



Claude DEBUSSY
CENTENARY EDITION 2018

ÉTUDES BOOK II

*dédiées à la mémoire de
Frédéric Chopin*

VIII POUR LES AGRÉMENTS



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VIII pour les agréments

— for ornamentation — is a most original work... featuring several musical ideas ... mixing embellishments, arpeggios, and short passages in the style of cadenzas.

This etude, the longest, was the last to be completed and is also most elaborate; originally placed at the end of the set, Debussy said: "it borrows the form of a barcarolle on a somewhat Italian sea."

The ornaments concerned are a far cry from the mordents, trills and turns of W. F. Bach — varied, extended embellishments of the type that he had been experimenting with throughout his composing career.

Three years before his death in 1918, and in spite of failing health and the anguish of World War I, these 12 studies in two books were the last significant piano pieces to be written by Debussy — intense, ingenious and unorthodox. Edward Lockspeiser observed that the Études are "perhaps the greatest of his piano works...representing a summary of the composer's entire pianistic creation."

At the same time he was working on a new edition of the Chopin studies, and these are dedicated appropriately to the memory of Chopin, being similar in scope — challenging technical problems skilfully hidden in pieces of harmonic innovation and

sensual charm. In a letter to his editor, he added that these works will ultimately prepare pianists and help them realise that the wealth of piano music demands formidable hands.

Debussy revolutionised the meaning of pianistic sound and how we listen to music, defining our perception of his surreal world. He was also a sensitive pianist, enriching the tradition of Chopin and advancing the integral soul of the sustaining pedal; he apparently played with penetrating softness and a flexible, caressing depth of touch, creating extraordinary

expressive power.

Here is a witty extract from Debussy's own introduction to his fingering-free etudes:

"Absence of fingering is an excellent exercise, negating musicians' perverse desire to completely dismiss the composer's (and editor's), and thereby vindicating words of eternal wisdom: 'If you want something done well, do it yourself'. Let us devise our own fingering!"

In this edition just three studies have been initially selected as being possibly the most approachable.

Wilhelm Friedemann Bach — guide to ornamentation



Pour les agréments

Lento, rubato e leggiero

Musical score for measures 1-2. The piece is in 6/8 time and B-flat major. Measure 1 features a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a half-note chord in the left hand. Measure 2 continues with similar textures. Dynamics include *pp* and *Sost. Ped*.

Musical score for measures 3-4. Measure 3 has a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a half-note chord in the left hand. Measure 4 features a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a half-note chord in the left hand. Dynamics include *pp* and *Sost. Ped off*.

Musical score for measures 5-6. Measure 5 has a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a half-note chord in the left hand. Measure 6 features a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a half-note chord in the left hand. Dynamics include *pp*, *p*, and *pp*. The piece concludes with a *m.s.* (mezzo-soprano) dynamic.

Musical score for measures 7-8. Measure 7 features a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a half-note chord in the left hand. Measure 8 features a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a half-note chord in the left hand. Dynamics include *pp* and *stretto*.

au mouvement

9

p *più p* *m.d.*

Sost. Ped Sost. Ped off

11

pp *m.d.* *m.s.* *rit.*

poco animando

12

p *semplice* *pp* *murmurando*

14

sotto *p*

16

p *rit.* **au mouvement** *pp* *dolce sonore*

Musical score for measures 18 and 19. The piece is in D major (two sharps). Measure 18 starts with a piano *m.s.* dynamic. The right hand features a complex rhythmic pattern with eighth and sixteenth notes, including a triplet of eighth notes. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment of quarter notes. A fermata is placed over the final measure of the system.

(pas en dehors)

Musical score for measures 20 and 21. The key signature changes to B minor (two flats). Measure 20 begins with a *pp* dynamic in the right hand and a *p* dynamic in the left hand. The right hand continues with a melodic line, while the left hand features a triplet of eighth notes. A fermata is placed over the final measure of the system.

Musical score for measures 22 and 23. The key signature remains B minor. Measure 22 starts with a *p* dynamic. The right hand has a melodic line with some grace notes, and the left hand has a rhythmic accompaniment. A fermata is placed over the final measure of the system.

p léger et dansant

Musical score for measures 24 and 25. The key signature changes to D major (two sharps). Measure 24 starts with a *mf* dynamic and is marked *marqué*. The right hand has a melodic line, and the left hand features a triplet of eighth notes. A fermata is placed over the final measure of the system.

4
a tempo (poco animando)

Musical score for measures 23-24. Measure 23 features a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a bass line. Measure 24 is a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The tempo is 'a tempo (poco animando)'. Performance instructions include 'dolce semplice' and 'pp'.

Musical score for measures 25-26. Measure 25 is a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. Measure 26 is a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The tempo is 'a tempo (poco animando)'.

premier mouvement

Musical score for measures 26-27. Measure 26 is a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. Measure 27 is a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The tempo is 'premier mouvement'. Performance instructions include 'cédez', 'p souple et ondoyant', and 'dolce sostenuto'.

Musical score for measures 28-29. Measure 28 is a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. Measure 29 is a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The tempo is 'premier mouvement'. Performance instructions include 'cresc.'.

Musical score for measures 29-30. Measure 29 is a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. Measure 30 is a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The tempo is 'premier mouvement'. Performance instructions include 'sopra', 'mf', 'f', and 'rf'.

pp subito
30 *rubato (poco scherzando)*
pp
p

quasi cadenza

6
31 *m.s. sotto*
sopra
3

m.s. un poco stretto *rit.* *m.d.*
mf sonore *m.d.* *m.s.* *m.d.*
6 6 3

premier mouvement

animando poco a poco

expressif
33 *p* *molto leggiero*

34

35

mf

p ma sonore

36

mf

sempre animando con fuoco

37

p

mf

38

mf

f

mf

f

cédez

au mouvement

Musical score for measures 39-40. The piece is in G major (one sharp). Measure 39 features a piano (*p*) dynamic with a sixteenth-note arpeggiated texture in the right hand and a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand. Measure 40 continues this texture. A fermata is placed over the final notes of measure 40.

molto ritardando

Musical score for measures 40-41. Measure 40 continues with a piano-piano (*pp*) dynamic and includes a triplet of sixteenth notes in the right hand. Measure 41 shows a significant deceleration (*molto ritardando*) with a fermata over the final notes, followed by a double bar line and repeat sign.

premier mouvement

Musical score for measures 42-43. Measure 42 features a piano-piano (*pp*) dynamic with a sixteenth-note arpeggiated texture in the right hand and a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand. A sixteenth-note sextuplet is marked in the right hand. A fermata is placed over the final notes of measure 42. Below the bass staff, the instruction *Sost. Ped* is written.

Musical score for measures 43-44. Measure 43 continues with a piano-piano (*pp*) dynamic and includes a sixteenth-note arpeggiated texture in the right hand and a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand. Measure 44 shows a significant deceleration (*molto ritardando*) with a fermata over the final notes, followed by a double bar line and repeat sign.

Sost. Ped off

Musical score for measures 45-47. The piece is in 2/4 time. Measure 45 starts with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth-note patterns, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment. Measures 46 and 47 show a crescendo leading to a fortissimo (*pp*) dynamic. The right hand has a triplet of eighth notes in measure 47. The piece concludes with a *m.s.* (more slowly) marking.

Musical score for measures 48-49. The tempo is marked *stretto*. Both measures feature a rapid sixteenth-note scale in the right hand, with a sixteenth-note accompaniment in the left hand. The dynamics range from piano (*p*) to fortissimo (*pp*).

Musical score for measures 50-51. The section is labeled *cadenza p*. The right hand contains a series of sixteenth-note patterns with fingerings 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 2, 4, 2, 1. The left hand has a steady accompaniment. The dynamic is *p*. The text *cre - scen - do mol - to* is written above the staff. Measure 51 ends with a *m.d.* (more slowly) marking.

Musical score for measures 52-54. The right hand features a rapid sixteenth-note scale starting with a fortissimo (*f*) dynamic, which increases to fortissimo fortissimo (*ff*) by measure 54. The left hand has a steady accompaniment. The section ends with a *m.d.* marking.

Musical score for measures 55-57. The tempo is marked *au mouvement*. The right hand begins with a *molto dimin.* (very diminishing) dynamic. The left hand has a steady accompaniment. Measure 55 includes a ten-measure scale in the right hand with fingerings 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 2, 4, 2, 1, 2. The dynamics range from *m.d.* (more slowly) to *à peine pp* (barely pianissimo). The section concludes with a *m.d.* marking.

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Appendix

Comments, afterthoughts & vocabulary

As an interpreter-performer I often have to ask myself why a composer has chosen a particular time or key signature and sometimes the answer is not at all obvious. Now that we have the tools with which to “re-arrange” the music otherwise, my position as an editor becomes much more interesting. When these pieces were first written I like to think that the composer did not necessarily consider all the options, (at the time they had so much else to think about) and I doubt whether a colleague, editor or proofreader would have had the temerity to question a composer’s wishes. However, in retrospect I like to think that these now aged composers are approvingly viewing my modifications from above and giving the nod to my humble efforts.

In spite of Debussy’s witty introduction I have suggested some fingering: *“Absence of fingering is an excellent exercise, negating musicians’ perverse desire to completely dismiss the composer’s (and editor’s), and thereby vindicating words of eternal wisdom: ‘If you want something done well, do it yourself’”. Let us seek our own fingering!*

The composer indicated metronome speeds very rarely and he once wrote: *“as a rose which might only last for one morning, a metronome speed might only work for one bar.”*

None of the sostenuto pedal * suggestions are attributed to Debussy. However, the opening and closing sections offer an ideal opportunity for the pedal points bass F, and also bass G flat.

- **1** the comma is indicated unusually as a pause with a quaver rest beneath
- **10** at 2nd beat — this edition has tried to make clear Debussy's instruction for the RH to take over the LH chord silently.
- **14** 4th quaver beat D natural delayed by one quaver beat for aesthetic and practical reasons
- **19** 3rd quaver beat LH alto top B removed
- **21** presented in A flat
- **20-23** I must admit to being a little baffled by this section, both musically and in particular with the metre. Barlines and time-signatures have been modified for 22-23.
- **27** — is the final RH semiquaver chord D natural an error ? Here I have added a sharp, although repeating the previous (and following) chords is also an option.
- **38** presented in E. The diamond notehead D natural can be omitted.

Duration: 5'45

* The sostenuto pedal was first shown in Paris at the Industrial Exposition of 1844. The idea was not immediately taken up by piano builders, but in 1874, it was perfected and patented by Steinway, soon to be fitted on all their grands and better uprights. One obvious commercial reason for not including the sostenuto pedal in musical scores must have been the thought of excluding buyers whose pianos didn't have it. Debussy and Ravel certainly played such Steinways in the Paris *salons*. Apparently, in 1900 the composer René de Castéra bought a 3-pedal Steinway on the advice of Albeniz. One could say that it took over 100 years for it to become established.

pas en dehors	not to be marked
léger et dansant	light and dance-like
marqué	marked
cédez	yield
souple et ondoyant	supple and swaying
à peine	almost silent