her concert in January 1827. Both Szymanowska and Chopin were actively engaged in musical salons where they might have met. While there is no historical evidence that Chopin saw her play, Szymanowska's name was mentioned frequently in his correspondence.¹⁶ More importance, however, is placed on the strong resonances of the form and style of her compositions in Chopin's. She composed a range of mazurkas, nocturnes, polonaises, preludes and études – all forms that would become part of Chopin's own output. This strongly suggests that, if

¹³ Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by his Pupils*, trans. Naomi Shohet, ed. Roy Howat (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 16.

¹⁴ Goldberg, *Music in Chopin's Warsaw*, 4.

¹⁵ Jim Samson, *The Music of Chopin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 13.

¹⁶ Sławomir Dobrzański, 'Maria Szymanowska and Fryderyk Chopin: Parallelism and Influence', *Polish Music Journal Online* 5 (2002)
<http://www.usc.edu/dept/polish_music/PMJ/issue/5.1.02/dobrzanski.html>[accessed 23 December 2015].

he did not know her or her playing personally, he certainly was very familiar with and approved of her work and style. Reports from her concerts praise both her singing and legato style that echoes Chopin's own playing technique.¹⁷

Mrs. Szymanowska succeeded in perfecting the nature of her instrument by making it approach the tone of the violin... In her playing chords, melodies, and single tones are combined in harmonious sonority, and the continuity of whole-, half-, and quarter-notes, combined with the most diverse and gradually developed shading in passages from the highest fortissimo to piano, from piano to crescendo, from crescendo to decrescendo etc., amazes the most exacting connoisseurs. In the adagio Mrs. Szymanowska brought the illusive imitation of human singing to the highest art.¹⁸

Following his graduation in 1829, Chopin visited Vienna, where he gave two public concerts. During the early nineteenth century, Vienna was a top destination for pianists, as the city was recognised for its high-quality piano manufacturers and vibrant concert life.¹⁹ That the critics responded favourably to the young Polish pianist's concerts, the first that he gave outside of his home city, boded well for Chopin's future. These critics particularly appreciated Chopin's own compositions – he performed his variations on 'Là ci darem', an improvisation on vocal themes and his Rondo à la krakowiak – and his playing style.²⁰ Boosted by his experiences in Vienna, Chopin returned to Warsaw, where he played several public concerts. In March and October 1830, he performed his Concerto in F minor and his Concerto in E minor, respectively. These concerts likewise received generally positive reviews from critics.²¹

¹⁷ Goldberg, *Music in Chopin's Warsaw*, 60.

¹⁸ Maurycy Mochnacki, *Pisma* [Writings], ed. Artur Śliwiński (Lwów: Połoniecki, 1910), 377-378; quoted in Goldberg, *Music in Chopin's Warsaw*, 52.

¹⁹ Janet Ritterman, 'Piano music and the public concert, 1800-1850', in Jim Samson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 11.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

²¹ Chen, 'A Performer's Analysis of the Four Ballades', 10. There is some debate over Chopin's reasons for abandoning a career as a concert pianist.

In about the same period, extra-musical influences made just as strong an impact on the young musician as did the performances he attended and gave. He was a regular guest at literary salons where prominent individuals of cultural circles devoted to learning and progress created havens for intellectual exchange as well as the preservation of national culture. While older members of those literary gatherings made a lasting impression on Chopin, it was the younger generation's new Romantic trends from the West that were even more influential.²² It was a trend that valued emotions over reason, a change that required new art forms for appropriate expression. New tendencies in other art forms served as inspiration for Chopin, which also made him an active force in the evolving musical Romanticism in Poland: in search of ways to express the newfound emphasis on feeling, he had developed a new harmonic and melodic language. He did, however, still highly appreciate compositional values of the eighteenth century and would not neglect his 'concern for total logic of the composition' nor would he 'sacrifice musical architecture in favour of virtuosity.'²³

Once Chopin had moved to Paris in the autumn of 1831 by way of Stuttgart, where he found further musical stimulation, he had many opportunities to meet, see and hear prominent piano virtuosi. In the early nineteenth century, Paris was the home to many of the world's best pianists, and a letter from Chopin to his friend Tytus Woyciechowski written only months after his arrival in the city reveals that he had greatly anticipated hearing these performers, and that he had taken advantage of opportunities to hear them perform:

²² Halina Goldberg, 'Chopin in Literary Salons and Warsaw's Romantic Awakening' *The Polish Review* 45 (2000), 55.

²³ *Ibid.*, 62.

Just imagine how curious I was to hear Herz, Liszt, Hiller, and the rest – they are all nobodies compared with Kalkbrenner. I confess I have played as well as Herz, but I long to play like Kalkbrenner ... It is impossible to describe his *calm*, his enchanting touch, his comparable evenness and the mastery which he reveals in every note – he is a giant who tramples underfoot the Herzes, Czernys and of course me!²⁴

His reference to Friedrich Kalkbrenner's playing style not only indicates personal preferences of interpretation but also demonstrates Chopin's curiosity about piano technique, particularly in the production of even, legato tones, making this exposure to the Parisian virtuosi a learning experience for the young pianist.

In the nineteenth-century Parisian world, the expressive or poetic virtuosi were often distinguished from the technical ones. Commenting on virtuoso piano performers in 1845, Delphine de Girardin provided epithets for all of the contemporary virtuoso pianists who were performing in Paris, writing that 'Thalberg is king, Liszt is a prophet, Chopin is a poet, Herz is a lawyer, [and] Kalkbrenner is a minstrel.'²⁵ As has become apparent in his writing on Kalkbrenner above, Chopin clearly favoured expression in the hierarchy of expression and technique. For him, technique was a means to an end – expression – and not an end in and of itself,²⁶ as the following closer look at his teaching will show. In his own training, he developed a technique that grew out of the creative process to suit the expressive demands and poetic virtuosity of his music. Chopin's personal playing style directly impacted his teaching, choice of piano, and his compositional style. All of these factors can in turn affect how modern students, teachers and performers approach his works.

²⁴ Chopin to Tytus Woyciechowski, Paris, 12 December 1831, in Chopin, *Selected Correspondence of Fryderyk Chopin*, 98.

²⁵ Delphine de Girardin, *Lettres parisiennes du vicomte de Launay*, ed. Anne-Martin Fugier (Paris: Mercure de France, 1986), 6; translated in Alicia Cannon Levin, 'Seducing Paris: Piano Virtuosos and Artistic Identity, 1820-1848' (PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2009), 1.

²⁶ Walker, 'Chopin: The Voice of the Piano', 20.

Chopin as a Teacher

Once he had established himself in Paris, Chopin began teaching the piano, a career choice that particularly occupied his time from 1832 to 1849. He restricted most of his teaching to the winter months, from October to May, teaching approximately five lessons a day from morning to early afternoon, reserving the summer months for composition.²⁷

While these superficial details are known, uncovering Chopin's legacy as a pedagogue has posed problems for researchers. Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, the primary scholar in this field, has been unable to ascertain with any certainty the exact number of students that Chopin had over the years, but he has uncovered documentation of about 150 pupils.²⁸ From his in-depth research, Eigeldinger has found information about many of Chopin's most prominent and most frequent students: Princess Czartoryska, Madame Dubois-O'Meara, Emilie von Gretsche, Wilhelm Adolf Gutmann, Georges Mathias, Karol Mikuli, Jane Stirling, Thomas Tellefsen, and Pauline Viardot.²⁹ Of these students, Mikuli and Mathias had the most impact in extending Chopin's legacy to future generations: Mikuli taught both piano and harmony in Lemberg to numerous students over a period of thirty-five years, and Mathias was a professor of piano at the Paris Conservatoire from 1862 to 1893, where he continued the Chopin tradition in France.³⁰

²⁷ Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 6.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁰ James Methuen-Campbell, 'Chopin in performance', in Jim Samson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 194.

Apart from that, the particular make-up of Chopin's clientele poses some challenges to researchers who want to know more about his own teaching style and philosophy. Most of his pupils belonged to the aristocracy, and most were women. Because of their class and gender, his students would not have performed in public, but despite the lack of career opportunities for his students, Chopin was a dedicated teacher who aimed to bring out the best, technically and expressively, in his students.³¹ Without public performances, however, no reviews are available, which in other cases constitute an important source of information about playing style. Also, because most of Chopin's students – aside from Mikuli and Mathias – did not become teachers themselves, they were not able to pass on Chopin's teaching to future generations of students. There is, in fact, no particular Chopin school of piano playing. This contrasts sharply with the legacy left by other pianist-teachers from the early nineteenth century such as Muzio Clementi, Carl Czerny, Johann Hummel, Friedrich Kalkbrenner and Franz Liszt, all of whom left their own schools or traditions of piano playing. Some of the distinct qualities of Chopin's music and playing, however, were passed on to a select few from the next generation. Alexander Michałowski, for example, a Polish pianist and composer, devoted his life to studying Chopin's music. He approached Mikuli to convey to him as much about Chopin's playing as possible. He also met Princess Czartoryska, who is reported to have been Chopin's best pupil and who played mazurkas for Michałowski. Hence he was able to both receive and preserve first-hand impressions of various aspects of Chopin's own playing style.³²

³¹ Ibid., 194.

³² James Methuen-Campbell, *Chopin Playing From the Composer to the Present Day* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1981), 72.

What was left by Chopin himself, however, and what Eigeldinger has done a remarkable job of compiling, are scores used by him with his students as well as personal recollections, primarily in the form of diary entries, letters and interviews, providing insight into Chopin's teaching and general musical aesthetics. Further documentation about Chopin's playing style and teaching comes in the form of recordings made by pianists who had a relationship, however distant, to Chopin, and in this respect, Raoul von Koczalski's recordings are invaluable.³³ Beginning in 1892, Koczalski studied with Mikuli, and over the course of his long career Koczalski frequently performed Chopin's works. In 1936, he played thirty recitals featuring Chopin's music in Berlin, with additional concerts in other cities.³⁴ Between 1923 and 1948, he made recordings of several of Chopin's works, including some of the waltzes, études and nocturnes. These recordings bear a closer relationship to Chopin's own performing style, as documented in reviews, letters, and journal entries, than those of any other pianist.³⁵ Chopin's sketch for a piano method that he created in order to facilitate the technical development of his students can be added to this list of documentary evidence. While he never completed the method, he did draft it, and since one of his students, Thomas Tellefsen, refused when he was asked to complete them after Chopin's death, the sketches survive unaltered, allowing direct access to some of Chopin's thoughts and methods.³⁶

³³ Raoul von Koczalski (1885-1948) began his musical career as a child prodigy. This Polish pianist was proud of his connection with Chopin that he received through Mikuli. David Dubal, *The Art of the Piano: Its Performers, Literature, and Recordings* (Pompton Plains, NJ: Amadeus Press, 2004), 205.

³⁴ Sandra P. Rosenblum, liner note to *The Complete Raoul von Koczalski Vol. 1*. 2010. Compact disc. Marston Records. 52063-2.

³⁵ Jonathan Bellman, 'Chopin and his Imitators: Notated Emulations of the "True Style" of Performance', *19th-Century Music* 24 (2000), 151.

³⁶ Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 5.

Just as his playing was unique and very different from that of other performers, his teaching methods also differed greatly from established ones as Chopin, unlike other contemporaneous pianist-teachers, did not attempt to transform his students into technical virtuosi. In contrast to Kalkbrenner and others, Chopin did not assign exercises and études to be mechanically repeated numerous times, occasionally in excessive ways: Mikuli reported, for example, that Kalkbrenner suggested that his students read while repeating their technical exercises.³⁷ Chopin, on the other hand, emphasised close listening. He wanted his students to have a clear mental image of the sound they wanted to produce. While playing, the student listened closely to the sonority coming from the piano, aiming to get the actual sound as close as possible to the desired sound. The desired sound would, in Chopin's view, lead the body to produce the correct technical movements.³⁸

Chopin and his Pianos

A particular sound depends on the creator as much as on the instrument on which it is produced, which is why it is worth taking a closer look at the pianos Chopin used throughout his career. The following paragraphs will examine their distinctive features, the differences and similarities in their construction and how these affect their sounds and options of playing. This, in turn, might allow conclusions to be drawn about how Chopin's compositions might have sounded when he played them, and perhaps even how he intended them to be played.

³⁷ Danuta Jasińska, 'Sketch for a Portrait of Kalkbrenner and Chopin', *Interdisciplinary Studies in Musicology* 9 (2011), 98.

³⁸ Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 16.

During his childhood in Warsaw, Chopin gained familiarity with a wide variety of pianos by local and foreign manufacturers.³⁹ These pianos, like the pianos throughout Europe at this time, featured either English or Viennese action. Pianos with English action had a hammer attached to the hammer rail, resulting in a heavier action. These pianos had massive cases and often featured metal supports. English models typically had two pedals, the damper and the *una corda*⁴⁰ and offered a deep, profound sound quality in the bass register.⁴¹ With the lighter Viennese action models, the hammers were attached to the keys. These pianos often featured more than two pedals in order to allow for a variety of sound qualities.⁴² The Viennese-style pianos featured a light bass register with a brilliant treble.⁴³

Chopin initially played the pianos of Fryderyk Buchholtz,⁴⁴ who was considered the leading piano maker in Warsaw and one of the first makers in the country who produced instruments with both English and Viennese action.⁴⁵ The Chopin family had two pianos in their home, one of which was a Buchholtz. Goldberg reports that this Buchholtz was burned in the 1863 Uprising⁴⁶ and therefore not much is known about the construction and sound qualities of this particular instrument. From

³⁹ Goldberg, *Music in Chopin's Warsaw*, 43.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 44-46.

⁴¹ Chen, 'A Performer's Analysis of the Four Ballades', 162.

⁴² Goldberg, *Music in Chopin's Warsaw*, 44-46.

⁴³ Chen, 'A Performer's Analysis of the Four Ballades', 162.

⁴⁴ Goldberg, *Music in Chopin's Warsaw*, 47. Fryderyk Buchholtz (1792-1837) received training as a carpenter in his hometown of Warsaw before travelling throughout Europe gaining experience as a piano builder.

⁴⁵ Alec Cobbe, *Chopin's Swansong: the Paris and London pianos of his last performances* (London: The Chopin Society, 2010), 1.

⁴⁶ This Uprising, perhaps better known as the January Insurrection, was an act of Polish rebellion against any form of Russian rule. Even though the rebels were 'greatly outnumbered, poorly equipped, and successful in only a few engagements', they gained support among various social groups and facilitated the spreading of the insurrection into Lithuania and parts of Belorussia. They did, however, fail to receive much needed military support, and by 1864, the remaining activists of the insurrection were arrested and met with even stronger Russian influence. 'January Insurrection', Encyclopedia Britannica Online <<http://www.britannica.com/event/January-Insurrection>> [accessed 20 June 2015].

reviews of concerts in which Chopin played this piano, Goldberg deduces that it probably featured an English action,⁴⁷ a feature possibly related to the year 1826, when Maria Szymanowska⁴⁸ imported a piano from England. Buchholtz examined this piano, possibly by Broadwood, closely, and he incorporated several design features from this piano into his later instruments. From January 1827, Buchholtz began including iron supports in his wood frame and leaving the bottom of the case open.⁴⁹

When Chopin performed his 1829 concerts in Vienna, he was presented with pianos by both Matthäus Andreas Stein and Conrad Graf.⁵⁰ Writing to his family on 8 August 1829, Chopin reported, ‘Stein wanted at once to send one of his instruments to my lodging, and then to the concert, if I give one. Graff [sic], who, by the way, makes better instruments, made the same offer.’⁵¹ He chose to perform on Graf’s piano, which he deemed to be the best Viennese instrument, and throughout his life, he continued to think highly of this manufacturer’s pianos.⁵² The audience, however, although quite in awe of Chopin’s talent, had some reservations about the sound quality. Chopin reported to his family on 12 August 1829 that ‘it is being said everywhere that I played too softly, or rather, too delicately for people used to the piano-pounding of the artists here.’⁵³

⁴⁷ Goldberg, *Music in Chopin’s Warsaw*, 48-49.

⁴⁸ Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831) was, like Chopin, a Polish musician. As one of the first nineteenth-century virtuoso pianists, she toured all over Europe, bringing knowledge of European compositional styles and pianos back to her home country.

⁴⁹ Goldberg, *Music in Chopin’s Warsaw*, 47-48.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁵¹ Frédéric Chopin, *Chopin’s Letters*, trans. and ed. E. L. Voynich (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1988), 50.

⁵² Sandra P. Rosenblum, *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music: Their Principles and Applications* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 421 n. 121; Goldberg, *Music in Chopin’s Warsaw*, 44.

⁵³ Chopin, *Chopin’s Letters*, 54.

This might have been due to Chopin's style as to the specific piano he used. Conrad Graf produced a large number of pianos over the course of his career⁵⁴ which typically featured a range of six and a half octaves with triple stringing throughout the entire range. Graf often added an extra board above the strings which would muffle the individual sounds, causing them to blend together. These instruments were appreciated for their singing quality, robust bass and sweet tone,⁵⁵ which, from today's point of view, might have especially suited Chopin's earlier compositions.⁵⁶

It may be for that reason that for his two 1830 concerts in Warsaw, he used two different pianos. For the first concert, he used the family Buchholtz piano with its English action. In a letter to his friend Tytus, Chopin reported that some members of the audience found 'that the tone of my piano was too woolly and prevented the runs in the bass from being heard.'⁵⁷ Although he would have preferred to play his own piano again for the second concert, he opted for a Viennese piano, and in the same letter to Tytus, Chopin remarked that 'at once the audience, which was larger than at the first concert, was satisfied. They applauded straightaway, were delighted that each note sounded like a little pearl.'⁵⁸ This Viennese instrument had a more distinct sound that projected better in a concert hall. Chopin, however, preferred his Buchholtz piano with its English action and more expressive touch,⁵⁹ once again indicating the sound he generally preferred, and the one he specifically preferred for his compositions.

⁵⁴ Conrad Graf (1782-1851) was a Viennese piano manufacturer. In a career that spanned over thirty years (1804-1842), he constructed approximately three thousand pianos that were appreciated for their high quality and design consistency. Robert Palmieri, *The Piano: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 154.

⁵⁵ Palmieri, *The Piano: An Encyclopedia*, 154.

⁵⁶ Cobbe, *Chopin's Swan Song*, 2.

⁵⁷ Chopin to Tytus Woychiewowski, 27 March 1830, Chopin, *Selected Correspondence of Fryderyk Chopin*, 39.

⁵⁸ Chopin, *Selected Correspondence of Fryderyk Chopin*, 39.

⁵⁹ Goldberg, *Music in Chopin's Warsaw*, 50-51.

When Chopin arrived in Paris, he chose an Érard as his first piano, but in his Square d'Orléans studio he kept two pianos, a grand which his students would use during lessons, and an upright he would play himself. Both of these pianos were made by the noted piano manufacturer Pleyel,⁶⁰ and in fact, Chopin appears to have preferred Pleyel's pianos to those of Érard, the major Parisian competitor, saying that 'Pleyel's pianos are the last word in perfection.'⁶¹ Halina Goldberg writes, 'it took Pleyel's sensitive instrument to fulfil Chopin's quest for a piano that most suited his artistic temperament – begun in his youth in Warsaw.'⁶² This quest brought Chopin into contact with pianos by some of Europe's leading piano manufacturers. During the nineteenth century, dozens of piano manufacturers produced pianos with huge variations in construction and sound quality.⁶³ However, during the 1840s, pianos made in London and Paris were not dissimilar with regard to framing, soundboard design and stringing, but had subtle differences.⁶⁴ One reason why Chopin may eventually have come to prefer Pleyel's pianos⁶⁵ could have been the changes to the construction of the instruments, as Pleyel, Broadwood, and Érard made numerous alterations to their piano designs in the early nineteenth century, some of which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

⁶⁰ Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, 'Chopin and Pleyel', *Early Music* 29 (2001), 392.

⁶¹ Chopin to Tytus Woyciechowski, 12 December 1831, in Chopin, *Selected Correspondence of Fryderyk Chopin*, 101.

⁶² Goldberg, *Music in Chopin's Warsaw*, 53.

⁶³ Robert S. Winter, 'Orthodoxies, paradoxes, and contradictions: performance practices in nineteenth-century piano music', in R. Larry Todd (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music* (New York: Routledge, 1990) 23.

⁶⁴ All three pianos Chopin used during this time employed actions based on the invention of Americus Backers from the 1770s, developed in London, known as the 'Echappement Anglais.'

⁶⁵ Chen, 'A Performer's Analysis of the Four Ballades', 163.

Chopin's Pianos and their Construction

It was completely normal for a composer to acknowledge the benefits of more than one piano manufacturer, and throughout the course of his career, Chopin remarked on the high quality of the instruments of several leading piano makers.⁶⁶ The three makes he favoured, however, were Pleyel, used in London and Paris, Broadwood, used for his concerts in London, and Érard, property of his student Jane Stirling. Fortunately, some of these pianos still survive today, allowing researchers to explore their distinctive features.⁶⁷

The noted firm of Pleyel was founded by Ignace Joseph Pleyel⁶⁸ in 1807.⁶⁹ His son, Camille Pleyel,⁷⁰ joined the firm in 1815, and Chopin dealt mostly with him.⁷¹ Pleyel studied piano with Jan Dussek and corresponded frequently with Kalkbrenner, and his association with some of the leading pianists of the day inspired some of his developments in piano construction.⁷² During a trip to London, he met with the reputable English piano manufacturer John Broadwood, giving Pleyel an important understanding of current innovations in the field.⁷³ By 1848, Broadwood was one of

⁶⁶ Winter, 'Orthodoxies, paradoxes, and contradictions', 23.

⁶⁷ These instruments can be found at the Cobbe Collection in Hatchlands Park, Surrey, UK <<http://www.cobbecollection.co.uk>>.

⁶⁸ Ignace Joseph Pleyel (1757-1831) was a multitasking individual. In addition to founding the reputable piano manufacturing firm, Pleyel et Cie, in 1807, he also composed and published music. Martha Novak Clinkscale, *Makers of the Piano: Volume 2, 1820-1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 291.

⁶⁹ Palmieri, *The Piano: An Encyclopedia*, 296.

⁷⁰ Camille Pleyel (1788-1855) studied both composition and piano. His primary piano teacher was Johann Ladislaus Dussek. In 1824 he took over his father's piano manufacturing firm. Novak Clinkscale, *Makers of the Piano*, 291.

⁷¹ Novak Clinkscale, *Makers of the Piano*, 291.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 291. During a time of extraordinary technical development in piano construction, the Pleyel firm made several important advancements. First, they developed a method of tempering brass and steel wires. Second, they held a patent for a cast-iron frame. Palmieri, *The Piano: An Encyclopedia*, 296.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 296.

the most prolific instrument makers, producing 3,000 instruments a year.⁷⁴ Chopin considered these pianos as ‘the real London Pleyel’,⁷⁵ and while there are no additional primary sources where Chopin addressed the quality of the Broadwood pianos, the papers of the noted Broadwood technician Alfred J. Hipkins, who scrupulously documented the composer’s piano technique, his visits to the Broadwood premises and the pianos he played (including serial numbers), give researchers detailed insight into his use of Broadwood pianos.⁷⁶

Chopin performed on several Broadwood pianos including the Grand Piano No. 17047,⁷⁷ which was used for his London recitals.⁷⁸ This piano has a clear and bright sound reminiscent of the early Grafs, but with greater resonance in the bass register.⁷⁹ Due to his numerous intimate salon performances, he preferred ‘less innovative instruments of high craftsmanship’ like the Pleyels or the Broadwoods. These piano makers were reluctant to abandon this intimacy of sensation ‘where the player is aware of the sequence of engagement, acceleration, and release in each descent of a key.’⁸⁰ This, in fact, is a crucial aspect as to why Chopin was always ambivalent about Érard’s pianos. Since they do not offer the high level of control and

⁷⁴ Cobbe, *Chopin’s Swan Song*, 19.

⁷⁵ Chopin to Tytus Woyciechowski, Paris, 12 December 1831; letter to his family, 10-19 August 1848, in Chopin, *Selected Correspondence of Fryderyk Chopin*, 101.

⁷⁶ Hipkins later became a prominent musicologist and music historian, and the first English pianist to give recitals devoted to Chopin. Cobbe, *Chopin’s Swan Song*, 20, 50-52.

⁷⁷ Now in the Cobbe Collection in Hatchlands Park, Surrey, UK.

⁷⁸ These concerts included the performance at the home of Mrs. Sartoris at 99 Eaton Place on 23 June 1848 and at the Earl of Falmouth’s at 2 St James Square on 7 July 1848. No. 17047 was later also used in Manchester and for the last performance of his life at Guildhall on 16 November. Other pianos Chopin played at that time include No. 16280, a Broadwood Patent Repetition Grand Piano, venerated in ‘Spanishwood’ that was used during a reception on 15 May 1848, hosted by the Duchess of Sutherland at Stafford, now Lancaster. No. 17050 was used for two performances, one at the residences of the Countess of Gainsborough and Mr M. Stirling, apparently a relative of Jane Stirling; No. 17082, a Patent Repetition Grand, was used for another performance at the residence of the Marquess of Douglas. London performances were made on the Broadwood No. 17047. Alec Cobbe, *Chopin’s Swan Song*, 22-24.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

the variety of options to shape the sound as on Pleyels or Broadwoods, they appear to limit the player to the pianos' 'limpidly bright ready-made tone' that Chopin only preferred when he was not feeling his best, his fingers were 'less than completely supple or agile, [he was] not feeling strong enough to mould the keyboard to [his] will, to control the action of the hammers as [he wished] it.' If, however, he felt 'alert, ready to make [his] fingers work without fatigue', he preferred the Pleyel where his fingers 'feel in more immediate contact with the hammers, which then translate precisely and faithfully the feeling [he wanted] to produce ...'⁸¹

Broadwood, known for their Patent Repetition Grand Pianoforte, made an unsatisfactory attempt to reproduce the action of an Érard. Consisting of an L-shape hook below the escapement lever, it was meant to capture the hammer butt after escapement which allowed the pianist to re-engage the key before it went back to its original resting position. In reality, this attempt proved to be a failure for Broadwood since the adjustment necessary was complicated and difficult to maintain, but it also affirmed Érard's strong position amongst leading piano makers as a manufacturer worth emulating.⁸² In the latter half of the nineteenth-century, other repetition actions were developed and patented that were more successful.⁸³

Both the Broadwoods and the Pleyels had a shallower touch than the Érards due to their 'Americus Backers' action. The Broadwood instruments do not have an outer hammer covering, yet the hammer is light and has great acceleration which makes a *forte* dynamic easily achieved. The pianos also have the capability of a very intimate,

⁸¹ Ibid., 30.

⁸² Pleyel and Broadwood exchanged information and models of pianos in an effort to maintain their defenses against Érard.

⁸³ Cobbe, *Chopin's Swan Song*, 41.

quiet sound, similar to the Pleyels, which requires great control and tactile awareness from the performer. The length of the Broadwood pianos is 244 cm, which gives it an extremely broad dynamic range and makes them ideal candidates for Chopin's repertoire.

In comparison, Pleyel pianos were slightly shorter than Érard and Broadwood pianos – 200 to 230 cm versus 253 cm and 244 cm respectively.⁸⁴ Because of the smaller size of Pleyel pianos, the bass strings were approximately 20 to 50 centimetres shorter than those found in Érard pianos.⁸⁵ This gave Pleyel pianos a soft sound that was less resonant and powerful than the sound generated by Érard's.⁸⁶ This difference in size created an enormous difference in tension. With a total tension ranging between 6500 and 9000 kilograms, a Pleyel piano had approximately 40 per cent less total tension than an Érard.⁸⁷

In comparison with other contemporaneous instruments, notably Érard pianos, as well as with modern instruments, Pleyel pianos had a shallow key dip.⁸⁸ This shallow key dip required a flexible, nuanced touch as opposed to the strong, powerful touch demanded by other pianos.⁸⁹ Some of this difference came from the double escapement of the Érard pianos. Introduced in the 1820s, double-escapement action keeps the hammer from returning to its resting position immediately, so that pianists

⁸⁴ William Alexander Eddie, *Charles Valentin Alkan: His Life and His Music* (Burlington: Ashgate, 1988), 201.

⁸⁵ Winter, 'Orthodoxies, paradoxes, and contradictions', 24.

⁸⁶ Eddie, *Charles Valentin Alkan*, 201.

⁸⁷ Winter, 'Orthodoxies, paradoxes, and contradictions', 24.

⁸⁸ Edmund Frederick, 'The "Romantic" Sound in Four Pianos of Chopin's Era', *19th-Century Music* 3 (1979), 151; Goldberg, *Music in Chopin's Warsaw*, 44.

⁸⁹ Eigeldinger, 'Chopin and Pleyel', 392.

can more readily repeat the same pitch quickly.⁹⁰ This action also provides more leverage and power; however, it does not give the performer as much control over sound quality.⁹¹

Pleyel and Érard pianos also differed considerably in the construction of their hammers. Pleyel pianos, like other early nineteenth-century pianos, had felt-covered hammers that produced a round tone.⁹² Edmund Frederick examined an 1845 Pleyel from his own collection.⁹³ This piano, which resembles Chopin's Pleyel pianos in terms of construction and sound quality, even though it was constructed several years later, features hammers that are covered in both hard leather and felt. This produces a clear, round tone in the bass and tenor registers as well as a sustained, incisive tone in the upper registers.⁹⁴ Pleyel shaped the hammers almost like a needle, particularly in the treble register, so that the hammers struck the string at a point, rather than on a curve.⁹⁵ With this design, the upper partials became more pronounced.⁹⁶ Érard pianos also featured hammers covered with both leather and felt; however, instead of covering the felt with leather, Érard alternated multiple layers of both felt and leather. These hammers were quite resilient and emphasised the fundamental, not the partials.⁹⁷

⁹⁰ Chen, 'A Performer's Analysis of the Four Ballades', 162-163.

⁹¹ Winter, 'Orthodoxies, paradoxes, and contradictions', 28.

⁹² Methuen-Campbell, 'Chopin in performance', 192.

⁹³ Edmund Fredericks owns a collection of over thirty historical pianos. These pianos are housed at the Historical Piano Study Center in Ashburnham, MA. Visitors to the study center can look at the historical pianos and hear master classes and concerts on these instruments. Frederick Historic Piano Collection, 'The Historical Piano Study Center', <<http://www.frederickcollection.org/studycenter.html>> [accessed 21 December 2013].

⁹⁴ Frederick, 'The "Romantic" Sound in Four Pianos of Chopin's Era', 151-152.

⁹⁵ Palmieri, *The Piano: An Encyclopedia*, 72.

⁹⁶ Winter, 'Orthodoxies, paradoxes, and contradictions', 27-28.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

Another characteristic of Pleyel pianos was the timbre resulting from the pedal mechanisms. Like many pianos of the time, Pleyel pianos had both a damper pedal and an *una corda* pedal.⁹⁸ It is plausible that Pleyel modelled his pedal action on English pianos, which also had only two pedals. The dampers touched the strings from above, a design known as over-dampers. Because they relied chiefly on gravity, there was, in the words of Robert Winter, ‘a discreet veil of sound’, even when the performer was not using the damper pedal.⁹⁹ Érard pianos, on the other hand, featured under-dampers that worked through springs, not gravity. This design allowed performers to suppress the sound quickly, completely and reliably.¹⁰⁰ Continental pianos, particularly those of Viennese construction, from this period often had quite a number of pedals capable of producing a range of sound qualities.¹⁰¹

With their smaller size, shallow key dip, single-escapement action, felt-covered hammers and unique pedal design, Pleyel pianos had a round, gentle tone that was significantly different from the bolder, louder tone of Érard pianos. These qualities made Pleyel pianos more suitable for use in drawing rooms and salons, while Érard pianos were suitable for the concert stage.¹⁰²

The construction and sound characteristics of Pleyel pianos suited Chopin’s poetic virtuosity, and contemporaneous reviewers drew a clear distinction between the Pleyel-Chopin connection and the Érard -Liszt connection. The following excerpt from the early nineteenth-century periodical *Le pianiste* makes this opposition clear,

⁹⁸ Eigeldinger, ‘Chopin and Pleyel’, 393.

⁹⁹ Winter, ‘Orthodoxies, paradoxes, and contradictions’, 27-28.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

¹⁰¹ David Rowland, *Early Keyboard Instruments: A Practical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 53.

¹⁰² Winter, ‘Orthodoxies, paradoxes, and contradictions’, 24.

allying Kalkbrenner and Ferdinand Hiller with Chopin, and placing Henri Herz, Henri Bertini, and Ludwig Schunke alongside Liszt:

Give Liszt, Herz, Bertini and Schunke an Érard; but to Kalkbrenner, Chopin and Hiller give a Pleyel; a Pleyel is needed to sing a Field romance, to caress a Chopin mazourk [*sic*], to sigh a Kessler Nocturne; for the big concert an Érard is necessary. The bright tone of the latter carries no further, but in a clearer, more incisive and distinct fashion than the mellow tone of the Pleyel, which rounds itself and loses a little of its intensity in the corners of a large hall.¹⁰³

Recalling Chopin's own admiring words for Kalkbrenner, this again confirms the sonic qualities Chopin himself appreciated in a musician and his or her interpretation as well as in an instrument, an aspect that is vital when analysing Chopin's own interpretive approach.

Playing Chopin's Pianos

In order to further deepen one's insights into the way these instruments could be played, a visit to the Cobbe Collection in Hatchlands Park in Surrey, UK, gives some indication of their technical features when played as well as their characteristic sounds, which played a significant role in Chopin's performances.¹⁰⁴ The Cobbe Collection is the world's largest collection of keyboard instruments with direct associations to composers. It contains instruments that were owned or played by masters such as Henry Purcell, Johann Christian Bach, Edward Elgar, Franz Liszt and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, as well as an Érard that had been once owned by French queen Marie-Antoinette.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ L. D., 'Les pianos', *Le pianiste* 9 (1834), 130; quoted and translated in Eigeldinger, 'Chopin and Pleyel', 391.

¹⁰⁴ See footnote 105.

¹⁰⁵ Cobbe, *Chopin's Swan Song*, x.

Illustration 1: Chopin's 1843 Pleyel (left) next to an 1845 Érard (right)



It also features the three pianos that played an important role in Chopin's life, and researchers get the opportunity to play an 1843 and an 1845 Érard, a 1819-1820 Graf and Chopin's 1843 Pleyel, amongst others. The physical experience of playing Chopin's music on instruments he valued is described and analysed in this chapter, and particular attention is given to the possibilities the player has to shape and interpret the compositions. On this occasion, recordings were made of three Études on the 1845 Érard and the Pleyel as well as on a modern piano for direct comparison, beginning with the 1843 Pleyel.¹⁰⁶

Playing the Étude Op. 10 No. 1 on this instrument,¹⁰⁷ a pianist experiences a feeling of connection with the action as though one's fingers were an extension of the hammer, just like Chopin described the instrument's quality to directly translate the

¹⁰⁶ All audio samples recorded on the occasion are attached to this thesis in order to support analytical and theoretical findings and will be referred to in this chapter. A complete track list can be found with the CD.

¹⁰⁷ Audio track 1.

desired emotion and effect.¹⁰⁸ This piano does not have a double escapement action, which explains why the repetition is not very responsive. The sound is veiled and round; also its tone colour is more consistent from bass to treble. The modern player first needs to become used to the different feel of the instrument, but adjusting to the touch and responsiveness of the piano will soon allow the pianist to increase the tempo, to astonishing effect. With a high key stroke velocity the sound is very different from the sound at a regular, more moderate stroke velocity. Playing the Étude Op. 10 No. 4¹⁰⁹ after that, it becomes quite easy to achieve the tempo as indicated, and though it has to be said that playing *fortissimo* was not allowed to avoid damage to the instruments, at least in the mezzo-range the action appears lighter than that of a modern Steinway and requires less effort. This lighter action, particularly, makes itself felt in the last bars of this étude, which are notoriously difficult to play; this aspect and also due to the smaller key size, makes it easier to play on this original instrument than on a modern Steinway.

¹⁰⁸ Cobbe, *Chopin's Swan Song*, 30.

¹⁰⁹ Audio track 7.

Illustration 2: Chopin's 1843 Pleyel, view of keyboard



The 1845 Érard, signed by Thalberg, on the other hand, produced a bright and firm sound when used to play the Étude Op. 10 No. 1.¹¹⁰ The dampers worked better and the action had an elastic quality that could be compared to pushing a spring-loaded button at times, thus making the player feel disconnected from the string, quite unlike the 1843 Pleyel. The sound in the bass and treble was much clearer on this instrument, the key dip felt a lot shallower than on the Pleyel, and this Érard also has double escapement, allowing much quicker re-engagement of a key. This kind of action was Érard's great breakthrough, and one that other piano makers such as Broadwood tried to emulate. It is important to note that both of the pianos played at the Cobbe Collection had been re-felted and they are not with their original hammers.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Audio track 2.

¹¹¹ The sole reason why researching visitors are allowed to play these pianos is because they have been re-felted. Pianists can play a few pieces on the earlier Érards; however, they still use the original hammers, which makes them very delicate.

Illustration 3: 1845 Érard



Further comparisons between the pianos available show that considerable differences exist, not only between the instruments of different makers, but also between different models of one manufacturer. Playing the *Étude* Op. 10 No. 2 on the 1843 Érard once owned by Jane Stirling, for example, one will find that the action of this instrument feels much lighter than that of its 1845 sibling. A lighter touch is required, utilising finger technique rather than the use of the whole arm. This Érard also has a double escapement and a less round sound, rather smaller and thinner, almost metallic. The keys are very light, thus requiring more effort in articulation from the performer. With an action as light as this, one can easily understand why the tempo in Chopin's day was faster and is more difficult to achieve on modern instruments.

In order to gain a comprehensive impression, an 1819-1820 Graf similar to the one on which Chopin composed the *Études* Op. 10 in Vienna was also played. This piano has an extremely light action, even lighter than the Stirling piano, making it easy to

damage and break the hammers if played with the same force one would use on a modern instrument. There are five pedals on this model: *una corda* on the far left, sustain on the right, and three moderators in the middle, yet it contains fewer keys. The lightness permits trills to be executed with ease, yet – at least on this particular piano – the action can be rather noisy and interfere with the (desired) produced sounds, which are very clear, thin and frail. The lighter action permitted faster playing of the *Étude* Op. 10 No. 2, but particularly when one is playing this instrument, one can also understand that the *Études*' dynamic range is much more refined than that of some modern technical approaches.

In addition to being a most exciting experience for a pianist, playing these original instruments gives the researcher very detailed insight into the relationship between Chopin's instruments and the pieces composed on them. By playing his compositions on very well preserved pianos of the period, one experiences their original sound as well as the technical demands and options of the music at the time of composition. A lighter action, for example, allowed for very subtle nuances in touch and dynamics as well as for playing at high speed – a fact that needs to be taken into account when playing Chopin's music on modern pianos, particularly with regard to a historically informed performance. What this experience also reveals is how Chopin may have intended these compositions to sound. Playing them on a piano of the time already gives a true idea of their actual sonic qualities; these pianos were explicitly chosen by Chopin, which enhances the insight enormously.¹¹² This is particularly supported by another technical, yet very personal fact; surviving Pleyel set-ups display a great variety from very light to very heavy touch, which is why it can be assumed that

¹¹² Cobbe, *Chopin's Swan Song*, 22.

every piano was set up specifically for its owner or player. This would mean that the set up of this particular Pleyel is close to Chopin's own ideal touch, which gives the closest impression of how Chopin himself liked some of his compositions to be heard.¹¹³

The History of the Piano Étude

When one is to examine Chopin's teaching methods, his compositions with pedagogical purpose are of great value. They reveal to performers and researchers alike where the composer placed the educational emphasis, whether it was of his own preference or as an adaption to a pupil's needs. This passage thus briefly reiterates the evolution of the genre of the étude in general before looking at Chopin's études in particular.

In the early nineteenth century, pedagogical works for the piano proliferated. This increase in productivity on the part of composers is aligned with the development of the instrument itself. Indeed, Simon Finlow asserts that changes in the construction of the piano spurred an interest in writing works for piano solo and for developing the technical abilities necessary to perform these works.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, with the widespread use of pianos in middle-class homes, there was a demand for works that would appeal to both amateurs and professional pianists as they strove to develop their technique.¹¹⁵ Indeed, the number of amateur pianists sparked significant

¹¹³ Ibid., 3.

¹¹⁴ Simon Finlow, 'The twenty-seven études and their antecedents', in Jim Samson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 50.

¹¹⁵ Howard Ferguson and Kenneth L. Hamilton, 'Study', *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press)
<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/27018>> [accessed 5 January 2013].

changes in piano pedagogy in the early nineteenth century. Jim Samson remarks that this period ‘was the age of the conservatory, the tutor, the textbook, the classroom; the age, too, when pianist-composers (the *grands pédagogues*), virtually without exception, had their systems, their *Lehrbücher*, and their coteries of pupils; the age, in brief, of the *étude* and the exercise.’¹¹⁶

Throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, composers wrote numerous short didactic works for keyboard instruments to fill this growing market.¹¹⁷ At the beginning of this period, composers used the terms ‘*étude*’ (study) and ‘exercise’ interchangeably.¹¹⁸ The precise meanings of these terms became more distinct in the early nineteenth century. By Chopin’s time, the generic label ‘exercise’ came to be associated with works that had as their primary function a specific technical challenge. Simon Finlow remarks that in exercises composers would isolate and repeat specific technical formulas. He argues that, while these types of works had considerable pedagogical value, they had little or no musical value.¹¹⁹ One example of a typical exercise is No. 58 from Carl Czerny’s Op. 599, *Practical Method for Beginners on the Pianoforte* (Example 2.1).¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Jim Samson, *Virtuosity and the Musical Work: The Transcendental Studies of Liszt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 17.

¹¹⁷ Jim Samson, *The Music of Chopin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 59.

¹¹⁸ Ferguson and Hamilton, ‘Study’.

¹¹⁹ Finlow, ‘The twenty-seven *études* and their antecedents’, 53.

¹²⁰ Carl Czerny, *Practical Method for Beginners on the Pianoforte, Op. 599*, edited by Giuseppe Buonamici (New York: G. Schirmer, 1893).

Example 2.1: Carl Czerny, Exercise No. 58 from Op. 599, bars 1-8

In this exercise, Czerny helps the pianist develop speed and agility through motif repetition. The asterisk to the right of the number of the exercise leads to a note instructing the pianist to practice the exercise a semi-tone higher, using the same fingering. With its emphasis on technical development and its negligible musical interest – one would not, for example, programme this work on a recital – this exercise is typical of other contemporaneous exercises, a genre that emphasised drill and repetition.¹²¹

Études, like exercises, serve to develop technical capabilities, however, they also provide considerable musical interest.¹²² Following an examination of the historical use of the terms ‘étude’ and ‘exercise’, Finlow points out that études not only feature technical challenges, they offer clearly defined musical structures.¹²³ For Jim

¹²¹ Finlow, ‘The twenty-seven études and their antecedents’, 54.

¹²² Ibid., 53.

¹²³ Ibid., 54.

Samson, the *étude* is the genre in which the role of composer and pedagogue meet.¹²⁴ By working through a technical problem, the pedagogue teaches his or her students how to confront technical challenges. Through a distinctly set musical structure and attention to musical qualities (for example, articulation, expression, dynamics), the composer provides a work that is suitable not just for playing, but also for listening. Concert *études*, like those of Chopin, form a subclass of *études*: those which would be suitable for public performance.

In his study on the predecessors to the Chopin *études*, Finlow provides an extensive, though not exhaustive list of some of the more well-known *études* of the early nineteenth century. These works include Johann Baptist Cramer's *Studio per il pianoforte* (1804) and *Étude pour le piano forte* (1810), Muzio Clementi's *Gradus ad Parnassum* (1817-1826), Friedrich Kalkbrenner's *24 études* (c1820), Ignaz Moscheles's *Studien zur höheren Vollendung bereits ausgebildeter Clavierspieler* (1826) and Carl Czerny's *Schule der Geläufigkeit* (1830).¹²⁵ Although he acknowledges the musical as well as pedagogical value in these *études*, Charles Rosen draws a distinction between these works and the *études* of Chopin: 'Chopin is the true inventor of the concert *étude*, at least in the sense of being the first to give it complete artistic form – a form in which musical substance and technical difficulty coincide.'¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Samson, *Virtuosity and the Musical Work*, 17.

¹²⁵ Finlow, 'The twenty-seven *études* and their antecedents', 52.

¹²⁶ Rosen, *The Romantic Generation*, 363.

The Background of Chopin's Études

While the precise dates when Chopin began composing and completed his first set of études is not known, scholars have established that he worked on them between 1829 and 1832.¹²⁷ At the beginning of this period, Chopin was still living in Warsaw, and firmly settled in Paris by the end of it. He finally published the set in 1833 as the *Douze grandes études* Op. 10, with a dedication to Franz Liszt. The études represent a turning point in Chopin's output, moving him away from the *stile brillante* of his early works, such as the rondos and variations, towards the works of his mature style.¹²⁸

While he would later in his life assign his advanced students some of his own études from Op. 10 and Op. 25, Chopin had not yet begun teaching when he composed the Op. 10 études.¹²⁹ He was, in fact, still actively performing in public and still pursuing a career as a performer. Andreas Klein speculates that the études might have come into existence as a 'by-product' of Chopin's daily practice in preparation for his public performances.¹³⁰ As noted above, Chopin was almost completely self-taught in matters of piano technique,¹³¹ and while research for this thesis has not confirmed this speculation, it is quite conceivable that Chopin used these works as vehicles to confront some of his own technical challenges.

¹²⁷ Samson, *The Music of Chopin*, 59.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹²⁹ Carl Mikuli, foreword to Carl Mikuli (ed.), *Fr. Chopin's Pianoforte-Werke* (17 vols, Leipzig: Kistner, 1880), 3-4.

¹³⁰ Andreas Klein, 'The Chopin "Etudes": An Indispensable Pedagogical Tool for Developing Piano Technique' (DMA dissertation, Rice University, 1989), 11.

¹³¹ See pages 29-30.

According to Samson, the études show Chopin systematically working through virtuoso piano techniques as each of the pieces addresses a single technical challenge.¹³² The first focuses on arpeggios, while the second works on the independence of the three middle fingers in chromatic passagework. In the third, the pianist must work to project an expressive, legato melody over a layered accompanying pattern in the same hand. The fourth develops speed using a variety of hand positions, and the fifth addresses accuracy in fast black-key passagework. In the sixth, Chopin targets expression in a legato melody before turning to a toccata-like texture with a melodic line that emerges from the figuration in the seventh. After the arpeggiated eighth étude, the ninth develops contrasts in touch and articulation. The tenth étude focuses on rhythm and accent while the eleventh requires the performer to project a melodic line from a thick texture of extended, arpeggiated chords. Finally, the twelfth, with its arpeggios, chromatic figures and scalar passages, focuses on the left hand.

In addition to fitting within the larger history of the étude genre, Chopin's Op. 10 études also fit within a tradition of organising a collection of pieces along tonal lines. Klein notes that since 1448, with Adam Ileborgh's keyboard tablature entitled *Praeludia diversarum notarum*, composers have composed groups of works similar in form or character in a succession of different keys.¹³³ The most well-known example of such a collection is Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, with its collection of preludes and fugues in all of the major and minor keys. Bach works methodically through all of the tonal possibilities, moving from parallel major to parallel minor and then chromatically up from C. Chopin was extremely familiar with Bach's work,

¹³² Samson, *The Music of Chopin*, 59.

¹³³ Klein, "The Chopin "Etudes"", 22.

and he employed a similarly logical, albeit less methodical, means of tonally organising his études. Table 2.1 shows the keys of each of the Op. 10 études and the tonal relationships between the études.

Table 2.1: Chopin, Études Op. 10 Keys and Tonal Relationships

| Number | Key | Relationship |
|--------|----------|----------------------------------|
| 1 | C Major | |
| 2 | A Minor | Relative minor |
| 3 | E Major | Dominant of No. 2 |
| 4 | C# Minor | Relative minor |
| 5 | Gb Major | Subdominant (respelled) of No. 4 |
| 6 | Eb Minor | Relative minor |
| 7 | C Major | |
| 8 | F Major | Subdominant of No. 7 |
| 9 | F Minor | Parallel minor |
| 10 | Ab Major | Relative major |
| 11 | Eb Major | Dominant |
| 12 | C Minor | Relative minor |

This table shows that the key of each succeeding étude is related in some way to the preceding one. Chopin expands the types of relationships from the parallel major and minors used by Bach to include dominant and subdominant relationships as well as relative majors and minors. The one exception to the tonal ordering of the Op. 10 études is No. 7, where Chopin returns to the key of the first étude in the middle of the set. With his use of C as the tonic for the beginning, middle and ending études, Chopin seems to ground the entire set in the realm of C. It functions, in a way, as the tonic for the entire collection.

Looking at surviving sources available to performers today, there are fourteen distinct manuscripts for the Op. 10 with varying levels of performance indications. For example, Chopin prepared copies of Op. 10 No. 1 and No. 2 with no tempo, fingering, dynamic or pedal markings. In contrast, he made extremely detailed copies

of Nos. 5 to 12. These copies contain numerous slurs, pedal indications, fingerings, articulation marks and words that describe the sought-after musical qualities.¹³⁴ To these fourteen sources, must be added the publisher's proofs as well as the three first editions to the list of primary sources for the scores of the Op. 10 études. As was common in the early nineteenth century, Chopin published the Op. 10 études simultaneously in France, Germany and England in order to protect scores from piracy and to increase his income from the sale of copyright to numerous publishers.¹³⁵

Chopin supervised the publication of his works, particularly early works such as the études, taking responsibility for the proofreading and corrections to the publishers' proofs.¹³⁶ Alterations on the proofs often clarify phrasing, articulation, fingerings and pedal indications.¹³⁷ Jeffrey Kallberg has uncovered documentation that reveals the publication process of Chopin's early compositions, including the études. Chopin would deliver his manuscript to his French publisher Schlesinger, who would then prepare a set of proofs which the composer would meticulously correct. Once the proofs had been corrected and another set had been printed out, Schlesinger would send the corrected proofs to his contacts in Leipzig and London, Kistner and Wessler, who would then prepare their editions from Schlesinger's proofs.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Thomas Higgins, 'Tempo and Character in Chopin', *The Musical Quarterly* 59 (1973), 110.

¹³⁵ Samson, *The Music of Chopin*, 17; Jeffrey Kallberg, 'Chopin in the Marketplace: Aspects of the International Music Publishing Industry in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century: Part 1: France and England', *Notes* 39 (1983), 537.

¹³⁶ Jeffrey Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History, and Musical Genre* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 167.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 167-168.

¹³⁸ Kallberg, 'Chopin in the Marketplace', 542, 551, 560 and 569.

In addition to these primary sources, performers can choose from a wealth of modern editions, only some of which deal with the problems posed by the existence of numerous primary sources. Mikuli, as one of the few of Chopin's students who pursued a professional career, prepared an edition of the études which was published by Schirmer. Mikuli had studied the études with Chopin and consulted with other students including Czartoryska and Frederike Streicher (and their scores of the work) as he was preparing the volume.¹³⁹ Mikuli also penned a foreword to the edition that contains further valuable performance information.¹⁴⁰

Among modern editions, there are four that do a particularly good job of collating the information from the primary sources. The volume of the Wiener *Urtext* devoted to the études was edited by Paul Badura-Skoda. Badura-Skoda's contribution is valuable because he includes the variant readings on the score itself, meaning that performers do not have to consult a separate volume of critical commentary to see the possible variants.¹⁴¹ Ludwik Bronarski and Józef Turczyński edited the volume of études for the Fryderyk Chopin Institute's complete works (henceforth referred to as the Polish Complete Edition)¹⁴² and which on first view clearly points out all of the variant readings from the primary sources at the back of the volume. On the scores themselves, a clean layout is provided, editorial emendations are clearly indicated with a change in font. For performers, this volume appears to offer a clear advantage over Badura-Skoda's: the page is not cluttered with variant readings, but the

¹³⁹ Thomas Higgins, 'Whose Chopin?', *19th-Century Music* 5 (1981), 72.

¹⁴⁰ Frédéric Chopin, *Complete Works for the Piano*, viii, edited and fingered by Carl Mikuli (New York: G. Schirmer, 1916).

¹⁴¹ Higgins, 'Whose Chopin?', 70.

¹⁴² Fryderyk Chopin, *Complete Works*, ii, edited by Ludwik Bronarski and Józef Turczyński (Warsaw: Instytut Fryderyka Chopina, 1949).

performer can easily look up alternate readings at the back of the volume.¹⁴³ This edition, however, is problematic when trying to prepare a historically informed performance of the *Études*, and performers need to be aware of several issues in the musical text. Not only have materials been over-edited and markings such as slurs altered, copies of music in a hand other than Chopin's have also been mistaken by editors for autographs, and changes from authentic sources have been made, at times without reference to this in the commentary.¹⁴⁴

Perhaps the best choice of modern editions is the Henle *Urtext* volume devoted to the etudes, and therefore the chosen edition for most of the musical examples throughout this thesis.¹⁴⁵ Under the direction of Ewald Zimmerman, this edition relies on primary sources, presents a clear text that performers can easily play from, with editorial emendations in a clearly differentiated font.¹⁴⁶ The Henle *Urtext* in general makes a better choice for performers who are interested in historically informed performance than the Polish Complete Edition as the Henle editors have consistently updated their scores to reflect current knowledge about the state of Chopin's primary sources and to correct mistakes that inadvertently made their way into the scores.¹⁴⁷

Another edition that the attentive performer interested in a historically informed performance cannot ignore is the one by Polish pianist, composer and Chopin scholar Jan Ekier.¹⁴⁸ As in some of the editions already mentioned, Ekier's combines variants

¹⁴³ Frédéric Chopin, *Études Op. 10*, edited by Paul Badura-Skoda (Vienna: Wiener *Urtext* Edition, Schott, 1973).

¹⁴⁴ Higgins, 'Whose Chopin?', 68.

¹⁴⁵ Frédéric Chopin, *Études*, edited by Ewald Zimmermann (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2006).

¹⁴⁶ Higgins, 'Whose Chopin?', 71.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁴⁸ Fryderyk Chopin, *Étude Op. 10, 25, ii*, edited by Jan Ekier (Warsaw: PWM, 2000).

in Chopin's hand (marked *ossia*) with the editors' suggestions in the text, which, whilst clearly laid out bar by bar in the performance commentary and indicated by different symbols, may still distract from a focused performance. And while this edition should be among the works of reference of every performer for the editor's artistic authority, it is his personal comments on practice and performance of the études that is perhaps even more interesting. Ekier's own playing was 'characterised by impeccable technique, logical musical narration, a sense of formal development, excellent pedal, purposeful articulation and expression that resulted from the content of the work.'¹⁴⁹ This description bears relation to Chopin's methods, regarding his personal style as well as his teaching. His interpretation (and thus his technique) was governed by the artistic content of the work; he recommended his pupils envision the exact overall sound of a piece first and let this mental image guide the body to reproduce this ideal.¹⁵⁰ In this regard, Ekier's comments on the études also reflect upon both tempo and fingering. He recommends that the performer adhere to the metronomic tempi and fingerings amply provided by Chopin.¹⁵¹

All four of these editions have their merits, and performers who are interested in historically informed performance of the *Études Op. 10* would do well to consult all of these scores as they prepare their interpretations. Performers must, however, be wary of other editions, of which there are many. Some, such as the Schirmer edition

¹⁴⁹ Stanislaw Dybowski, 'Jan Ekier', The Fryderyk Chopin Institute Online <<http://en.chopin.nifc.pl/chopin/persons/text/id/276/lang/en>> [accessed 28 May 2015].

¹⁵⁰ See page 37.

¹⁵¹ Playing at the tempo indicated by Chopin will familiarise the performer with the intended speed before finding a possibly differing tempo according to his or her abilities. The same accounts for comments on Chopin's fingering; his given fingering should be obeyed unless it causes physical discomfort. This is important since each finger creates a sound very much different from the others, a fact that Chopin himself emphasises. It is thus a fact that must be taken into consideration when one is trying to model one's own interpretation as closely as possible to the one indicated by the composer. Jan Ekier, *Performance Commentary*, 2 in Fryderyk Chopin, *Étude Op. 10, 25*, ii, edited by Jan Ekier (Warsaw: PWM, 2000).

edited by Arthur Friedham,¹⁵² contain numerous markings that bear no relation to Chopin's intentions. Take, for instance, the opening of Op. 10 No. 10 (Example 2.2a and 2.2b).

Example 2.2a: Chopin Étude, Op. 10 No. 10, bars 1-5, Henle *Urtext*

Example 2.2b: Chopin Étude Op. 10 No. 10, bars 1-5, Schirmer Friedham

From these examples, numerous differences between the two versions can be seen. Friedham has altered the fingering, omitted some of the accents in the treble line, changed the pedal indications and added expressive markings such as the *marcato*

¹⁵² Frédéric Chopin, *Etudes*, edited by Arthur Friedheim (New York: Schirmer, 1916).

pochissimo in bar 1. None of these changes are produced in a different type, so the performer would have no way of knowing which markings are the editor's and which came from Chopin.¹⁵³

Summary

Chopin's correspondence and the explorations of the Cobbe Collection pianos have shown what impact the choice of instrument makes on the performance of the Études Op. 10. As these pianos differ considerably from modern Steinways and from each other, it can be discovered how individual études may have been envisioned by playing them on an appropriate historical instrument. The lighter action that allows playing with less effort at a higher speed, for example, may give a good representation of the originally intended tempo that, perhaps, is unfeasible on a modern Steinway. Taking this into account when looking at historically informed performance is vital, as Alfred J. Hipkins' daughter Edith J. Hipkins clear-sightedly writes in the publication of her father's notes and work:

The Chopin playing of this century is a post-Chopin tradition which has nothing to do with the playing of the master; and has continually progressed further from his ideal as the piano has gained in strength and volume. It represents what others have made of his music, but is not the real Chopin, any more than the Bach of our pianists is the real Bach. To find the real Bach, we must go back to the clavichord and harpsichord.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ A word must be said about the duration of the anacrusis. In the autograph of this étude, Chopin wrote the anacrusis as a crotchet. All three of the first editions present a quaver as the anacrusis. Bronarski and Turczyński, *Chopin Complete Works*, ii, 143.

¹⁵⁴ Edith J. Hipkins, *How Chopin Played: From Contemporary Impressions Collected from the Diaries and Note-Books of the Late A. J. Hipkins*; quoted in Cobbe, *Chopin's Swan Song*, viii.

Because of the long performance tradition of Chopin's études and their suitability for public performance,¹⁵⁵ they, unlike other works with a predominantly educational purpose, can serve as a focus for investigations into historically informed performances of the works. This investigation must rely on general performance-related aspects, such as those discussed in the following chapter, as well as available primary source material.

¹⁵⁵ Since the early nineteenth century, pianists have performed these works on the concert stage. Unlike many of the other nineteenth-century études, Chopin's études have continuously remained in the concert repertory. Tracy D. Lipke-Perry, 'Integrating Piano Technique, Physiology, and Motor Learning: Strategies for Performing the Chopin Etudes' (DMA dissertation, The University of Arizona, 2008), 14.

Chapter 3

Chopin's Musical Style and the Op. 10 Études

Chopin's Op. 10 études have both pedagogical and musical value. In developing a historically informed interpretation of these works, consideration of historical evidence – including theoretical treatises about early-nineteenth-century playing styles, primary sources for the études and early recordings – yields much valuable information. Theoretical treatises offer explanations for certain idiosyncratic notational conventions. Clive Brown contends that a performer's familiarity with these notational practices can enrich his or her interpretations.¹ Scholars who have examined the primary sources in detail note that Chopin was incredibly meticulous in preparing the autographs, proofs and first editions for the Op. 10 études.² The composer was involved in the entire publication process, altering articulation marks, fingerings, indications on pedalling, dynamics and other variables as he looked over the proofs.³ Early recordings provide additional information regarding historical performance practice. Neal Peres da Costa, one of the main scholars in this emerging field of musicology, remarks that, 'written texts – musical notation and verbal advice – are imperfect in preserving performing practices of the past';⁴ recordings, however, can preserve earlier performing traditions. In this chapter, attention is paid to articulation, fingerings, pedalling, phrasing, dynamics, tempo and rhythm, and ornaments. After discussing the prevailing trends in the early nineteenth century, the

¹ Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice, 1750-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2.

² See Chapter 2, page 61.

³ Jeffrey Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History, and Musical Genre* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 167-168.

⁴ Neal Peres da Costa, *Off the Record: Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), xxii.

focus shifts to Chopin's works in general before addressing the études more specifically.

Articulation

In a letter to his friend Tytus Woyciechowski, Chopin noted his admiration of Friedrich Kalkbrenner's fluid touch. Kalkbrenner, along with other pianists of the Parisian school, was greatly concerned with touch and articulation.⁵ Four prominent piano treatises, including one written by Kalkbrenner, that were published in Paris in the first half of the nineteenth century deal explicitly with articulation, along with other technical issues. Their descriptions of the different types of articulation bring valuable information to performers of Chopin's music.⁶ All of the treatises describe four main types of articulation, distinguished by the length of the sounding tone and the silence that follows (Example 3.1).

Example 3.1: Four Main Articulation Types



The shortest notes, *piqué*, are notated with vertical wedges and should be played with one-quarter sound and three-quarters silence. Notes marked with dots indicate *détaché* and should be played with half tone and half silence. When a *legato* slur connects notes marked with dots, this indicates *porté*, notes that consist of three-

⁵ See Chapter 2, page 33; Jonathan Bellman, 'Frédéric Chopin, Antoine de Kotski and the *Carezzando* Touch', *Early Music* 29 (2001), 400.

⁶ These treatises include Louis Adam, *Méthode de piano du Conservatoire* (1804), Alexis de Garaudé, *Méthode complete pour le Piano Forte* (1820), Henry Lemoine, *Méthode pour le Piano* (1827) and Friedrich Kalkbrenner *Méthode pour apprendre le piano-forte à l'aide du guide-mains* (1831). Bellman, 'Frédéric Chopin, Antoine de Kotski and the *Carezzando* Touch', 405.

quarters sound and one-quarter silence. Finally, notes indicated solely with a slur indicate *lié*, or *legato*, where the note sounds for the full duration.⁷

For Chopin and his contemporaries, issues regarding articulation and touch were closely connected to the types of pianos they preferred. As noted, Pleyel pianos had a lighter touch than Érard pianos.⁸ The difference in touch initially posed some problems for Chopin's students when they first played the Pleyel in Chopin's studio. One of these students, the Latvian pianist Emilie von Gretsck, immediately commented on this difference to Maria von Grewingk:

Until now I have worked more on heavy keyboards than on light ones: this has greatly strengthened my fingers. However, on this type of piano it is impossible to obtain the subtlest nuances with movements of the wrist and forearm, as well of each individual finger. These nuances – I've experienced them at Chopin's on his beautiful piano.⁹

Indeed, because the keys were lighter, had a shallower key dip and lacked the double-escapement action, Pleyel pianos required less power.¹⁰ They also gave the performer much more control over the variety of articulation, particularly with regard to *legato* playing.

In his compositions, Chopin makes much more use of *legato* than the other three types, and legato carried through particularly well on his Pleyel piano. For Chopin, controlling a slow *legato* melody was as much of a technical preoccupation as fast passagework.¹¹ In the Op. 10 études, legato passages abound. For example, the

⁷ Ibid., 405.

⁸ See Chapter 2, page 50.

⁹ Maria von Grewingk, *Eine Tochter Alt-Rigas, Schülerin Chopins* (Riga: Löffler, 1928), 15; quoted and translated in Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, 'Chopin and Pleyel', *Early Music* 29 (2001), 392.

¹⁰ David Rowland, *Early Keyboard Instruments: A Practical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 38.

¹¹ Jim Samson, *The Music of Chopin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 63.

opening of No. 3 features a lyrical melody with slurs indicating a legato touch (Example 3.2).

Example 3.2: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 3, bars 1-9, Henle *Urtext*

In this example, Chopin highlights the fluid nature of the passage by writing in *legato*, a marking that appears in the French, German and English first editions of the étude.¹² Chopin could equally demand *legato* control of faster passages of virtuosic character, as in the opening of No. 5 where he uses a slur to indicate the *legato* touch in the first two bars in the right hand before using the simpler verbal indication *legato* in bar 3 (Example 3.3).

¹² John Rink, 'Chopin's First Editions Online' <<http://www.cfeo.org.uk/jsp/browsecollection.jsp>> [accessed 8 November 2013].

Example 3.3: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 5, bars 1-7, Henle *Urtext*

32

Vivace $\text{♩} = 116$
brillante

Opus 10 Nr. 5

5.

8

f *p* *legato* *cresc.*

Red. * Red. * Red. *

4

8

Red. * Red. * Red. *

In these legato passages, the performer should hold each note for its full value and blend it seamlessly with the preceding and following notes. Chopin wrote several passages requiring an accented *legato* articulation. This type of articulation, in which the performer should hold the pitch for three-quarters of its full rhythmic value, is found in passages such as the opening of No. 9 where dotted notes are connected by slurs (Example 3.4).

Example 3.4: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 9, bars 1-6, Henle *Urtext*

Opus 10 Nr. 9

Allegro molto agitato $\text{♩} = 96$

9.

p *legatissimo* *cresc.* *con forza*

Red. * Red. * Red. * Red. * Red. *

4

21

Red. * Red. * segue

For the performer, this passage proves to be quite difficult in terms of articulation. The right hand is charged with playing accented *legato*, while the left hand should be a completely smooth *legato*. In fact, Chopin marks the accompaniment pattern *legatissimo*.

This set of études also contains passages of *staccato*, indicated with dots over the notes but no slurs. This type of articulation, in which the performer should hold the note for half of its value, is found in No. 10 (Example 3.5). Here, Chopin moves from a *legato* passage to a *staccato* passage. To emphasise the change from slurs to dots, Chopin adds the reminder *staccato* at the beginning of bar 13.

Example 3.5: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 10, bars 12-14, Henle Urtext



By far the rarest type of articulation found in the Op. 10 études is the heavy *staccato*, indicated by vertical wedges over the notes. Chopin uses this type of articulation in No. 9, bar 4 (Example 3.6). In this passage, Chopin indicated *con forza* in the middle of the phrase, in the preceding bar. The heavy *staccato* on the final note of the phrase seems to indicate that the composer did not want the pianist to back away too much from the phrase ending.

Example 3.6: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 9, bars 1-6, Henle *Urtext*

9. *Allegro molto agitato* ♩ = 96

p legatissimo *cresc.* *con forza*

5 4 4 4 5 4

Ped. * *Ped.* * *Ped.* * *Ped.* *

4 *segue*

The tenth of the Op. 10 études challenges the performer with its range of notated articulations. In this étude, Chopin experiments with different articulations to add variety to a single musical pattern (Example 3.7). In the first bar, Chopin groups the twelve quavers in pairs, as opposed to the groups of three that one would expect in a 12/8 meter. The top note of each pair in the right hand is slurred to the lower note. Each note in the pair is separated by the interval of a seventh, so the pattern is clearly audible melodically. In bar three, he retains the same pattern but omits the slurs. Chopin changes the pattern of the accents in bar 5 so that the accents fall on every third quaver. Then, in bar 9, he omits the accents but brings back the slurs. These slurs once again group the quavers in pairs; however, here the bottom note is slurred to the top note in contrast to the slurring pattern of the opening bars. Both the accents and the slurs disappear in bar 13 when Chopin, still retaining the same basic pitch structure, changes the articulation to staccato. By bar 13, he has covered quite a lot of ground in terms of types of articulation. This articulative play in fact continues throughout the étude.

Example 3.7: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 10, bars 1-14, Henle *Urtext*

10. *f*
legatissimo

3

6 *cresc.* *f* *dim.*

9 *p*
legatissimo

12 *staccato* *cresc.*

While these études are themselves studies in articulation, Chopin used other methods to build his students' skills in articulation. In order to help them learn to achieve the nuanced subtleties that his music required, Chopin spent a great deal of time instilling proper finger placement in his students. For Chopin, the most natural,

‘normal’ position of the fingers was with the five fingers resting on E, F#, G#, A# and B.¹³ With this position, the shorter fingers fall on the white keys, and the longer fingers fall on the black keys. Using this ‘normal’ position as home base, Chopin prescribed a series of exercises designed to develop the muscle mechanics necessary to produce various types of articulation. In order, he passed from staccato to heavy staccato, to accented legato and finally to legato.¹⁴ That legato was the last type of articulation to be studied speaks to the difficulty of producing a Chopin-quality legato tone. It is worth noting that these four gradations of articulation parallel the four types set out in the Parisian piano treatises discussed above.¹⁵

Through his finger exercises, Chopin helped his students develop a suppleness and freedom of movement, not only of the fingers but of the entire arm. For example, Jan Kleczynski noted that after faithfully practising Chopin’s articulation exercises, he was able to pass his thumb easily under any of his other fingers, without changing the horizontal position of his hand.¹⁶ In his draft for a piano method, Chopin asserts the necessity of the freedom of movement:

Everything is a matter of knowing good fingering. ... Just as we need to use the conformation of the fingers, we need no less to use the rest of the hand, the wrist, the forearm and the upper arm. One cannot try to play everything from the wrist, as Kalkbrenner claims.¹⁷

¹³ Jean [Jan] Kleczynski, *How to Play Chopin: The Works of Frédéric Chopin, Their Proper Interpretation*, trans. Alfred Whittingham (London: William Reeves, 1913), 34.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁵ See page 69.

¹⁶ Jan Kleczynski (1837-1895) was a prominent Polish pianist and pedagogue. From 1859 to 1866, he studied at the Paris Conservatory. Although he never worked directly with Chopin, he did study with teachers who had close ties to the composer. During his time in Paris, the spelling of Kleczynski’s first name was often rendered ‘Jean’. The Fryderyk Chopin Institute, ‘Jan Kleczyński’ <<http://en.chopin.nifc.pl/chopin/persons/detail/name/kleczyński/id/524>> [accessed 22 December 2013]; Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by his Pupils*, trans. Naomi Shohet, ed. Roy Howat (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 102; Kleczynski, *How to Play Chopin*, 29-32.

¹⁷ Frédéric Chopin, Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 18.

A bronze cast of Chopin's left hand at the Hunterian Museum & Art Gallery Collections in Glasgow resembles fingers that are long and slender and although Chopin was not of immense stature (1.70m),¹⁸ he was capable of performing all the chords and arpeggios in his music with great ease.¹⁹ In addition, there appeared to be an extraordinary flexibility in his hands, a quality that fascinated witnesses.²⁰ For example, Stephen Heller told the music critic James Huneker that, 'It was a wonderful sight to see Chopin's small hands expand and cover a third of the keyboard. It was like the opening of the mouth of a serpent about to swallow a rabbit whole'.²¹

Fingerings

Through these articulation exercises, Chopin was not trying to develop equality among all of the fingers. Instead, he asserted that each finger was different and produced a distinctive sound quality, noting there are 'as many different sounds as there are fingers'.²² This concern with the individuality of the fingers led Chopin to adopt some unconventional fingering principles, which he passed on in his first editions, manuscripts and autographs, as well as in the scores his pupils used while learning his compositions.²³ For example, he freely used thumbs on the black keys; he allowed the third, fourth, and fifth fingers to cross over each other; he used the

¹⁸ John G. O'Shea, 'Was Frédéric Chopin's illness actually cystic fibrosis?', *The Medical Journal of Australia* 147 (1987), 586.

¹⁹ James Methuen-Campbell, 'Chopin in performance', in Jim Samson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 193.

²⁰ Hunterian Museum & Art Gallery Collections <<http://www.huntsearch.gla.ac.uk/cgi-bin/foxweb/huntsearch/DetailedResults.fwx?collection=all&searchTerm=112086&mdaCode=GLAHM>> [accessed 14 December 2015].

²¹ James Huneker, *Chopin: The Man and his Music* (New York: Dover, 1966), 40.

²² Frédéric Chopin, *Projet de Méthode* (unpublished); quoted and translated in Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 17.

²³ Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 19 n. 38.

same finger for successive notes; and he passed the fifth finger over the thumb.²⁴ On several occasions, Chopin used the thumb on the most expressive notes of a phrase. Through the use of the thumb on these important notes, they become slightly detached and stand out from the rest of the phrase.²⁵ Chopin also used finger substitution in certain passages to sustain a legato melody.²⁶ Finger substitution is a technique commonly associated with harpsichordists and organists, and, as noted, Chopin had taken some organ lessons with Wilhelm Würfel during his childhood in Warsaw.²⁷ These fingerings often help to produce the distinctive tone colour and articulation that he sought in a specific passage.²⁸

One such unconventional fingering recommended by Chopin was the use of the thumbs on black keys. This fingering pervades the étude Op. 10 No. 5, colloquially known as the black key étude. Because the upper line uses exclusively the black keys, with the exception of an F natural in bar 66, the performer has no choice but to strike the black keys with his thumb if he or she is to use it at all. Chopin does not wait long before introducing this unconventional fingering. By the third note of the étude, the thumb is already participating in the black-key virtuosic passage (Example 3.8)

²⁴ Ibid., 19-20.

²⁵ Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 366.

²⁶ Alan Walker, 'Chopin: The Voice of the Piano', *The American Music Teacher* 59 (2010), 24.

²⁷ Kornel Michałowski and Jim Samson, 'Chopin, Fryderyk Franciszek', *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online (Oxford University Press)

<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51099>> [accessed 23 November 2013]; See Chapter 2, page 29.

²⁸ Rosen, *The Romantic Generation*, 371.

Example 3.8: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 5, bars 1-2, Henle *Urtext*

Another unconventional fingering that Chopin introduced to piano technique was the crossing of the third, fourth and fifth fingers. Nowhere is this idiosyncrasy more evident than in Op. 10 No. 2. Throughout much of this étude, the pianist uses only the third, fourth and fifth fingers for the top line as he or she executes rapid, brilliant chromatic semiquavers (Example 3.9). What makes this étude sit well in the hand, despite the unconventional fingering, is that Chopin uses the short fifth finger on only white keys, causing less distortion of the hand as the fifth finger does not have to stretch and the wrist does not have to rotate to reach a black key.

Example 3.9: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 2, bars 1-4, Henle *Urtext*

At times, Chopin called for the use of the same finger for successive notes. In legato passages in particular, this requires extreme attention to articulation and can pose challenges to the performer. While alternate fingerings might be available,

performers might consider the technical and musical gains they can make by attempting to execute Chopin's suggested fingering and articulation. One example of this type of passage is found in Op. 10 No. 3 (Example 3.10).

Example 3.10: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 3, bars 5-9, Henle *Urtext*



In this example, the pianist uses the thumb of the right hand consecutively for the pitches A-B-A-B in the second half of bar 8.²⁹ This passage comes just before the opening melodic line returns in bar 9, and the pianist must strive to maintain the legato quality of the accompaniment figure while allowing for a feeling of repose and breath that comes at the end of the phrase. Another unconventional fingering Chopin advocated was the passing of the fifth finger over the thumb – for example, in descending passage work for the right hand – or conversely the thumb under the fifth finger – for example, in ascending passage work for the right hand. This type of fingering, which requires both a freedom of movement and a lack of tension in the fingers, hand and wrist, does not appear in the Op. 10 études. It does, however, appear in Op. 25 No. 11 (Example 3.11).

²⁹ While this use of the thumb is not expressly indicated in either the French or the German first editions, it is present in the English first edition. Mikuli also includes this fingering in his edition of the études. Rink, 'Chopin's First Editions Online'; Carl Mikuli (ed.), *Chopin Complete Works for the Piano* viii (New York: G. Schirmer, 1916).

Example 3.11: Chopin, Étude Op. 25 No. 11, bar 67, Henle *Urtext*

67

The first of the Op. 10 études challenges the pianist in terms of fingering.

Throughout the étude, Chopin requires the right hand to expand, using the second finger as a pivot, to reach intervals as large as a tenth. In certain passages, such as the one beginning in bar 27 (Example 3.12), this recommended fingering can be quite difficult to accomplish.

Example 3.12: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 1, bars 27-32, Henle *Urtext*

27

30

Charles Rosen remarks that many pianists alter Chopin's fingering in this passage.³⁰

With Chopin's fingering, the thumb always executes the lowest note in any given octave of the arpeggiated figuration. By having the strong, heavy thumb play the lowest note, the figure is grounded. The relatively weaker fifth finger gains strength

³⁰ Rosen, *The Romantic Generation*, 364.

by playing the pitches that occur on the beat, pitches that have a natural accent.

Chopin helps the weak fifth finger by writing accents on the first semiquaver of each beat.³¹

Chopin was aware of the physical differences among the fingers, and, instead of trying to equalise these differences through exercises, he worked to cultivate them and exploit them for their sound possibilities. These goals are negated when a pianist alters the fingering without considering the effect on phrasing and articulation. Some might argue that Chopin's fingering, at least in the passage in Example 3.12, can be too difficult or painful to execute by pianists without large hands.³² Despite Chopin's very flexible hand and natural ability to execute the études, by practising his suggested fingerings, pianists can develop a flexibility and freedom of movement that can enable them to play with more ease, and which can serve them in other repertoire as well.

Pianist and composer Jan Ekier states that Chopin's fingering is 'based on the principle of the relaxation, flexibility, and calmness of the hand.'³³ Ekier questioned the value of Chopin's fingering today, especially in the Études:

Is its topicality affected by the changed parameters of modern pianos? Does its application depend, and to what degree, on the size of the pianist's hands, its anatomic build and functionality?³⁴

³¹ These accents appear in the first two bars, when the fingering principle is being established.

³² Rosen, *The Romantic Generation*, 364.

³³ Ekier was winner of the eighth prize in the Third International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw in 1937; Jan Ekier, *Performance Commentary*, 3 in Fryderyk Chopin, *Étude Op. 10, 25*, ii, edited by Jan Ekier (Warsaw: PWM, 2000).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

Some of Ekier's conclusions suggest that some études are 'inconceivable' without the fingering indications made by Chopin, for instance, Études Op. 10 No. 1, Op. 10 No. 7, Op. 10 No. 8, Op. 10 No. 10, and Op. 10 No. 12. In certain études where the fingering lies naturally in the hand, Chopin did not mark fingering, while in other études fingering was marked but only to be regarded as possibilities. In this case Ekier suggests that Chopin left the choice of fingering to the discretion of the performer.³⁵ These remarks are more evident for those pieces regarded as virtuoso études, in which the fingering could be described as technical. Another type of fingering is the 'expressive' fingering used in melodic parts; it should never be altered.³⁶ Chopin asserted:

Each finger is formed differently, and this is why one should not destroy the charm of striking with a particular finger, but, on the contrary, try to develop it ... There are as many different types of sound as the number of our fingers ... The third finger is the great singer.³⁷

Contrary to developing freedom and flexibility of movement by using Chopin's fingering suggestions, Ekier believes that a pianist should verify the usefulness of the Chopinesque indications, and if discomfort occurs, then the pianist should try editorial fingering or an individual approach (Example 3.13). However, the performer should compare the altered fingering with that of the original so that the final sound is similar to that suggested by Chopin.³⁸

³⁵ For example, Étude Op. 10 No. 2, Op. 10 No. 4, Op. 10 No. 5, and Op. 10 No. 9.

³⁶ A variety of 'expressive' fingering is the 'expressive-articulation,' where a repetition of consecutive melodic notes is repeated by the same finger.

³⁷ Frédéric Chopin, Jan Ekier, *Performance Commentary*, 3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

Example 3.13: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 1, bars 30-32 and 35-36, Henle *Urtext*

Pedalling

Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger remarks that Chopin's sound aesthetic found its perfect match with the pedal mechanism of Pleyel pianos.³⁹ English and French piano manufacturers, such as Broadwood and Pleyel, had developed technology that allowed the use of the damper pedal to prolong the resonance of bass notes considerably.⁴⁰ This development, along with the sound quality of the *una corda* pedal, allowed for the distinctive sound quality of Chopin's music.

The prolonged resonance of bass notes, in particular, permitted Chopin to explore new territory with regard to left-hand accompaniment patterns. By using the damper pedal, the pianist could fill in left-hand accompaniment patterns while the bass note continued to sound. Chopin could use a larger range of pitches without overly taxing the physical capacities of the hand. It should be noted, however, that Chopin's

³⁹ Eigeldinger, 'Chopin and Pleyel', 393.

⁴⁰ Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 20. See Chapter 2, page 47.

keyboard was slightly narrower than modern grand pianos. The span of a tenth on a Pleyel is about one-quarter of an inch smaller than it is on a modern Steinway.⁴¹

Unfortunately, it is impossible to know with any certainty how Chopin used the pedals when he played. The extensive pedal markings he made in his autographs and in his student's scores demonstrate that he was greatly concerned with this aspect of piano technique.⁴² There are, however, numerous differences amongst the pedal markings in his autographs, corrected copies and numerous first editions. Sandra Rosenblum argues that Chopin's obvious concern with pedal markings coupled with the discrepancies amongst the primary sources reveals that Chopin favoured a more improvisatory approach to pedalling.⁴³

Another factor that must be considered is that Chopin gave different pedalling directions to different students. In some cases, he would modify his advice to suit the playing level of the particular student. For example, Chopin might give one piece of advice to an amateur pianist while saying the exact opposite to a professional-calibre pianist. In general, Chopin advised his students, most of whom were amateurs, to use the pedals sparingly and only when necessary to create the desired sound.⁴⁴ Here, it is important to remember Chopin's directive to his students about careful listening.⁴⁵

A clear mental image of the desired sound coupled with close listening to the actual sound produced can aid in the physical, technical achievement of the desired sound.

⁴¹ Maurice Hinson, 'Pedaling the piano works of Chopin', in Joseph Banowetz (ed.), *The Pianist's Guide to Pedaling* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 188.

⁴² Sandra P. Rosenblum, 'Some Enigmas of Chopin's Pedal Indications: What Do the Sources Tell Us?', *Journal of Musicological Research* 16 (1996), 42.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴⁴ See Chapter 2, page 36; Raoul Koczalski, *Frédéric Chopin: Betrachtungen, Skizzen, Analysen* (Cologne: Tischer & Jagenberg, 1936), 13; quoted and translated in Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 57.

⁴⁵ See Chapter 2, page 37.

He did not want his students to use the pedals to help with dynamic shadings. For example, one of his students recounted a bit of Chopin's pedalling advice: 'Learn to make a *diminuendo* without the help of the [*una corda*] pedal; you can add it later'.⁴⁶

In many of his scores, Chopin carefully notated the depressing and the raising of the damper pedal. Both of these types of indications can be clearly seen in the manuscript for the Op. 10 No. 7 étude housed at the Morgan Library & Museum.⁴⁷ He did not, however, include notations for the use of the *una corda* pedal.⁴⁸ Instead, he provided verbal and written guidelines to his students for the use of this pedal. One particular context in which he favoured the use of the *una corda* pedal was in enharmonic modulations. Kleczynski reports that Chopin advised switching between the damper and the *una corda* pedal on the modulation.⁴⁹ He provided further examples of cases where Chopin advocated switching between the damper and *una corda* pedals:

We arrive at the combination of the two pedals, at which Chopin excelled to perfection. How well we know these musical flourishes which are so attractive to the ear, with the soft pedal (the Nocturne in F sharp, Op. 15 No. 2, second part, the Nocturne in D flat, Op. 27, No. 2, etc., etc.). Chopin would often pass from the hard (damper) pedal to the soft almost instantaneously, particularly in discordant variations of pitch. These had a very special fascination, chiefly on the Pleyel pianos. Examples are: the first measure of the *larghetto* in the Concerto in F minor on the note E flat; the Polonaise in C minor, Op. 40, No. 2, at the moment of returning to the motif of the trio; the Mazurka in A minor, Op. 17 (No. 4), eighth measure; the Polonaise in C-sharp minor, Op. 26, No. 1, second part, ninth measure, and so on.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Quote attributed to August Franchomme, quoted and translated in Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 57.

⁴⁷ Frédéric Chopin, *Etudes, Piano, Op. 10 No. 7* autograph manuscript, US-NYpm MA 2473, <<http://www.themorgan.org/music/manuscript/114340>> [accessed 8 November 2013].

⁴⁸ Hinson, 'Pedaling the piano works of Chopin', 180-181.

⁴⁹ Jan Kleczynski, *Frédéric Chopin, de l'interprétation de ses oeuvres* (Paris: Macker, 1880), 44-45; quoted and translated in Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 58.

⁵⁰ Hinson, 'Pedaling the piano works of Chopin', 181.

Reports on Chopin's own playing provide further information about the composer's use of the pedals. For instance, Antoine François Marmontel recounted the following:

Chopin used the pedals with marvellous discretion. He often coupled them to obtain a soft and veiled sonority, but more often still he would use them separately for brilliant passages, for sustained harmonies, for deep bass notes, and for loud ringing chords. Or he would use the soft pedal alone for those light murmurings which seem to create a transparent vapour round the arabesque that embellished the melody and envelop it like a fine lace. The timbre produced by the pedals on Pleyel pianos has a perfect sonority, and the dampers work with a precision very useful for chromatic and modulating passages; this quality is precious and absolutely indispensable.⁵¹

One characteristic of Chopin's pedalling that was frequently remarked upon was his flutter pedalling. This technique allowed the pitches' sound to sustain, without resulting in a loss of clarity of the line.⁵² This type of pedalling, in which the pianist rapidly flutters his or her foot on the pedal, is particularly effective for clearing out non-chord tones, dissonances and thick textures, without losing much in the way of volume or sustained sound.⁵³

The primary sources for the Chopin études contain extensive pedal markings in some cases, though these markings often differ among the various sources. When Chopin indicated the use of the damper pedal, he clearly marked both the depression and the release of the pedal. On occasion, the pedal is used with great predictability and regularity as in Op. 10 No. 1 (Example 3.14).

⁵¹ Antoine François Marmontel, *Les pianistes célèbres* (Paris: Heugel, 1878), 4-5; quoted and translated in Eigeldinger, 'Chopin and Pleyel', 393.

⁵² Walker, 'Chopin: The Voice of the Piano', 24.

⁵³ Hinson, 'Pedaling the piano works of Chopin', 196

Example 3.14: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 1, bars 1-8, Henle *Urtext*

The image displays the first eight bars of Chopin's Étude Op. 10 No. 1. The score is written for piano and is in 3/4 time. It is marked 'Allegro' with a tempo of quarter note = 176. The tempo is 'legato' and the dynamics are 'f'. The score is for piano (Opus 10 Nr. 1). It shows the first system (bars 1-2), the second system (bars 3-4), and the third system (bars 5-8). The right hand features sweeping arpeggios with fingerings (1-5) and accents. The left hand has long, held notes with a 'Ped.' marking. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

This étude is notable for its expansive range. A distance of six and a half octaves separates the lowest note and the highest note of the piece. Throughout the étude, the long, held notes in the left hand ground the sweeping arpeggios in the right hand. In example 3.14, the pedal follows the harmonic rhythm, underlined by the movement in the left hand, so that the rapidly executed arpeggios in the right hand create a wash of sound. Although it is not indicated in the score, flutter pedalling would be an acceptable interpretative choice in bar 5, where the non-chord tones in the bass can muddy the clear harmonies in the right hand.

In some passages, the pedal helps the pianist execute difficult accompanimental patterns, particularly those like the pattern found at the beginning of Op. 10 No. 9, that encompass a large range (Example 3.15).

Example 3.15: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 9, bars 1-9, Henle *Urtext*

Allegro molto agitato ♩ = 96

9. *p legatissimo* *cresc.* *con forza*

4 *rit. tenuto* *a tempo*

7 *cresc.* *sotto voce* *sempre legatissimo*

Ped. ** Ped.* ** Ped.* ** Ped.* ** Ped.* ** Ped.* ** Ped.* ** Ped.* ** Ped.*

In this example, the accompaniment in the first bars spans almost two octaves.

Without the damper pedal, it would be almost impossible to achieve the *legatissimo* quality that Chopin demands.

In the opening of the tenth étude, Chopin couples a staccato articulation in the bass with the use of the damper pedal (Example 3.16). The first quaver on beats one and three receives a staccato dot, while the remaining quavers are slurred together. This precise articulation coupled with the pedal that is sustained throughout the bar adds a lightness to the accompaniment pattern that Chopin marked *legatissimo*.

Example 3.16: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 10, bar 1, Henle *Urtext*



Nowhere in the Op. 10 études does Chopin call for the use of the *una corda* pedal. Based on the reports of his students and of Marmontel cited above, however, one can infer places in the études where its use might be appropriate.⁵⁴ The *una corda* pedal might be suitable in portions of the third étude, with its lyrical melodic line accompanied by a murmuring-like pattern in the inner voice (Example 3.17). It could be argued that the use of the *una corda* pedal makes even more sense in this context given the absence of any sort of pedal markings at the opening of this étude.

Example 3.17: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 3, bars 1-4, Henle *Urtext*



Phrasing

In his teaching and playing, Chopin placed a great deal of emphasis on phrasing. According to evidence collected by Eigeldinger, the composer often resorted to analogies to language structure when describing musical phrasing.⁵⁵ In this respect,

⁵⁴ See pages 86-87.

⁵⁵ Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 42.

the composer was not alone: concern with the relationship between music and language or rhetoric was a common concern during the early nineteenth century. For example, Pierre-Joseph-Guillaume Zimmerman wrote:⁵⁶

Merely to play correctly is to speak well in order to say nothing. In repetitions or sequential progressions within a passage, expression itself must be progressive, for it is useless to repeat the same idea (musical or otherwise) several times if the repetition doesn't bring with it a greater degree of persuasion or emotion. In piano music, the meaning not being fixed by words, the nuances, the expression sometimes become arbitrary; two contrary versions are able to be equally good. What is bad is the absence of intention, for uniformity is frigidity, and with it no effect is possible; the music becomes a monotonous warbling which is only able to produce boredom.⁵⁷

Chopin's analogies directly relate musical phrase structure to sentence structure. Chopin's student Kleczynski recounted how the composer would break down an eight-bar phrase according to how a sentence would be punctuated:

In a musical phrase composed of something like eight measures, the end of the eighth will generally mark the termination of the thought, that which, in language written or spoken, we should indicate by a full-point; here we should make a slight pause and lower the voice. The secondary divisions of this phrase of eight measures, occurring after each two or each four measures, require shorter pauses – that is to say, they require commas or semi-colons. These pauses are of great importance; without them, music becomes a succession of sounds without connection, an incomprehensible chaos, as spoken language would be if not regard were paid to punctuation and the inflection of the voice.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Pierre-Joseph-Guillaume Zimmerman (1783-1853) was a noted pianist and pedagogue. In Paris, he lived next door to Chopin, and he was the head of the piano department at the Conservatory. In 1840, he published his *Encyclopédie du pianiste compositeur*, a treatise that codifies the technical approach of the Paris school of piano playing. Jonathan Bellman, 'Chopin and his Imitators: Notated Emulations of the "True Style" of Performance', *19th-Century Music* 24 (2000), 152.

⁵⁷ Pierre-Joseph-Guillaume Zimmerman, *L'Encyclopédie du Pianiste Compositeur* (Paris: L'Auteur, 1840), 58; quoted and translated in Bellman, 'Chopin and his Imitators', 152.

⁵⁸ Kleczyński, *How to Play Chopin*, 49-50.

Chopin provided some specific guidelines to his students on how to phrase music, and recollections of these lessons appear in Kleczynski's writings. In general, longer notes, higher-pitched notes, dissonances, syncopations and the first note of each bar were seen to be stronger than the surrounding notes, while phrase endings were weak.⁵⁹ Bellman interprets these guidelines, as reported by Kleczynski, in a different manner. He contends that Kleczynski wrongly attributes these sentiments to Chopin and that these sorts of ideas would never have worked in Chopin's aesthetic.⁶⁰ However, in many cases, the suggestions make musical sense. If these indications are understood as suggested guidelines, not as rules, the performer can learn quite a lot about interpreting Chopin's music. When musically warranted, these guidelines do not need to be followed.

Chopin's love of the *bel canto* style, with its emphasis on declamation and dramatic expression, makes perfect sense in light of his connecting music to language. From a very early age, Chopin was enamoured with the fluid, expressive style exemplified in the works of Vincenzo Bellini and Gaetano Donizetti as well as in the singing of Giovanni Battista Rubini and Giuditta Pasta.⁶¹ Indeed, in bringing *bel canto* aesthetics into the piano repertoire, Chopin focused on breathing, making the piano breathe in such a way that the instrument could be said to sing. He also instructed his students on how to use the movements of the body to achieve proper phrasing and a singing quality.

⁵⁹ Jan Kleczynski, *Chopin's Greater Works: Preludes, Ballads, Nocturnes, Polonaises, Mazurkas*, trans. Natalie Janotha (London: William Reeves, 1896), 41.

⁶⁰ Bellman, 'Chopin and his Imitators', 153.

⁶¹ Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 15. The Italian composers Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835) and Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848) exemplify the *bel canto* style in their compositions. Prominent interpreters associated with this style include the Italian tenor Giovanni Battista Rubini (1794-1854) and the Italian soprano Giuditta Pasta (1797-1865).

For Chopin, the key was the wrist, as he once noted, ‘the wrist: respiration in the voice’.⁶² By this, Chopin seems to mean that the wrist has the same function for a pianist as the breath does for a singer. To parallel the breath at the end of a vocal line, Chopin advocated breathing with the wrist, lifting it slightly from the keyboard at the end of each phrase.⁶³ In the scores of some of his students, particularly those of Madame Dubois, Chopin wrote oblique strokes at key moments. Eigeldinger remarks that these lines, which function like breath marks in vocal scores, mark where the wrist should be lifted slightly from the keyboard.⁶⁴ With respect to the suppleness of the wrist, Chopin betrays his indebtedness to harpsichord technique. Jean-Philippe Rameau wrote, ‘The wrist must always be supple. This suppleness, which spreads to the fingers, gives them freedom and all necessary lightness’.⁶⁵

Chopin included detailed phrasing indications in the Op. 10 études. As noted above, Chopin instructed his students that, in general, longer notes, higher-pitched notes, syncopations and dissonances tended to be stronger than the surrounding pitches.⁶⁶ The opening of Op. 10 No. 3 (Example 3.17 above) includes numerous crescendos and decrescendos that spell out these general tendencies for the performer. Chopin also instructed that phrase endings are typically weak. Generally in the études he indicated diminuendos on phrase endings, as in bar 8 of No. 2 (Example 3.18).

⁶² Frédéric Chopin, *Projet de Méthode* (unpublished); quoted and translated in Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 45.

⁶³ Kleczynski, *Frédéric Chopin, de l'interprétation de ses oeuvres*, 55; quoted and translated in Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 45.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 112, n. 79.

⁶⁵ Jean-Philippe Rameau, ‘De la mécanique des doigts sur le clavecin’, in *Pièces de clavecin*; quoted and translated in Charles Timbrell, *French Pianism: A Historical Perspective* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1999), 35-36.

⁶⁶ See page 92.

Here, Chopin emphasises the arrival on bar 4 with a wedge on top of the note along with *con forza*, and he writes a crescendo into bar 8, the last bar of the phrase.

Dynamics

As noted, the volume of sound produced by the Pleyel pianos that Chopin preferred was quite small.⁶⁷ Chopin used this softness and the high degree of nuance these pianos were capable of producing to his benefit. Consider this laudatory review of Chopin's own playing written by Hector Berlioz:

In order to appreciate him fully, I believe he has to be heard from close by, in the salons rather than the concert hall, with all preconceived notions put aside as these would be inapplicable to both him and his music ... There are unbelievable details in his Mazurkas; and he has found how to render them doubly interesting by playing them with the utmost degree of softness, *piano* to the extreme, the hammers merely brushing the strings, so much so that one is tempted to go close to the instrument and put one's ear to it as if to a concert of sylphs or elves.⁶⁸

It is interesting to note that Berlioz remarks on his temptation to get closer to the piano in order to listen more carefully to the music. As noted, Chopin cultivated a high degree of listening sensitivity in his students.⁶⁹ It appears, with this review by Berlioz, that when his sought-after sound quality was achieved, listeners were prompted to listen more closely and carefully to the sound quality without being distracted by the performer's technical feats.

The soft sound of the Pleyel pianos, however, does not mean that all of Chopin's music should be played with softer dynamic levels. He frequently indicated

⁶⁷ See Chapter 2, page 45.

⁶⁸ Hector Berlioz, 'Revue musicale: concerts', *Le rénovateur*, 15 December 1833; quoted and translated in Eigeldinger, 'Chopin and Pleyel', 391.

⁶⁹ See Chapter 2, page 37.

fortissimo passages in his scores, and even noted two *fff* passages in the Polonaises Op. 26 No. 1 (Example 3.20a) and Op. 40 No. 1 (Example 3.20b).⁷⁰

Example 3.20a: Chopin, Polonaise Op. 26 No. 1, bars 1-3, Schirmer Mikuli

Allegro appassionato.

Example 3.20b: Chopin, Polonaise Op. 40 No. 1, bars 61-66, Schirmer, Mikuli

The Op. 10 études present a wide variety of dynamic shadings from *ppp* to *fff*. Individual études range from *pp* to *fff* (No. 4) and from *ppp* to *ff* (No. 9). In No. 9, particularly, these dynamic shadings occur quickly, necessitating a great amount of control on the part of the performer. Take, for example, the final seven bars of this étude (Example 3.21).

⁷⁰ Methuen-Campbell, 'Chopin in performance', 192.

Example 3.21: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 9, bars 61-67, Henle *Urtext*

In these bars, the pianist must change the dynamic levels abruptly from *f* in bar 61 to *pp* in bar 62 to create an echo effect. Although the dynamic level in bar 61 is marked as *ff* in the Polish Complete Edition, all of the first editions have *f* marked in that bar.⁷¹ The process repeats in the following two bars, moving from *ff* to *pp*, before drifting off to the *ppp* conclusion.

Modern performers do not always abide by Chopin's dynamic markings, even when he is quite clear about his intentions. For example, in Op. 10 No. 1 when Chopin brings back the opening idea in the tonic key in bar 49, he prepares for this arrival by writing a diminuendo in bar 48 (Example 3.22). Bars 47 and 48 contain an E major sonority, a sonority that is far removed from the home key of C major. He slides surreptitiously to C major, by way of a second inversion G dominant seventh chord on the final beat of bar 48. The return of C major is something of a surprise, and the

⁷¹ Rink, 'Chopin's First Editions Online'.

effect of this surprise is lessened if the performer does not perform Chopin's requested diminuendo.

Example 3.22: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 1, bars 45-50, Henle *Urtext*

With regard to dynamic shading of phrases, Chopin recommended that the dynamics follow the contour of the melody. When the melody ascends, a crescendo should be played; and when the melody descends, a decrescendo would be appropriate.⁷² However, as with his guidelines on phrasing,⁷³ these should be read as suggestions, not rules, and the performer can depart from the normal manner for interpretive reasons.

Tempo and Rhythm

Choosing an appropriate tempo is an important interpretive decision. Chopin provided some guidance, at least for a good portion of his works. He, like many composers of his generation, was enamoured with Johann Maelzel's 1816 invention, even insisting that his students work consistently with a metronome.⁷⁴ Chopin

⁷² Kleczynski, *Chopin's Greater Works*, 41.

⁷³ See page 92.

⁷⁴ Johann Nepomuk Maelzel (1772-1838) was a German inventor and engineer. Maelzel met Diedrich

included metronome markings in many of his compositions up until 1836, when he discontinued this practice.⁷⁵ For many modern performers, his indicated tempos seem quite fast, particularly in the works with quick tempos. It must be remembered that accomplishing these quick tempos would have been much easier on Chopin's Pleyel, with its light action.⁷⁶ This is particularly true in quick works that feature active left-hand accompaniment patterns.⁷⁷ James Methuen-Campbell reminds modern performers that aiming for clear articulation and texture will give the impression of playing more quickly and will approximate the sound produced during Chopin's time.⁷⁸ Modern pianists have a tendency to slow down works with slower tempos and, at times, this distorts the metrical character of the works.⁷⁹

Chopin was quite consistent in calling for precise metronome markings in his early works, including the Op. 10 études. The autographs of Nos. 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 contain metronome markings, and Chopin provided markings for the remaining études of the collection in his corrections to the publisher's proofs.⁸⁰ These metronome markings are summarised in Table 3.1.

Winkel in Amsterdam in 1812, and together they worked on a pendulum chronometer. Winkel's contribution to the invention was designing a double pendulum, with a fixed weight on the bottom and a sliding weight near the top. Thanks to a spring-driven mechanism, the pendulum would keep swinging at a constant rate of speed. Maelzel added a scale of values to the invention and convinced several prominent musicians, including Beethoven, to endorse the machine for which he had secured patents. Paul Metzner, *Crescendo of the Virtuoso: Spectacle, Skill, and Self-Promotion in Paris during the Age of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 182-185; Rosen, *The Romantic Generation*, 414.

⁷⁵ Thomas Higgins, 'Tempo and Character in Chopin', *The Musical Quarterly* 59 (1973), 106.

⁷⁶ Methuen-Campbell, 'Chopin in performance', 191. See Chapter 2, page 53.

⁷⁷ Higgins, 'Tempo and Character in Chopin', 115.

⁷⁸ Methuen-Campbell, 'Chopin in performance', 192.

⁷⁹ See Chapter 4, pages 134-135.

⁸⁰ Higgins, 'Tempo and Character in Chopin', 107.

Table 3.1 Tempo and Metronome Markings in Chopin, Études Op. 10⁸¹

| Étude | Tempo | Metronome Marking |
|-------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Allegro | ♩ = 176 |
| 2 | Allegro | ♩ = 144 |
| 3 | Lento ma non troppo | ♩ = 100 |
| 4 | Presto con fuoco | ♩ = 88 |
| 5 | Vivace brillante | ♩ = 116 |
| 6 | Andante con molto espressione | ♩. = 69 |
| 7 | Vivace | ♩. = 84 |
| 8 | Allegro | ♩ = 88 |
| 9 | Allegro molto agitato | ♩. = 96 |
| 10 | Vivace assai | ♩. = 152 |
| 11 | Allegretto | ♩ = 76 |
| 12 | Allegro con fuoco | ♩ = 160 |

Performers should consider the tempo and metronome markings for these études. As Thomas Higgins notes, Chopin spent a great deal of time thinking about these aspects of the score and searching for the combination of tempo indication and metronome marking that would produce his desired effect.⁸² Higgins remarks that although it can never be known for certain at which point in the compositional process Chopin added the tempo and character indications, evidence points to his adding these indications very close to the time of publication. Higgins attributes these late additions to Chopin's thoughtful consideration of which combination of tempo marking and character indication would bring about the desired result in performance.⁸³ Most of these indications are quite a bit faster than the tempos at which modern performers play the études.⁸⁴ With the faster études – such as numbers 1, 8 and 10 – slowing down the tempo makes sense in some situations. For example, if the études were to be played on a heavy modern instrument in a large concert hall,

⁸¹ Ibid., 118-119.

⁸² Ibid., 110.

⁸³ Ibid., 109-110.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 114.

a slower tempo would allow for the same clarity of texture that Chopin's Pleyel, with its light touch, would have produced in a smaller room. However, many modern performers reduce the tempo of the slower études, numbers 3 and 6 specifically.⁸⁵ Rosen, for one, remarks that modern performers typically perform the sixth étude at approximately half Chopin's desired speed. When played this slowly, he argues, the étude loses its character as an étude and becomes more nocturne-like. It also destroys the meter of the piece, transforming it from a piece with two beats per bar to one with six, and lessens the pedagogical value of contending with the chromatic inner voice.⁸⁶ While these études seem to have an almost nocturne-like feel about them, it appears – from the composer's metronome markings – that he did not want them to be too slow. In fact, playing them at Chopin's tempo gives the melodies more of a sustained, singing quality that can be lost at slower speeds.

Ekier argues that the majority of the études are played in narrower or wider tempo zones, containing the Chopinesque tempi inside. For instance, in Étude Op. 10, No. 2 the performance zone would indicate that the performance zone is ♩ = 139-160, whereas the Chopinesque tempo would indicate ♩ = 144.⁸⁷ In some études the original tempo is found at the end of the performance zones. In other words, they will be performed in either the Chopinesque tempi or quicker or the Chopinesque tempi or slower.⁸⁸ Études that contain virtuoso elements – Op. 10 No. 9 and Op.10 No. 12 – should always be played in a tempo slower than the one suggested by the composer due to measures that would prove more difficult in modern instruments, which contain a heavier action, wider keys, and wider and deeper keyboards.⁸⁹ The

⁸⁵ Rosen, *The Romantic Generation*, 379.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 379-380.

⁸⁷ Ekier, *Performance Commentary*, 2.

⁸⁸ For example Étude Op. 10, No. 5; *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

expressive études – Op. 10 No. 3 and Op.10 No. 6 – are also played in slower tempi than those indicated by Chopin. In the Étude Op. 10 No. 6 the tempo becomes three times slower than the Chopin tempo and has a metronomic unit of ♩ = 69.⁹⁰ Ekier states that these changes in tempi could be the result of some ‘traditions’ that prevailed in the second half of the nineteenth century. These ‘traditions’ of a slow execution of the more complicated parts of the Étude could have been influenced by its instrumental and vocal transcriptions that usually overlooked the middle part.⁹¹ The modern conception of the Op. 10 No. 3 differs from that of Chopin and is shown in the first edition: the composition was marked as *Vivace*, whereas in the second edition it was marked *Vivace ma non troppo*.⁹² However, only in printed editions it appears that Chopin changed it to *Lento ma non troppo* while concurrently adding metronomic tempo.⁹³

Ekier draws several conclusions. First, metronome markings are abstract concepts, hence two performances of the same composition can create a sense of different tempi, dynamics, articulation, etc. Second, the performer should learn whether the metronome markings indicate the tempo of the whole composition or the beginning of the work, which proves important in the *rubato* in opening sections. Third, the tempo chosen by the performer is always intertwined with the actual tempo, even with deviations, depending on the character of the work. Finally, metronomic tempo has a variant meaning and the perception of the zone is an issue resolved by the performer. In other words, metronomic tempo is not a norm, ‘but an orientation.’⁹⁴

Despite Chopin’s insistence on using the metronome, he did not advocate a global mechanical treatment of rhythm. In fact, one of the primary characteristics of

⁹⁰ Ibid., 3; See also page 101..

⁹¹ In the same manner, there were transcriptions for cello that could have influenced the tradition of a slower tempo.

⁹² Ekier, *Performance Commentary*, 3.

⁹³ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 2.

Chopin's treatment of rhythm is his use of tempo *rubato*. In the early nineteenth century, this technique referred to any alteration of the pulse.⁹⁵ It manifested itself in two principal ways: as a slowing down or speeding up of both hands simultaneously (as in an *accelerando* or *ritardando*) or as an alteration of the tempo of the melodic line so that it becomes out of sync with the accompanying voice.

In general, for Chopin, tempo *rubato* meant that the left hand kept strict, almost metronomic, time, while the right hand was free to speed up or slow down according to the performer's interpretation.⁹⁶ This type of tempo *rubato*, termed asynchronous or *contrametric rubato*, continues an eighteenth-century tradition described by C. P. E. Bach. Although Pier Francesco Tosi briefly mentioned this type of *rubato* in 1723, he provided neither a detailed description nor musical examples. C. P. E. Bach provided the first complete description of this practice, saying:

When the execution is such that one hand appears to play against the meter while the other strikes all the beats precisely, then one has done everything that is necessary. Only very seldom are all parts struck simultaneously . . . Slow notes, caressing and sad thoughts [melodies] are the best for this. Dissonant harmonies are better suited to it than consonant passages. Proper execution of this tempo requires a great sense of judgment and an especially great sensitivity.⁹⁷

The practice of *contrametric rubato* passed through Franz Benda before Jan Ladislav Dussek and Chopin made use of it.⁹⁸ In his study of early recordings, Peres da Costa found that performers typically used this type of tempo *rubato*, in which the metrical

⁹⁵ Peres da Costa, *Off the Record*, 192.

⁹⁶ Mikuli, *Vorwort to Fr. Chopin's Pianoforte-Werke*; quoted and translated in Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 49.

⁹⁷ C. P. E. Bach, *Essay* (1787); quoted and translated in Sandra P. Rosenblum, *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music: Their Principles and Applications* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 374.

⁹⁸ Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice*, 378.

pulse of the right hand became out of sync with the left hand, in pieces that are slow and expressive. It was particularly common in performances of works where the melody and accompaniment are quite different from one another. This allows the melody to assume a rhythmic independence that the performer can translate into a metrical independence.⁹⁹

This type of tempo *rubato* is in direct contrast to another type that gained favour with most other composer-pianists. In his study of Classical and Romantic performance practice, Clive Brown notes that, in the nineteenth century, there was a gradual move towards a type of *rubato* in which the basic pulse slowed down or sped up.¹⁰⁰ By 1833, this practice had become widely expected by the public, as J. Feski remarked: ‘*Ritardando* and *accelerando* alternate all the time. This manner has already become so fixed in the minds of the musical public that they firmly believe a diminuendo must be slowed down and a *crescendo* speeded up’.¹⁰¹ Chopin also used this type of tempo *rubato*, as he indicated *strettos* and *ritardandos* in his scores. In Op. 10 No. 3, for example, he indicates a *stretto* in bar 7 and a *ritardando* in bar 8, at the end of the first phrase (Example 3.23).

⁹⁹ Peres da Costa, *Off the Record*, 48-50, 190.

¹⁰⁰ Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice*, 396.

¹⁰¹ J. Feski, *Caccilia* 15 (1833), 270; quoted and translated in Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice*, 384.

Example 3.23: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 3, bars 5-8, Henle *Urtext*

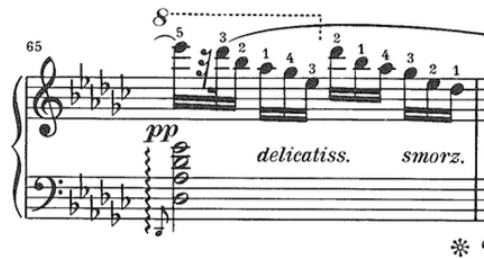


These two types of tempo *rubato* – one with a constant tempo in the left hand and the other with a constantly fluctuating tempo – require different amounts of technical competence from the pianist. In the case of the latter, both hands remain synchronised throughout the performance of a piece. This is a relatively easy effect to accomplish. In the former, however, the hands are asynchronous. If the left hand remains on the beat while the tempo of the right hand fluctuates, there will be moments when the two hands do not line up metrically. This requires independence of both hands and can be quite difficult to accomplish technically. What makes this practice even more difficult is that there are so few recorded examples to serve as models. In his study of nineteenth-century performance practice, Peres da Costa examined early recorded examples of piano repertoire. He found that pianists who had been trained in the late nineteenth century and during the twentieth century almost never engaged in this asynchronous type of tempo *rubato*. He did, however, uncover some recordings of pianists who had been trained in the mid nineteenth century. These pianists do use asynchronous tempo *rubato*, the type that Chopin preferred.¹⁰² Jan Ekier marks some rhythmic alterations on bar 65 of the Op. 10 No. 5 (Example 3.24). He suggests that Chopin was apparently more concerned with the introduction of a rest rather than the shortening of the second note, which could indicate a natural raising of the hand.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Peres da Costa, *Off the Record*, xxxii-xxxiii.

¹⁰³ Ekier, *Performance Commentary*, 4.

Example 3.24: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 5, bar 65, Henle *Urtext*



Ornaments

One final distinctive characteristic of Chopin's music is his use of ornaments, including trills, grace notes and *fioritura*. For ornamentation, Chopin was inspired by the types of ornamentation found in Italian opera, particularly in the da capo arias of the *bel canto* tradition.¹⁰⁴

With respect to trills, Chopin wanted most, but certainly not all, of the trills to begin with the upper note.¹⁰⁵ One exception to this rule is when a small note precedes the trill. If the small note is an upper appoggiatura, this indicates that the trill should begin on the upper note.¹⁰⁶ If the small note is the same as the principal note, the trill should begin on the principal note.¹⁰⁷ If there is no appoggiatura before the trill, the performer must decide whether to begin the trill with the principal note or with the auxiliary note. The Polish Complete Edition advises performers to choose the method of execution that best integrates the trill with the surrounding musical material.¹⁰⁸

Whether the trill began with the auxiliary note or the principal note, it should begin

¹⁰⁴ Michałowski and Samson, 'Chopin'.

¹⁰⁵ Camille Saint-Saëns, 'Quelques mots sur l'exécution des oeuvres de Chopin', *Le courrier musical* 13 (1910), 386-387; quoted and translated in Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 58.

¹⁰⁶ Ludwik Bronarski and Józef Turczyński, 'Commentary', in *Chopin Complete Works*, ii, Studies (Warsaw: The Fryderyk Chopin Institute Polish Music Publications, 1949), 133.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

on the beat.¹⁰⁹ Pianists should play the trills evenly, and the turns at the ends of the trills should be tranquil, as they are in *bel canto* singing.¹¹⁰

Chopin's use of grace notes likewise comes from his interest in *bel canto* opera.¹¹¹

Chopin often notated groups of grace notes that ornament themes when they reoccur in a piece.¹¹² Performers generally have a tendency to give these ornamental passages a good deal of rhetorical weight, emphasising them because of their difference from previous statements of the theme. This goes counter to what Chopin instructed his pupils. Kleczynski, for example, emphasises this characteristic of Chopin's music:

These ornamental passages, these *grupetti* of a certain number of notes, most frequently appear when the same motif returns several times; first the motif is heard in its simplicity; afterwards, surrounded with ornaments, richer and richer at each return. It is, therefore, necessary to render this motif with very nearly the same shadings, whatever may be the form in which it reappears. ... Again, these ornamental passages should not be slackened, but rather accelerated towards the end; a *rallentando* would invest them with too much importance, would make them appear to be special and independent ideas, whereas they are only fragments of the phrase, and, as such, should form part of the thought, and disappear in it like a little brook which loses itself in a great river. ... Chopin differed, in his manner of using arabesques and parenthetical ornamentations, from the usual manner of his time, which was to dwell upon such passages and to endue them with importance.¹¹³

This, again, should be read as a performance suggestion, not a rule. Performers could conceivably slow down the end of a *fioritura* if it makes sense musically and interpretatively. Ekier also suggests that grace notes should be sounded

¹⁰⁹ Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice*, 408.

¹¹⁰ Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 59.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 52.

¹¹³ Kleczynski, *How to Play Chopin*, 48-49.

simultaneously with the lower note of the third, as well as a corresponding note on the left hand, based on Chopin's indications (Example 3.25). In this example e1 is played together with B in the left hand.¹¹⁴

Example 3.25: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 3, bar 23, Henle *Urtext*



In terms of character, these ornamented sections, when performed by Chopin, had an almost ethereal, magical quality. Contemporaneous composers who imitated Chopin's style gave similar *fioritura* passages notations such as *con delicatezza* (gently), *scintillante* (sparkling), and *zaffiroso* (like a sapphire).¹¹⁵ Furthermore, Chopin notated variants to the *fioritura* in his students' scores. These lent an improvisatory, dreamy quality to the ornaments that was common in *bel canto* influenced piano music.¹¹⁶

Reports on Chopin's playing indicate that he advocated a great deal of improvisation with respect to ornaments. Mikuli reported to Koczalski that Chopin would add ornamental variants, particularly in his mazurkas and nocturnes.¹¹⁷ This evidence allows the modern performer some leeway with respect to ornamentation. Provided

¹¹⁴ Ekier, *Performance Commentary*, 4.

¹¹⁵ Bellman, 'Chopin and his Imitators', 157.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 157.

¹¹⁷ Koczalski, *Frédéric Chopin*, 203; quoted and translated in Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, 52. Koczalski studied with Mikuli, one of Chopin's students. He published information about playing the works of Chopin that he learned during his lessons with Mikuli. This is also evident in a recording by Koczalski of Chopin's Nocturne in E flat major, Op. 9 No. 2 <<https://youtu.be/VRmek8kADWA>> [accessed 5 January 2016].

the performer is familiar with Chopin's typical patterns of notated ornaments – where they occur and their pitch content – he or she can perhaps experiment with improvised ornaments.

The Op. 10 études do not contain an abundance of ornaments; however, those that do appear deserve careful consideration on the part of performers. In all of these études, there is one sole trill: the first note of No. 8 (Example 3.26).

Example 3.26: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 8, bars 1-2, Henle *Urtext*



According to the editors of the Polish Complete Edition, this trill should begin on the principal note, even though there is no appoggiatura that precedes it.¹¹⁸ While the editors do not explain this decision, it does make musical sense. The principal pitch of this trill is C, the dominant of F major. By starting the trill on C, the performer gives more importance to this note, which holds an important harmonic function.

The ninth étude contains several instances of mordents. These appear on the return of the principal melody in bar 37 (Example 3.27).

¹¹⁸ Bronarski and Turczyński, 'Commentary', 142.

Example 3.27: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 9, bars 37-45, Henle *Urtext*

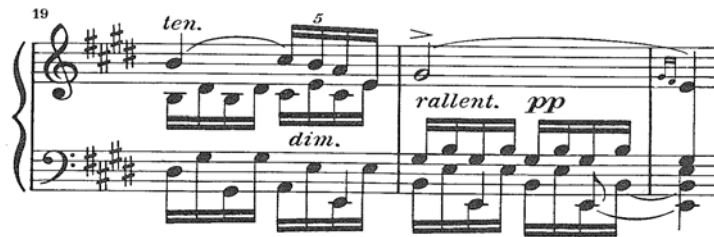
The image shows a musical score for Chopin's Étude Op. 10 No. 9, bars 37-45. The score is in B-flat major and 3/4 time. It consists of three systems of two staves each. The first system (bars 37-39) is marked 'a tempo' and 'sempre agitato'. The second system (bars 40-42) continues the 'sempre agitato' marking. The third system (bars 43-45) is marked 'con forza'. The right hand features a melodic line with mordents and ornaments, while the left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Performance instructions include 'sempre legato' and 'con forza'.

Here, these mordents serve to alter a previously heard melody. It is fairly common, however, to hear pianists add similar mordents to the first statement of this melody at the opening of the étude. These additions do not make much sense when viewed from a historical perspective. Chopin, in the Op. 10 études, clearly indicates the ornaments he seems to have desired. There is, in fact, little conflict among the various primary sources on the matter of ornamentation. Furthermore, it seems that Chopin had a clear reason for inserting the mordents in question upon the return of the principal melody. The absence of the mordents from the initial presentation of the melody does not seem to be an oversight.

The third of the études presents numerous *appoggiaturas*. These ornaments present a challenge from a rhythmic perspective. The performer must decide whether the

ornament should be placed on the beat or before the beat and whether the ornament should be aligned with the arrival of the bass note. Take, for example, the appoggiatura in bar 21 (Example 3.28)

Example 3.28: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 3, bars 19-21, Henle *Urtext*



Here, the notation seems to indicate that the G# in the right hand comes before the beat and before the sounding of the E major chord. However, Chopin left explicit instructions with his student Madame Dubois that the *appoggiatura* should be played on the beat, at the same time as the E major chord.¹¹⁹ The remaining notes – including the F# *appoggiatura* and the principal note E – should come after the sounding of the entire chord.

Summary

As works of the concert repertoire, the Op. 10 études warrant an examination in terms of historically informed performance practices of the early nineteenth century. These works provide numerous examples of the techniques – such as articulation differences, unconventional fingerings and the use of the pedal – that Chopin demanded in his piano works in general. Further examination of the third and fourth études in chapter four will provide insight into how a performer can go about developing a historically informed interpretation of the études.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 137.

Chapter 4

Case Studies of Chopin's Études Op. 10 No. 3 and No. 4

Introduction

This chapter employs the information garnered in chapters two and three to specific études. These in-depth analyses serve as case studies of how the performance of Chopin's works might be approached from a historical perspective. While there have not been any in-depth studies developing historically informed interpretations of Chopin's Op. 10 Études, John Rink's work on the E-minor Prelude can serve as a template that is useful in the examination of other works by Chopin.¹ Rink begins by examining primary sources, notational idiosyncrasies and the historical record. He then turns his attention to formal elements in the prelude. He synthesises all of this information, along with his personal sensibilities as a performer, into an interpretative roadmap based largely on register, the musical element he deems to be most important in this particular work.

In this chapter, attention is paid to the state of the primary sources, how they differ, and the types of information they provide. With regard to some musical aspects, Chopin provides a wealth of information for performers. In other instances, the primary sources do not provide adequate details. The performer who wishes to interpret the études in a historically informed manner must make educated decisions based on extant information and the historical context.

¹ John Rink, 'The state of play in performance studies', in Jane W. Davidson (ed.), *The Music Practitioner: Research for the Music Performer, Teacher and Listener* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 37-51.

This chapter examines the third and fourth of the Op. 10 études. These contrasting études make ideal choices for investigation because they offer a diversity of figurations. The third in particular makes a fruitful subject for investigation. Most of the Op. 10 Études largely focus on a single musical idea: for example, the arpeggiated figures in the first étude, the chromatic semiquavers in the second, the black-key semiquaver triplets in the fifth and the broken chords in the eleventh. The diversity of figurations in the third étude parallels its more complex formal structure. Because the other études concentrate on a single musical figure, they do not contain contrasting interior sections. The third étude is in ternary form, A B A'.² The fourth étude provides a significant contrast to the third. It has a considerably faster tempo and a completely different character. This change in character brings several interpretative questions, particularly regarding accents and staccato dots.

The choice to discuss these two études was motivated in part by the wealth of contrasting musical material, as these contrasts allow for a more thorough discussion of issues related to the historically informed performance of Chopin's music. The third and fourth études also make good case studies with regard to programming decisions. Some pianists choose to perform these études singly or in smaller groups. Chopin seems to have conceived of these two études as a pair: they are the only two linked by the performance indication *attaca il presto con fuoco*.³ Based on this indication, pianists might consider always programming these two études together.

² John Rink, in his introduction to the Op. 10 Etudes in *Chopin's First Editions Online*, remarks that all of the Op. 10 Etudes are in ternary form. While this is true in terms of the tonality of each of the études, only the third features a significant variation in the figurations. John Rink, 'Etudes Op. 10', *Chopin's First Editions Online* <<http://www.cfeo.org.uk/jsp/browsecollection.jsp>> [accessed 24 November 2013].

³ Thomas Higgins, 'Tempo and Character in Chopin', *The Musical Quarterly* 59 (1973), 111.

Étude Op. 10 No. 3⁴

There are four main primary sources for this étude. The first, an autograph hereafter referred to as MS1, is dated Paris, 25 August 1832.⁵ This manuscript, with its hasty penmanship, crossed-out notes and imprecise notation, appears to be a working manuscript.⁶ The second primary source, hereafter referred to as MS2, is likewise an autograph.⁷ This second manuscript is a much cleaner copy and seems to have been used to prepare the two first editions of the étude, the French edition published by Maurice Schlesinger and the German edition published by Friedrich Kistner.⁸ Rink refers to this manuscript as a *Stichvorlage*, or an engraving model.⁹ The third and fourth primary sources are the French and German first editions, respectively.¹⁰ A fifth primary source, the English first edition, is not considered here.¹¹ This score contains numerous editorial markings, including multiple fingering options that distance the score from Chopin's hand.¹²

Analysis

Understanding the minutiae of the score is, in the opinion of Peter Walls, the first step in developing an interpretation.¹³ In the case of Chopin's third étude, a bar-by-

⁴ Audio tracks 4-6.

⁵ The Pierpont Morgan Library, The R.O. Lehman Collection, US-NYpm C549.E85.

⁶ The Fryderyk Chopin Institute, 'Manuscripts: Etude in E Major, Op. 10 No. 3' <<http://en.chopin.nifc.pl/chopin/manuscripts/detail/id/29>> [accessed 21 April 2013].

⁷ The Fryderyk Chopin Museum, PL-Wnifc M/192.

⁸ John Rink, 'Études Op. 10: Source Information', *Chopin's First Editions Online*. <<http://www.cfeo.org.uk/jsp/>> [accessed 08 January 2016].

⁹ John Rink, 'Études Op. 10: General Introduction', *Chopin's First Editions Online*. <<http://www.cfeo.org.uk/jsp/>> [accessed 21 April 2013].

¹⁰ Frédéric Chopin, *Études pour le Piano, Op. 10* (Paris: Maurice Schlesinger, 1833) and Frédéric Chopin, *Douze Grandes Études Pour le Pianoforte, Op. 10* (Leipzig: Fr. Kistner, 1833).

¹¹ Frédéric Chopin, *Douze Grandes Études (en Deux Livraisons.) pour le Piano Porte [sic], Op. 10* (London: Wessel & Co., 1835-6).

¹² As noted in Chapter 3, Chopin was very much involved in reviewing his works, particularly the Op. 10 études, prior to publication. For the English edition, however, Chopin was not able to exert as much editorial influence as he did not have easy access to the proofs.

¹³ Peter Walls, 'Historical performance and the modern performer', in John Rink (ed.), *Musical*

bar discussion of significant notational features aids the performer in the development of his or her interpretation. Through this discussion, certain elements come to light as carrying more weight and can therefore be considered more important to the interpretation of the work.

Bars 1-8

The étude opens with a presentation of the main theme. This theme is a cantabile melody with a three-voiced accompaniment. The melody is in the soprano voice, with accompanimental semiquavers in the alto. The bass voice plays constant crotchets, while the tenor voice is slightly syncopated. Chopin's notation does not notate the distribution of the voices in such a way that it is immediately clear to the performer. Some editors have altered the notation of the bass and tenor lines to clearly distinguish the separate voices (example 4.1).

Example 4.1: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 3, bar 1, Henle *Urtext*



Bringing out the four-voiced texture requires absolute attention to details of articulation from the performer. The slower moving cantabile melody is marked *legato*, and the performer must work to sustain this line without letting the accompanying voices disrupt it.

Performance: A Guide to Understanding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 31.

For this opening melody, Chopin did not include a lengthy slur marking to indicate the phrase beginning and ending. Instead, the melody is broken down into slurred groups of smaller durations. The primary sources differ slightly with respect to the slurring of the semiquavers in bars 2, 3, 5, 10 and 11. In MS2, Chopin used two slurs to connect the four semiquavers, while he used a single slur in the French and German first editions. The visual presentation of the single slur helps create an image of a longer melodic thought in the mind of the performer, aiding in the execution of a smooth, connected legato. This interpretation is further helped by Chopin's indication to perform a slight crescendo on the first two semiquavers and a slight decrescendo on the second two semiquavers (example 4.2).

Example 4.2: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 3, bars 1-4, Henle *Urtext*

The image shows a musical score for Chopin's Étude Op. 10 No. 3, bars 1-4. The score is in treble and bass clefs, 2/4 time, with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The right hand starts with a piano (p) dynamic and a 'legato' marking. The left hand has a 'p' dynamic and a '3' marking. The score shows four bars of music with various slurs and articulation marks.

In this passage, Chopin provides clues as to how he envisioned the execution of tempo rubato.¹⁴ For example, at the end of bar 7, he marks *stretto*, followed by *ritenuto* in bar 8, indicating that the performer should speed up slightly leading up to the dominant seventh chord on the second half of bar 8, before slowing down on the cadential resolution.

This passage also contains grace notes of a type which will appear throughout the course of the étude. These grace notes appear in the second half of bar 7 and the first

¹⁴ See Chapter 3, page 103.

half of bar 8 (example 4.3). The A# acciaccaturas are indicated with slashes through the stems, in both the French and German first editions. These grace notes should be played on the beat,¹⁵ simultaneously with the corresponding semiquaver in the alto line, that is with the B in bar 7 and with the A# in bar 8. The duration of these grace notes should come from the subsequent melodic note, G#, and not from the preceding note.¹⁶

Example 4.3: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 3, bars 5-8, Henle *Urtext*



In terms of dynamics, this opening theme is unquestionably soft. It begins *piano*. Several ‘hairpin’ crescendos and decrescendos follow the contour of the melodic line,¹⁷ increasing in volume as the pitch rises and decreasing in volume as the pitch descends. In bar 6, Chopin indicates a crescendo that leads into the final cadence of this opening section. This crescendo, which is not followed by a corresponding decrescendo, leads into the repetition of the main theme.

Bars 9-21

Bars 9 to 13 are an exact repetition of bars 1 to 5. In bar 14, a crescendo initiates an

¹⁵ See Chapter 3, page 108.

¹⁶ Ludwik Bronarski and Józef Turczyński, ‘Commentary’, in *Chopin Complete Works*, ii, Studies (Warsaw: The Fryderyk Chopin Institute Polish Music Publications, 1949), 133.

¹⁷ These dynamic markings reflect Chopin’s general guidelines on phrasing as discussed in Chapter 3, pages 88-91.

alternate, more incisive ending of the theme. As in bar 7, a *stretto* indication in bar 15 leads into the cadential preparation. In bar 16, Chopin indicates *con forza*, with force, and he makes his first departure from the legato articulation he has used since the opening of the piece. The semiquavers in the right hand in bar 16 are all connected with a slur, but staccato dots over each note indicate that the performer should slightly separate each of the notes.¹⁸ Chopin gives this bar further weight by indicating *ritenuto* and a crescendo that leads to a *ff* in bar 17. This is the first climactic moment of the piece (example 4.4).

Example 4.4: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 3, bars 15-17, Henle *Urtext*



In bar 18, Chopin indicates a return to the legato articulation, with the marking *sempre legato*. This is accompanied by a ‘hairpin’ decrescendo and a written *diminuendo* that falls into a *pp* marking on the final cadence in bar 20-21. The grace notes in bar 21, as with the previously-heard grace notes in the étude, should be executed on the beat. The first grace note should be struck simultaneously with the E major chord¹⁹ (example 4.5).

¹⁸ See Chapter 3, page 72.

¹⁹ Bronarski and Turczyński, ‘Commentary’, 133.

Example 4.5: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 3, bars 19-21, Henle *Urtext*

Bars 21-29

The B section of this ternary-form étude begins in bar 21. In contrast to the long cantabile melody of the A section, the B section initially features shorter motivic units that are two bars in length (example 4.6).

Example 4.6: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 3, bars 19-25, Henle *Urtext*

These motives provide challenges with respect to articulation. The legato right hand material falls under a slur that connects all of the pitches in the two-bar unit. The left hand material, however, contains staccato dots over some of the notes, with slurs connecting other notes. The pitches with the dots are generally separated by wide intervals, as in the first five semiquavers of bar 22. This makes sense from a performance standpoint: in order to span a range of an octave and a fourth, the

pianist would have to release one pitch before striking the next. Notes that can easily be reached, such as the arpeggiated sonority in bar 23, are connected with slurs.

The articulation in the left hand of bar 29 departs from the pattern originally set up by Chopin at the beginning of this section (example 4.7). Instead of having dots over all of the bass semiquavers, Chopin places dots only on the first, fourth, fifth and eighth semiquavers. This change begs a consideration of the purpose of these dots. If they were merely for articulation purposes, it seems that perhaps Chopin would have placed dots over every note in the bar. Instead, he placed them on the lowest pitched notes. Indeed, these dots seem to emphasise the descending bass motion from C# to B, as it prepares for the arrival on A in the following bar. In short, they distinguish the bass line from the tenor line.

Example 4.7: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 3, bar 29, Henle *Urtext*



The frequent appearance of grace notes in this passage demonstrates its motivic relationship to some of the material in the A section. Indeed, the acciaccaturas in bars 23, 25, 27 and 29 are identical to those found in bars 7 and 8 and should be played in a similar manner, by striking the grace note on the beat at the same time as the accompanying voices.

In this section, Chopin treats the initial motive as presented in bars 21-23 as an ascending sequence. It starts on E in its first and second presentations and on F# in its third and fourth presentations. He couples this rising sequence with a crescendo in bar 29. This increase in musical tension culminates in an arrival on an A major chord in bar 30.

Bars 30-38

Bars 30 to 38 continue with the presentation of motivic units that are two bars in length. The first of these ideas, bars 30 and 31, features an alternation between A major and A minor (example 4.8). Two separate slurs divide this material into smaller, one-bar units, a division that is further reflected by the dynamic contrast between *forte* for the major-key presentation of the material and *piano* for the minor-key presentation. In bars 32 and 33, Chopin presents a new motivic idea. Groups of two slurred semiquavers in both hands outline a half-diminished C# seventh chord. Here, the right hand and left hand present the material in contrary motion, a technical challenge for the performer.

Example 4.8: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 3, bars 29-33, Henle *Urtext*

The image displays a musical score for Chopin's Étude Op. 10 No. 3, specifically bars 29 through 33. The score is written for piano and is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It consists of two systems of music. The first system covers bars 29 to 33, and the second system covers bar 33. The notation includes treble and bass staves with various musical markings such as slurs, dynamics (cresc., p, f), and fingering numbers (1-5). The score shows a transition from a major key to a minor key and back to a major key, with a technical challenge in bar 33 involving contrary motion.

Chopin treats the material from bars 30 to 33 as a sequence in bars 34 to 37. The motives have been raised a whole step, so that the initial material is presented in B major. This section ends with the arrival on the E# fully diminished seventh chord at the beginning of bar 38.

Bars 38-46

In bar 38, Chopin begins a section of intense chromaticism (example 4.9). The bass line in bars 38 to 41 consists of chromatically descending augmented fourths/diminished fifths. The right hand similarly relies on this interval for its material, though the line ascends quickly before arriving on the highest note of the piece on the downbeat of bar 42. This high point is strengthened by a solidification of the harmonic support: for the first time in many bars, we hear a clear, unadorned triad. The dynamics further act to strengthen this arrival on B. Chopin indicated a crescendo in bar 37. He indicates further crescendos in each of the succeeding bars until the fortissimo arrival on the downbeat of bar 42.

Example 4.9: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 3, bars 37-42, Henle *Urtext*

The image displays a musical score for Chopin's Étude Op. 10 No. 3, specifically bars 37 through 42. The score is written for piano and is in B major (two sharps) and 3/4 time. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system covers bars 37 and 38, and the second system covers bars 39, 40, and 41. The right hand (treble clef) and left hand (bass clef) are both present. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings like 'cresc.' and 'ff'. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5. The bass line features chromatic descending augmented fourths/diminished fifths. The right hand features ascending chromatic lines. The piece concludes with a fortissimo triad on B major in bar 42.

The clear B major triad does not last for long. On the third semiquaver of bar 42, Chopin introduces an A natural, transforming the chord into a dominant seventh, preparing the listener for the eventual return of the tonic, E major. In the following bar, Chopin brings back material that has strong parallels with material from the A section. This material, a series of semiquavers in both hands, is marked on both occasions with the indication *con forza* and includes dotted notes under a slur in the right hand. Bars 44 and 45 repeat the material of bars 42 and 43, although the *con forza* has been replaced with the indication *con fuoco* (in a fiery manner). In bars 42 and 44, Chopin includes pedal indications. In both the French and German first editions, the depression of the pedal is clearly indicated, but the release of the pedal is omitted. The performer could easily hold the pedal throughout bars 42 and 44, releasing it just following the downbeat of bars 43 and 45. This usage makes sense harmonically as bars 42 and 44 contain a single sonority. By releasing the pedal on the downbeat, the chromatic movement in bars 43 and 45 would be much clearer.

Bars 46-54

This eight bar section consists entirely of semiquavers, slurred in pairs (example 4.10).

Example 4.10: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 3, bars 46-53, Henle *Urtext*

The image shows a musical score for Chopin's Étude Op. 10 No. 3, bars 46-53. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It consists of three systems of two staves each. The first system (bars 46-48) is marked 'f con bravura' and features a complex texture of fully diminished seventh chords. The second system (bars 49-51) is marked 'cresc. stretto' and continues the chromatic progression of diminished seventh chords. The third system (bars 52-53) is marked 'ritenuto e cresc. f' and shows the return to the initial pitch collection (G# B D F) in bar 52, followed by a final cadence in bar 53.

Chopin marks the entire section *con bravura*, or brilliantly. Indeed, as this passage comes directly following a dominant harmony, it gives the distinct impression of a cadenza. The material for most of this passage comes from fully diminished seventh chords. Chopin cycles through every single possible manifestation of the fully diminished seventh chord, moving chromatically by semitone. When he returns to the initial pitch collection, G# B D F, on the second and third semiquavers of bar 52, he breaks the pattern. His performance indication *stretto*, which is present in both the French and the German first editions, at the end of bar 51 builds the intensity of the section. From here until the arrival on B major in bar 54, he builds the harmonic tension further by changing one note of the chord at a time, instead of moving the entire chord down by semitone. Chopin draws on the listener's expectation of an impending arrival by indicating a *ritenuto*, similarly indicated in both the French and the German first editions, coupled with a crescendo in bar 53.

Bars 54-61

In bar 54, Chopin marks *legatissimo*, signalling a return to the legato articulation of the A section. The short motivic units, however, mark this passage as still belonging to the B section of the work. The soft dynamic level, marked *piano*, offers contrast from the preceding brilliant passages, marked *forte*. Harmonically, this eight bar phrase prolongs B major, the dominant, in a preparation for the eventual return of E major (example 4.11).

Example 4.11: Chopin, *Étude Op. 10 No. 3*, bars 54-61, Henle *Urtext*

In this phrase, Chopin returns to a clear melody and accompaniment texture. In bars 54 to 55, there are three distinct voices. In the soprano, ties over the bar line connect this material to the opening theme. The alto line, with its constant semiquaver motion, likewise is related to material from the opening. The bass motion firmly grounds the passage harmonically. At the end of bar 56, Chopin adds a tenor voice to the texture, further preparing for the reprise of the main theme.

This passage provides one of the few instances in the Op. 10 études of cross-rhythms. The semiquaver triplets in the bass contrast with the semiquavers in the alto and soprano. As these triplets consist of a primary note, its upper neighbour, and a return to the primary note, these triplets are rather like written-out mordents. Because of their ornament-like nature and the fact that the cross-rhythms occur only sporadically, they do not present much of a challenge to the performer.

Bars 62-77

The primary theme returns in bar 62. Instead of bringing back the version from the opening of the piece, which features the acciaccaturas in the lead-up to the cadence, Chopin brings back the second version of the theme, with its staccato semiquavers that lead to the cadence. The primary difference between the ending of the first A section and the ending of the étude is that Chopin draws out the cadence for an additional four bars.

In MS2, Chopin wrote, *attaca il presto con fuoco*, after the final bar of the third étude, indicating that the performer should proceed immediately from the third to the fourth étude without pause. This marking, which appears nowhere else in the Op. 10 études, demonstrates that the composer wanted pianists to perform these two études together and that he, perhaps, conceived of them as a pair.

Étude Op. 10 No. 4²⁰

For the fourth of the Op. 10 études, there are three principal primary sources. The first is a working autograph, dated Paris, 6 August 1832, by the composer.²¹ The fact that this manuscript lacks many articulation and dynamic markings that are present in the first editions suggests that perhaps additional autograph sources have been lost. With regard to the first editions, the French edition and the German edition are both valuable primary sources for those interested in historically informed performances of the fourth étude. As with the third étude, the English first edition of the fourth étude contains numerous editorial markings, such as fingerings, that distance it from Chopin's hand. For this reason, this source is not considered in this study.

Analysis

Bars 1-4

The first four bars of the fourth étude present the primary thematic material. Each bar features a discreet motivic unit. Bar 1 contains a sequentially presented motive consisting of four ascending semiquavers. Chopin places this motive so that the lowest note of the motive is the third semiquaver of the beat, thereby creating a syncopation. The Henle Edition suggests that the performer use the heavy thumb on the lowest note of each four-note group, thereby accentuating the syncopation.²² Chopin did not call for this particular fingering – there are, in fact, no fingerings in this bar in either the French or the German first editions; however, the editorial suggestion of the Henle Edition makes sense musically. In bar 2, the motivic accent

²⁰ Audio tracks 7-9.

²¹ This manuscript is now located at The Fryderyk Chopin Museum in Warsaw, PL-Wnifc, M/3249. The Fryderyk Chopin Institute, 'Manuscripts: Etude in C sharp minor, Op. 10 No. 4' <<http://en.chopin.nifc.pl/chopin/manuscripts/detail/id/70>> [accessed 11 June 2013].

²² Frédéric Chopin, *Études*, edited by Ewald Zimmermann (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2006), 26.

reverts to the beat. In neither the French nor the German first edition do accents occur on the beat in this bar. However, when the motive returns in bar 52, there are accents on each beat in both the French and German first editions. Therefore, it makes sense for the performer to accent the first semiquaver of each beat in the right hand of bar 2. The motivic material here is presented as a descending sequence, with a repeated pedal C# as the fourth semiquaver of each beat. Unlike in the previous two bars, the motivic material in bar 3 is primarily disjunct. The four semiquavers of each beat span the range of a tenth. Here, Chopin adds a third voice to the texture, indicated by the upward pointing stems on the second and fourth notes of each beat (example 4.12). The fourth bar is cadential in nature. The parallel octaves lead strongly to a G#, the dominant of the home key, C# minor.

Example 4.12: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 4, bars 1-4, Henle *Urtext*

The image shows the musical score for Chopin's Étude Op. 10 No. 4, bars 1-4. The score is in C# minor, 3/4 time, marked 'Presto' with a quarter note equal to 88. It features a right hand with a descending eighth-note sequence and a left hand with a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The right hand has upward-pointing stems on the second and fourth notes of each beat. The score includes dynamic markings like 'f con fuoco', 'fp', and 'cresc.', and fingering numbers.

Throughout this four-bar phrase, the primary texture is melody plus accompaniment. The right hand and left hand play distinctive material, with one hand holding the primary motivic material while the other provides a chordal accompaniment. These accompanimental chords are marked with staccato dots in both the French and German first editions. These dots keep the texture from becoming too heavy, an

important feature due to the quick tempo of this étude.

Bars 5-8

Bars 5-8 repeat, for the most part, the thematic material presented in the opening bars, with some slight variations. The primary material is transferred to the left hand, where it is presented in G# minor. To give weight to the third semiquaver of each beat in bar 5, the pianist might consider using the fourth finger of the left hand, a fingering which is absent from the primary sources but which makes musical sense. Chopin rewrites the final bar of the phrase to allow for a return to C# minor.

Bars 9-12

Bars 9 to 11 repeat the material of the opening bars. On the last beat of bar 11, Chopin slightly changes the harmony to allow for a modulation in bar 12. From the harmonies presented in bar 12, Chopin seems to be preparing a modulation to G major.

Bars 13-16

In bar 13, Chopin brings the motivic material from bar 1 back in the left hand. The accents on each beat that are included in the Henle Edition are indeed present in both the French and German first editions. Instead of following it with the material from bar 2, Chopin repeats the same material in bar 14. He repeats it again in bar 15, transposed up a fifth, and presumably leading to an arrival on F#.

Bars 17-20

Chopin thwarts the expectation of an arrival on F# by presenting an Fx as the first

pitch in the right hand of bar 17. Here, he continues with the presentation of the opening motive, leading into a return of the material from bar 2 in bar 18. Both bars are repeated, with the motivic material transferred to the left hand, in bars 19 and 20.

Bars 21-26

In this six-bar phrase, Chopin continues to develop material originally presented in bars 1 and 2, transferring the material between the two hands and seeming to prepare for an arrival on E.

Bars 27-32

Chopin thwarts the listeners' expectations by not fulfilling the expected arrival on E on the downbeat of bar 27. He then continues to develop the material originally presented in bars 1 and 2. The material from bar 2 has been transformed when it reappears in the lower staff of bar 29. The semiquavers on beats 2 and 4 in bars 29 and 30 are inversions of the bar 2 motive. In bars 31 and 32, Chopin inverts the motivic material of bar 1, producing a descending sequence.

Bars 33-40

In bars 33 and 34, Chopin presents heavy, accentuated chords in the right hand with consistent semiquaver motion that is derived from the material in the opening bar in the left hand (example 4.13). The next two bars bring back the motivic material from bar 2. This four-bar section is then repeated at a different pitch level in bars 37 to 40.

Example 4.13: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 4, bars 33-36, Henle *Urtext*

Bars 41-50

In the first four bars of this transitional section, Chopin develops the motivic material originally presented in bar 2. This material appears on the last two beats of these bars in the right hand (example 4.14). In bar 47, he brings back the motivic material from bar 1. He sequences this material, with some additional chromaticism, leading back to a return to the home key of C# minor.

Example 4.14: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 4, bars 41-44, Henle *Urtext*

Bars 51-82

Bars 51 to 65 are an exact repetition of bars 1 to 15. In the remaining bars, Chopin uses the motivic material from bar 2 to lead to the forceful conclusion of the étude.

Questions for the Performer

In Op. 10 No. 3, Chopin provides quite detailed instructions for the performer. These details come in the form of a metronome marking, a general tempo indication as well as indications on when to speed up and slow down, and clear dynamic indications in the form of *p*, *f* and *ff* as well as numerous crescendos and decrescendos. In Op. 10 No. 4, Chopin left comparatively fewer instructions for the performer. He did provide a clear metronome marking and a general tempo indication as well as numerous dynamic markings. However, there are no markings that indicate when to speed up or slow down. Rather than taking these indications at face value, the performer can critically examine them to evaluate their relevance and the suitability of adding similar interpretative nuances at other points in the score.

Metronome Markings

With regard to the third étude, MS1, the earliest source, contains a tempo indication of *Vivace*. When Chopin prepared MS2, he altered this tempo indication to *Vivace ma non troppo*. Upon publication, Chopin had once again rethought the tempo, using the indication *Lento ma non troppo*. The change from *vivace* to *lento* seems extreme.

Thomas Higgins explains that Chopin typically waited until late in the compositional process to assign tempo designations, as the composer ‘had to search for the notational *mot juste*, and perhaps for a more precisely felt tempo, so that other

players would discern it'.²³ Perhaps the composer thought that word '*vivace*' would indicate a vigorous playing approach that would be at odds with the calm, legato principal melody. Chopin did include metronome markings in both the German and French first editions. In the German publication, Chopin indicated ♩ = 100, which is almost certainly a misprint; while the French edition, as well as Mikuli's copy of the score, contain the indication that the ♩ = 100.²⁴

Chopin's metronome marking of ♩ = 100 seems at odds with his tempo marking, *lento ma non troppo*, and many modern pianists seem to take their cues for the tempo from Chopin's tempo marking, not his metronome marking. Table 1 indicates the average metronome marking used in several recordings by modern pianists. In calculating the average pace, the total number of quavers in the piece (308) was divided by the total time of the recording, in minutes rounded to the nearest hundredth. As can be seen from the table, most pianists take a tempo that is considerably slower than Chopin's desired tempo.

Table 4.1: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 3 Performance Times

| Pianist | Track length | Average tempo |
|--------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Lang Lang | 4.78 minutes | ♩ = 64 |
| Claudio Arrau | 4.5 minutes | ♩ = 68 |
| Valentina Lisitsa | 4.27 minutes | ♩ = 72 |
| Vladimir Ashkenazy | 4.27 minutes | ♩ = 72 |
| Alfred Cortot | 3.93 minutes | ♩ = 78 |
| Murray Perahia | 3.8 minutes | ♩ = 81 |
| Maurizio Pollini | 3.57 minutes | ♩ = 86 |
| Vladimir Horowitz | 3.49 minutes | ♩ = 88 |

²³ Higgins, 'Tempo and Character in Chopin', 110.

²⁴ Bronarski and Turczyński, 'Commentary', 136.

John Rink found a similar phenomenon in recordings of Chopin's E minor prelude, noting that most pianists who performed the prelude had a tendency to use a slower tempo than that requested by Chopin. Rink attributes this slower tempo to a desire on the part of pianists to luxuriate 'in the rich harmonic palette of the modern piano', while noting that a faster tempo would have allowed the pianists to produce 'a steady stream of colour within the left-hand counterpoint'.²⁵

In the third of the Op. 10 études, a slower tempo unarguably adds to the smoothness of the opening cantabile melody; however, much can be said for playing the piece at Chopin's desired tempo. When the beginning is played at a faster tempo, it leads more naturally into the contrasting middle section, whose brilliant and virtuosic nature relies in part on being played at a tempo near ♩ = 100. This section, beginning in bar 21, is marked *poco più animato*. The ending of the B section moves more naturally into the return of the opening theme when the A section is taken at a brisker pace.²⁶ The return of the A section in bar 62 had been preceded by a *poco rallentando* in bar 61. A slight slowing down is possible if the prevailing tempo for the A material is quicker.

For the fourth étude, Chopin did not indicate a metronome marking in the extant autograph. In the printed version, he added a metronome marking of ♩ = 88, a quick tempo that corresponds with the presto indication found at the beginning of the movement.

²⁵ Rink, 'The state of play in performance studies', 43.

²⁶ This quicker tempo, then, solves to some extent a problem that Rink experiences when performing the étude. He noted, 'Where I have found this étude problematic as a performer is in knowing how to treat what I have just described as the "transitional passage leading to the opening theme's return"'. Rink, 'Analyzing rhythmic shape in Chopin's E major étude', 130.

Tempo Rubato

In the third *étude*, Chopin provides clues for the performance of tempo rubato. He indicates an acceleration with the *stretto* in bars 7, 15, 51 and 68 and a deceleration with the *ritenuto* in bars 8, 16 and 53. In all of these cases, Chopin marks these slight tempo variations at moments of increased harmonic intensity in the approach to a cadence. For example, in bar 7 Chopin arrives on a predominant harmony, ii6. In the second half of the bar, the harmony changes to a dominant harmony, accompanied by the marking *stretto* (example 4.15).

Example 4.15: Chopin, *Étude Op. 10 No. 3*, bars 5-8, Henle *Urtext*

This *stretto* carries through to the first beat of bar 8, where the harmony changes to V/V. The expected resolution to the dominant and then to the tonic, E major, is accompanied by the *ritenuto*. In bars 15 and 16, Chopin continues this pattern of pairing increased harmonic tension in cadential preparation with variations in tempo. On the downbeat of bar 15, Chopin writes a V7/vi chord which moves to a vi chord on the second half of the bar. This progression, marked *stretto*, leads to the emphatic cadential movement from V7/V, passing through a French augmented sixth chord, to a second inversion tonic triad, which carries the *ritenuto*. The *stretto/ritenuto* markings in the B section come during the section featuring the fully diminished seventh chords. After setting up a pattern whereby the chord changes every two

quavers, Chopin speeds up the harmonic motion so that the harmony changes every quaver. This occurs in bar 51, and Chopin pairs this sped-up harmonic rhythm with the *stretto* marking. When he arrives on the A# diminished seventh chord in bar 52, he stays on this dissonant harmony. After repeating the same chord for three quavers, Chopin writes in the *ritenuto*. Here, the tempo indications parallel the harmonic motion. When the harmonic rhythm speeds up, so does the tempo. And when the harmonic rhythm slows down, so does the tempo.

It is notable that each *stretto* indication is followed shortly thereafter with a corresponding *ritenuto*, with the exception of the final one in bar 68 (example 4.16). Because of the consistency with which Chopin has paired the *strettos* and *ritenutos*, the performer here might want to avoid using a *ritenuto* in bar 69. Although this passage has strong parallels with the material in bars 15 to 17, there are some significant differences. Chopin avoids writing *con forza* on the staccato semiquavers in bar 69, and the crescendo in this bar only leads up to a *forte*, not a *fortissimo* as in the previous passage. Because the soft, delicate end of the piece is nearing, it makes sense that the performer should approach it differently from the lead up to the brilliant, virtuosic B section.

Example 4.16: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 3, bars 67-70, Henle *Urtext*

In the fourth étude, there are no indications in any of the primary sources that indicate when and where the performer might speed up or slow down. In the case of the fourth étude, this absence of performance indications is perhaps due to the character of the étude, and not to any carelessness or oversight on the part of Chopin and/or his editors. The fourth étude features a constant stream of semiquavers that seem to drive inexorably from the beginning of the étude to the end. Any fluctuation to the governing tempo might disrupt this forward drive.

Pedalling

In playing these études, the performer is challenged by the lack of precise pedalling indications. There are few pedal markings in the extant primary sources for the third étude. In the French and German first editions, the sole pedal markings come in bars 42 and 44, in the midst of the more virtuosic B section. In these cases, Chopin calls for the use of the damper pedal only in bars where non-chord tones are completely absent. Bars 42 and 44 are B dominant seventh chords. Following this principle, the Polish Complete Edition calls for the use of the damper pedal in bars 20-21, at the

final cadence of the initial A section.²⁷

Mikuli's edition provides valuable insight into how Chopin played and taught this étude with respect to pedalling.²⁸ Mikuli provides considerably more pedalling indications than Chopin, particularly in the B section of the étude, and he uses them with great consistency, building on the principle we see with the composer's original pedal indications. Mikuli only employs the damper pedal in instances where there are absolutely no non-chord tones. This logical technique ensures clarity of harmonic movement, and in some cases, for example, bars 46-51 (example 4.17), clarifies the harmonic rhythm in passages of intense chromaticism. In this example, Mikuli's pedal indications follow the chord changes and contribute to the bravura character of this virtuosic section by allowing for a greater volume of sound.

Example 4.17: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 3, bars 46-51, Schirmer Mikuli

The image displays a musical score for Chopin's Étude Op. 10 No. 3, bars 46-51, in Mikuli's edition. The score is presented in two systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system begins with the instruction *f con bravura.* and features several pedalling markings (pedals) indicated by asterisks and wavy lines below the bass staff. The second system concludes with the instruction *cresc. stretto.* and also includes pedalling markings. The music is characterized by dense, chromatic textures and complex harmonic structures.

²⁷ Fryderyk Chopin, *Complete Works*, ii, edited by Ludwik Bronarski and Józef Turczyński (Warsaw: Instytut Fryderyka Chopina, 1949), 17.

²⁸ Carl Mikuli, *Chopin Complete Works for the Piano*, vol. 7 (New York: G. Schirmer, 1895). It is important to note that Mikuli would have been familiar with a more modern instrument than that of Chopin. His pedal indications therefore are sparser and at times utilise syncopated pedal techniques.

The primary sources for the fourth *étude* contain even fewer pedalling indications. Both the French and the German first editions feature a pedal marking on the downbeat of bar 79, with a release of the pedal indicated at the end of bar 82 – the final bar of the piece – in the German edition. This emphatic C# minor arpeggio brings the piece to a resounding close. As with the third *étude*, this pedal indication corresponds to a section of the piece where there are no non-chord tones. With the active surface rhythm and intense chromaticism of this *étude*, there are very few instances of complete bars, or even parts of bars, without non-chord tones. Even Mikuli, who is notorious for adding pedal indications to his edition of the score, uses only a few pedal markings. When he does add pedal markings, they highlight bars where there is quite a bit of arpeggiation, as opposed to chromatic step-wise motion. One example occurs in bar 3. Here, the left hand plays arpeggiated staccato chords, while the right hand plays arpeggiated semiquavers. Only the final semiquaver of each beat is a non-chord tone. There are no pedal indications in the French first edition²⁹ (example 4.18). On the contrary, Mikuli calls for the damper pedal to be depressed on the beat and released well before the next beat (example 4.19). Indeed, it is a suggestion that proves to be effective when performing this passage on a modern instrument.³⁰

²⁹ John Rink, 'Chopin's First Editions Online' <<http://www.cfeo.org.uk/jsp/browsecollection.jsp>> [accessed 10 January 2016].

³⁰ Audio Track 9.

Example 4.18: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 4, bar 3, French First Edition



Example 4.19: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 4, bar 3, Schirmer, Mikuli



Interpretation

In his article on rhythmic shape in the third of the Op. 10 études, John Rink remarks, 'It goes without saying that the interpretation of music requires decisions – conscious or otherwise'.³¹ One of the first decisions that a performer must make concerns the purpose of this étude, and the nature of this purpose is most definitely open for debate. As Rink remarks, some scholars have claimed that the étude develops a pianist's skills at controlling a legato melody. These scholars, then, would focus on articulation, letting the legato melody in the upper voice sing on top of the three lower voices. Rink counters this by showing how he views the étude as an exercise in controlling syncopations, both on the level of the semiquaver and quaver as well as on a larger formal scale. Rink draws a parallel between the 1:2:1 ratio among the

³¹ John Rink, 'Analyzing rhythmic shape in Chopin's E major étude', in Artur Szklener (ed.) *Analytical Perspectives on the Music of Chopin* (Warsaw: The Fryderyk Chopin Institute, 2003), 125.

semiquaver, quaver and semiquaver that make up the first three notes of the tenor line and the 1:2:1 ratio that governs the overall structure of the piece – the A section contains half as many measures as the B section.³²

While Rink's perspective certainly makes sense, there are other equally valid ways of interpreting this *étude*. One could, for example, argue that the *étude* gives the performer a chance to develop skills in controlling wave-like structures. Indeed, wave-like structures can be found in virtually all of the musical elements in this *étude*. The pitches of the opening melody, for example, gently rise and fall in a wave-like manner. 'Hairpin' crescendos and decrescendos mirror the rise and fall of the melody. Chopin's tempo rubato indications lend a similar wave-like motion to the tempo of the piece. This wave-like character can even be felt through the large-scale form. After the initial A section, the piece shows a marked increase in rhythmic activity and chromatic intensity. This intensity disperses with the return of the A section to conclude the *étude*.

Summary

By using the contextual information gleaned from chapters two and three, this case study demonstrates how performers can make informed decisions on how to approach two of Chopin's *études* from the Op. 10 collection. The third and fourth *études* of the Op. 10 collection were chosen for their contrasting characters and musical materials. The primary sources for these *études* provide clear information regarding metronome markings, general tempo indications and dynamic changes. Information regarding the usage of the pedal, fingerings and accents was found to be

³² Ibid., 131.

missing at times. Suggestions were made about how to approach these challenges in a historically informed manner. This analytical approach, which was heavily influenced by the work of John Rink, could easily be applied to other works by Chopin.

Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusion

Frédéric Chopin is one of the great composers of piano music; his works belong to the standard repertoire of many pianists and can be heard today in concert halls all over the world, played on powerful grand pianos with brilliant sound. And yet a question arises: ‘How might those works have sounded when Chopin himself, one of his students or contemporaries played them?’ Exactly how it sounded, and how Chopin intended it to sound, will never be known, yet this is a question that the historically informed performance movement has been expanding on since the 1970s in an attempt to establish a potential sonic framework, and to bring performances as close to this framework as possible. It is a question that this thesis endeavours to answer by studying theoretical treatises, primary sources and period instruments, all of which provide details with regard to a set of interpretive choices, from tempo and fingering to phrasing and articulation. Since Chopin’s études are a popular recital choice despite their general purpose as exercises, they are of great interest for an analysis on the basis of historically informed performance.

The Études Op. 10 belong to a large body of works that were composed in the early nineteenth century. These études provide considerable pedagogical interest, with each of the études being focused on one specific technical challenge – not only for his students, but also for the composer himself. Chopin was largely self-taught, and these études were one of the vehicles that he utilised to develop his own idiosyncratic playing style. Chopin particularly confronts the challenge of creating the smooth legato sound he much admired in Friedrich Kalkbrenner’s playing of Étude Op. 10

No. 3, and the scores that he used while working on this with his students provide additional valuable information regarding pedalling and phrasing. The study of the primary sources for the études (the autograph manuscripts and the first editions) revealed a wealth of detail with regard to fingerings, phrasing, and articulation. Particularly interesting is the fact that, for Chopin, these fingerings were not merely a technical matter or one of personal preference, ease of execution or comfort. Instead, he emphasises that each finger produced a distinctive sound quality, and practising Chopin's recommended fingerings brings the performer closer to the sound quality and phrasing that Chopin envisioned.

As early-nineteenth-century notation, including that of Chopin, is notoriously imprecise, it is not enough for a performer to simply look at the first edition or the autograph manuscript of a given work and follow the indications precisely. With regard to articulation, for example, Chopin includes four main types in the études: legato, accented legato, staccato and heavy staccato. He does not, however, explain what these articulation markings mean, and because most of his students did not perform professionally or teach another generation of students, there are no firm performance guidelines that have been passed from teacher to student through the years. In this case, the examination of contemporaneous piano treatises yielded much valuable information about how to execute the corresponding aspects.

Similar situations were found when looking at pedal indications. In some cases, conventions existed in the early nineteenth century that would have allowed Chopin to notate the pedal usage that he desired. The primary sources, however, are lacking in this regard, particularly with the use of the *una corda* pedal. Editions of the score

edited by his pupils, including the edition of Mikuli, do provide information for the performer with regard to the historical use of the pedal. These pedal indications must, however, be scrupulously scrutinised and not merely accepted at face value. The methodology of historically informed performance allows a performer to make decisions about the accuracy of these pedal markings on a case-by-case basis, and other documents, such as instructions Chopin left to his students, again illuminate the pedal usage that he recommended in certain cases.

These findings from primary sources are greatly supported by research into the types of pianos that Chopin preferred and regularly played. His Pleyel piano with its light touch, for example, allows the performer to control articulation with a precision that is much more difficult to attain on a modern instrument. For performers who are playing on modern grand pianos, this kind of precise articulation can be achieved, albeit through other means such as slowing down the tempo in general. Being aware of the Pleyel's light touch is particularly relevant to the historically informed performance of Op. 10 No. 4, in which Chopin aims to develop the pianist's speed by working with a variety of hand positions.

While theoretical information on the pianos' characteristics based on construction is essential, one cannot begin to form an idea of a historically informed interpretation of the études purely on theoretical material. Playing a piano as Chopin would have played it with one's own hands is crucial, as a visit to the Cobbe Collection proved. It is the world's largest collection of keyboard instruments that are directly associated with a composer, and it also features those pianos that played such an important role in Chopin's life – two models of Érard, a Graf, and a Pleyel. The experience of

playing the études on those period instruments opened up entirely new views on the works and the possibilities of performing them, and have thus been recorded and included in this thesis for more immediate reference. The Pleyel in the Cobbe Collection, for instance, has a noticeably light touch and is highly responsive, allowing the pianist to increase the tempo considerably. This experience was repeated when playing the 1843 Érard and indicates that, with action as light as this, the original tempo may have been considerably quicker, articulation more refined, both of which will be difficult to reproduce on modern instruments.

In addition to insights into articulatory nuances and tempo, playing these original pianos also revealed another intriguing fact. Since they have been explicitly chosen by the composer, one can assume that he valued their individual sounds. In addition, surviving Pleyel pianos show immense variations in set-up and probably have been adjusted specifically according to their owners and players. With regard to Chopin's Pleyel, it is possible that the preserved setup is one he would have chosen himself, bringing the researcher much closer to the ideal sound that can also be applied when establishing a historically informed reading of the études, which have to this day not yet been considered by scholars in the context of historically informed performance practice.

After establishing a range of elements that are likely to have influenced performances in the nineteenth century, an in-depth examination of Études Op. 10 No. 3 and 4 was undertaken. Applying those previously highlighted aspects to particular passages of the score was the final step in the process of developing a historically informed interpretation and finding out how these passages may have been played and how they may have sounded.

The question of how they may have sounded is particularly interesting in the present day, where printed scores of Chopin's music are easily obtainable and every pianist advanced enough performing them, while countless recordings have been made, the majority of them on modern pianos. It is this contemporary sound characterised by modern-day pianos that the present-day audience is familiar with and that has influenced listeners to love Chopin's compositions. When a performer approaches these études with the aim of creating a historically informed performance, he or she would include the study of other compositions, also taking into consideration the known conventions of the time – implementing a similar approach as the one used in this thesis.

This not only brings the researcher several steps closer to what Chopin may have hoped for in his études both musically and pedagogically. It also brings new life to the work and broadens modern pianists' musical horizons; in order to gain a viable image of the études authentic shape, they will meticulously study them, their surviving manuscripts, their different versions, the composer's comments and corrections, treatises, letters, reviews, recordings – anything that may offer a point of reference as to how one particular articulation was meant to be executed, how fast or slow a certain tempo would have been taken at the time, or how mechanical aspects would influence the performance of a piece. They will become completely immersed in the work and develop a new understanding of the composition. In the process of this thesis, not only has theoretical research helped to develop this understanding, but to a great extent also the direct experience of Chopin's instruments. Feeling their very unique properties under one's own fingers can truly help create a mental image of articulation, dynamics and tempo as well as the specific vital characteristics of a piece originally written for and played on the period instruments.

Trying to reconstruct an interpretation that is as close as possible to what we believe to be one based on historical conventions, however, can easily lead to misconceptions. Performers and audiences today will never know just exactly how Chopin intended his compositions to sound when performed, and it is not the aim of historically informed performance practice to state universal rules about this concern or even to directly imitate a historic performer's personal style. It is rather trying to establish guidelines of what was common practice at a certain time in history, by looking at comments by listeners about what was particularly interesting, surprising or even outrageous about a new piece. This will allow the researcher to make more general assumptions about the practices of the time, and, based on that, how a composer complied with them or not.

For Chopin, research in this thesis shows that his playing was particularly characterised by his fluid style, a highly personalised combination of rhythmic varieties and strong focus on close listening – elements that he used to great effect and one that admirers and pupils could be expected to emulate. But on the contrary, pianists then were, in fact, ‘warned off from imitating him rather than being encouraged to do so,’¹ for the simple reason that they knew what made his performances so special and unforgettable. As fellow pianist Ferdinand Hiller describes it vividly:

What in the hands of others was elegant embellishment, in his hands became a colorful wreath of flowers; what in others was technical dexterity seemed in his playing like the flight of a swallow. All thought of isolating any one quality - novelty, grace, perfection, soul - fell away; it was simply Chopin.²

¹ Jonathan Bellman, ‘Chopin’s Pianism And The Reconstruction of The Ineffable’, *Music Teachers National Association e-Journal* (February 2012), 15.

² Ferdinand Hiller, *Briefe an eine Ungenannte* (Köln: DuMont and Schauberg, 1877), 150-152; quoted and translated in Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by his Pupils*, trans.

If, however, it is impossible to exactly reproduce the way Chopin played, why would performers wish to dedicate research into the question of ‘how to?’ some may ask. One possible answer might be that by examining a work closely, one gains great insight into the work itself, and anyone prepared to dedicate him or herself to it will be amply rewarded. This analysis brings out elements that would have been characteristic of a contemporaneous performance and it highlights Chopin’s trademark elements such as immense attention to the quality of sound. And while knowledge of these elements does not give the ability to emulate the great composer’s playing, it provides performers with a strong foundation on which they can build when preparing their own interpretation. This echoes Alfred Brendel, who emphasises the importance of a strong artistic base for each pianist, as without it, all further attempts will be unstable and are at risk of collapsing.³

Preparing one’s individual interpretation is a long process, and one that can and should be historically informed, in the most literal sense. Looking into earlier treatises, studying what was common practice and what was expected allows performers to make a cognisant choice drawing from a large number of factors that will later shape their own, highly individual interpretation. Performers can expand the types of sounds and articulations in their own technical repertoire, ‘master certain specialised (and currently all but forgotten) pianistic tools’⁴ and acquire knowledge that will not only serve them well in the performance of the études, but also many other works by Chopin and is a worthwhile investment in any performing career. For

Naomi Shohet, ed. Roy Howat (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 270.

³ See Chapter 1 page 23.

⁴ Bellman, ‘Chopin's Pianism’, 26.

teachers and performers alike, these types of historical investigations can bridge the gap between modern interpretations and historically informed interpretations serving to help reveal a work's true essence. Preparing such a historically informed performance means getting to know the origins of a work, and adapting this 'new' old style creates an intriguing experience on modern instruments. It poses the exciting challenge of recreating historical shape with modern means – a challenge that every performer should embrace; 'to engage our imaginations to produce creative and individual interpretations, and to approach this task with the intent of surprising and delighting those that hear us: these are the approaches that Chopin himself used to astound and delight his listeners.'⁵

⁵ Ibid., 26.

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