

practice & performance

The *25 Études Élémentaires*, Op. 137, consists of a set of études, each of which are preceded by a short exercise and a prélude. These short exercises and préludes assist the student in learning and preparing the necessary technical skills to play the étude successfully. They can also be used as effective sight reading and transposition material. To study these études it is important to consider some basic ideas:

- **Balance between the hands**—this often requires the left hand (LH) to play more gently, and the right hand (RH) more strongly, although in some cases the opposite occurs.
- **Fingering and finger independence**—if the hand is held slightly above the keyboard, the fingers have a plane of motion in which they can articulate, leading to enhanced facility. Careful attention to correct choices in fingering are always keys to success.
- **Pedal**—the use of full, half and quarter pedals (and even flutter pedal) can be effective in helping to create a clear sound texture. In many cases, finger pedaling is helpful in freeing up the foot pedal to enhance the texture. Pedal use should enhance the sound and not be used to sustain the sound unless needed and appropriate. The fingers should produce and sustain the sound as much as possible and as appropriate.
- **Sense of contact with the key**—maintaining a sense of contact or feeling with the key allows us to measure how long we need to remain on a key before playing the next note in the sequence. This aids in playing more evenly, reduces rushing, avoids confusion in fingering, and allows time for planning the next hand and finger movements.
- **Tempo**—not all études need to be played at a fast tempo. Careful attention to appropriate tempo allows the performer to bring out the expressive character of each étude to develop expressive playing.

Original French title spellings are maintained throughout: *exercice*, *prélude*, and *étude*.

No. 1 in C Major

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Challenges: Articulations and Short Phrase Groups

Exercise: Independence of fingers 3, 4, 5 is a key to mastering this exercise. If there is difficulty executing the groupings of fingers 3, 4, and 5, try starting a new gesture each time finger 3 or 5 is indicated.

Prélude: Attention to balance between the hands helps to create clarity in the sound texture. It is important to phrase the repeated notes by giving each a different dynamic, thus avoiding a banging sound created by downward motion of the hands on these notes.

Étude: This étude teaches phrasing of short note groups by using different strengths in finger touches to create the sounds of *crescendo* and *decrescendo*. The changes in articulation require the use of gestures. Playing the LH chords by themselves assists in hearing the harmonic progression, and in phrasing the larger sections. M. 7 contains a change of pattern that may require some extra practice. Bertini indicates that it is important to count four beats per measure. This helps to choose an appropriate tempo while bringing out the expressive character of this étude. Holding the LH chords for the full measure allows for clarity in the sound texture, an opportunity to use the pedal judiciously to connect passages where needed, and to enhance the richness of the sound.

Although not included in the original, it is suggested to add a slight *ritardando* in the last three measures to gracefully end the piece.

No. 12 in F Major

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Challenges: Phrasing and Balance

Exercise: The scale patterns in this exercise may seem easy enough to play, but they change pattern quickly, and go in contrary motion and at different intervals apart. Fingering will be the hardest challenge in performing this piece. Trouble coordinating the notes and fingerings can be avoided by practicing out of rhythm until feeling more secure playing in a rhythmic structure. Work in smaller groupings of notes and take time in between the groups to prepare for the next set of notes. Balance between the hands will help clarity in the sound texture.

Prélude: The short note groups need to be phrased carefully with a slight lift or breath between phrases. This will also help coordinate gestures. In mm. 1-2, be sure to count carefully and give the dotted quarter notes their full value. Block the LH chords if needed for pattern security.

Étude: It can be easy to rush in this étude. If there is a tendency to rush, practice playing chords on each beat of the measure in the LH. This will produce the sound of a metronome and you will be able to hear and feel where the beat structure is in the measure. Then play the measures as written in the music. Balance in the B section is important along with finger pedal the LH for clarity of the sound texture. The repeated notes in mm. 27-28 require thoughtful choices in fingering. Follow the *diminuendo* and *rallentando* directions for ease in execution and expressiveness in performance. Pedal use is appropriate as long as it does not obscure the harmony and texture.

No. 13 in D Minor

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Challenges: Articulations and Hand Position Shifts

Exercise: This study contains the natural, harmonic, and melodic forms of the D minor scale. Careful attention should be given to notes and fingering, with clean starts to gestures used to navigate the repeated notes. Balance between the hands will help to create a clean sound texture.

Prélude: Attention to the opening of the hand position in the first measure will be important to consider when approaching the octaves in the remainder of the prélude. It may be helpful to block the octaves during practice to find hand positions. Playing the notes *legato* may also help to learn how to phrase the melody before moving back to staccato performance.

Étude: To successfully learn and perform this étude requires careful attention to the opening and closing of the hand in preparation for the note groups. It is easy for the RH to be late in playing the 16th notes due to the 16th rest. Anticipate the entrance of the RH passage to avoid difficulty with the rhythm. It is helpful to practice this piece one measure at a time. Playing the LH chords alone will help determine the overall harmonic phrasing. Clean starts to gestures will assist in successful learning and performance.

25 ÉTUDES ÉLÉMENTAIRES

No. 1 in C Major

Henri Bertini
Op. 137

Exercise

Lento

mf

1 5 3 4 2 3 3 2 1

4

3 4 2 4 1 5 3

Prélude

Allegretto

mf

1 1 5 4 5 1 1

5

5 1 5 1

Étude

Allegretto

p

1 5 1

No. 3 in G Major

Exercice

Allegretto

mf

Lento

Prélude

mp

$\frac{1}{3} \frac{5}{5}$ $\frac{1}{2} \frac{5}{5}$

3

$\frac{1}{3} \frac{5}{5}$ 5 $\frac{1}{3}$ $\frac{1}{2}$

Andante

Étude

mf

$\frac{1}{3} \frac{5}{5}$ $\frac{1}{2} \frac{5}{5}$

4

$\frac{1}{2} \frac{5}{5}$

Exercice

Allegretto

mf

Prélude

Allegretto

p

5

p

Étude

Allegretto

p

6

f

No. 20 in C Major

Allegretto

Exercise *mp*

1 1 1 3 1 5 2 1 3

5 4 4 3 1

5

1 1 3 1 4 1

5 4 3 1 3 1 3 2

Allegretto

Prélude *mp RH detached*

5 5 5 5 5 5 1 5

2 5

4

1 2 5

8

rall.

1 4 2