

Claude DEBUSSY  
CENTENARY EDITION 2018

ÉTUDES BOOK II

*dédiées à la mémoire de  
Frédéric Chopin*

XI POUR LES ARPÈGES

COMPOSÉS





Musical Health Warning : please be aware that these editions are definitely not urtext and should be consulted together with a traditional version. They have been devised purely to help solve musical and technical problems at the piano.

Please send comments and error reports to  
Ray Alston : [contact@pianopracticaleditions.com](mailto:contact@pianopracticaleditions.com)

## XI pour les arpèges composés

— for creative arpeggios — is deservedly the most popular of the études, recrafting these rippled chords in a variety of imaginative ways and influencing composers for generations to come.

The musical challenges are basically how to incorporate these exotic embellishments and to project the melodic and harmonic line. In spite of a ranging world war, the central section in typical Debussy humorous vein is very lively and reminiscent of Pickwick and General Lavine.

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 études:

*“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.



# Pour les arpèges composés

[ ♩ = 66 ]

*dolce e lusingando*

3 4 3 2 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

This system contains measures 1 through 4. The music is in 3/4 time with a key signature of three flats. The right hand features a complex arpeggiated pattern with fingerings 3, 4, 3, 2, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3. The left hand has a simple accompaniment. The tempo and mood are indicated as *dolce e lusingando*.

3 *m.s.* *rf* *pp*

This system contains measures 5 through 8. The right hand continues the arpeggiated pattern. The left hand has a simple accompaniment. The dynamics are marked *m.s.* (mezzo-soprano), *rf* (riforma), and *pp* (pianissimo).

5 *rf*

This system contains measures 9 through 12. The right hand continues the arpeggiated pattern. The left hand has a simple accompaniment. The dynamics are marked *rf* (riforma).

7 *pp* *m.d.* *m.s.* *m.s.*

This system contains measures 13 through 16. The right hand features a complex arpeggiated pattern with a dynamic marking of *pp* (pianissimo) and *m.d.* (mezzo-dolce). The left hand has a simple accompaniment. The dynamics are marked *m.s.* (mezzo-soprano) and *m.s.* (mezzo-soprano).

*Sost. Ped.*

..\*\*..

8

*m.d.* *m.s.* *m.d.* *m.d.*

*Sost. Ped.* *m.d.*

Detailed description: This system shows measure 8 of a piano piece. The music is in a key with three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor) and a 3/4 time signature. The right hand features a melodic line with slurs and accents, marked *m.d.* (mezzo-forte). The left hand provides a bass line with slurs and accents, marked *m.s.* (mezzo-sotto). A *Sost. Ped.* (sostenuto pedal) marking is placed below the first few notes of the left hand. The system concludes with a final note marked *m.d.* and a fermata.

9

Detailed description: This system shows measure 9. The right hand continues the melodic line with slurs and accents. The left hand continues the bass line with slurs and accents. The system concludes with a final note marked *m.d.* and a fermata.

10

*m.s.*

Detailed description: This system shows measure 10. The right hand continues the melodic line with slurs and accents. The left hand continues the bass line with slurs and accents. The system concludes with a final note marked *m.s.* and a fermata.

11

Detailed description: This system shows measure 11. The right hand features a melodic line with slurs and accents. The left hand provides a bass line with slurs and accents. The system concludes with a final note marked *m.s.* and a fermata.

4 4

12 *p*

13

14 *p* *m.s. sotto* *m.d.* *m.s.* *mf sonore* *m.d.*

15 *mf* *molto dimin.*

Musical score for measures 16-17. The piece is in a key with three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor) and a 3/4 time signature. Measure 16 begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and features a melodic line in the right hand with slurs and a bass line. Measure 17 is marked *expressif* and includes a half note in the bass line. The system concludes with a mezzo-forte (*m.d.*) dynamic and a melodic flourish in the right hand.

Musical score for measures 18-19. Measure 18 starts with a mezzo-forte (*m.d.*) dynamic and continues the melodic and harmonic development. Measure 19 features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line with a fermata. The system ends with a mezzo-forte (*m.d.*) dynamic and a melodic flourish in the right hand.

Musical score for measures 20-21. Both measures consist of a continuous sixteenth-note scale in the right hand, with the left hand providing a harmonic accompaniment. A *Sost. Ped.* (Sostenuto Pedal) marking is present at the beginning of measure 20, and a decorative flourish (three asterisks) is at the end of measure 21.

Musical score for measures 22-23. Both measures consist of a continuous sixteenth-note scale in the right hand, with the left hand providing a harmonic accompaniment. A *Sost. Ped.* (Sostenuto Pedal) marking is present at the beginning of measure 22, and a decorative flourish (three asterisks) is at the end of measure 23.

Musical score for measures 22-23. The piece is in a minor key. Measure 22 features a descending melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. A fermata is placed over the final note of measure 22. The instruction "Sost. Ped." is written below the staff, with a line extending to the end of measure 23. A decorative flourish is present at the end of measure 23.

*poco a poco crescendo*

Musical score for measures 24-25. The piece continues with a similar descending melodic pattern. Measure 24 shows a continuation of the melodic line, and measure 25 concludes with a final chord. The instruction "poco a poco crescendo" is centered above the staff.

Musical score for measures 26-27. The piece continues with a similar descending melodic pattern. Measure 26 shows a continuation of the melodic line, and measure 27 concludes with a final chord. The instruction "poco a poco crescendo" is centered above the staff.

Musical score for measures 28-30. The piece is in a major key. Measure 28 is marked "lumineux" and "ff". Measure 29 is marked "sec" and "8va". Measure 30 is marked "mf m.d." and "f". The instruction "lumineux" is written above the staff. The instruction "sec" is written above the staff. The instruction "8va" is written above the staff. The instruction "mf m.d." is written above the staff. The instruction "f" is written below the staff. The instruction "f" is written below the staff.

27 *p* *mf* *staccato marcato* 8<sup>va</sup> 1

28 *p* *elegante, un poco pomposo* 8<sup>va</sup>

[♩ = 84] *giocososo* 29 *f* *m.d.* *dimin.* 5

*scherzandare* 31 *p* *pp* *m.s.* *m.s.* *p*



Musical score for measures 34-36. The piece is in 3/4 time, with a key signature of two flats. Measure 34 features a bass line with eighth-note patterns and a treble line with chords. Measure 35 shows a change to 2/4 time, with a treble line marked *pp* and a bass line with chords. Measure 36 continues in 2/4 time with chords in both staves, marked *m.s.*

Musical score for measures 37-40. Measures 37 and 39 feature a treble line with triplets and a bass line with chords, marked *f* and *m.d.*. Measures 38 and 40 feature a treble line with triplets and a bass line with chords, marked *p* and *f*. Measure 39 includes the instruction *staccato marcato*.

Musical score for measures 39-40. Measure 39 features a treble line with chords and a bass line with chords, marked *f*. Measure 40 features a treble line with chords and a bass line with chords, marked *f*. The instruction *staccato marcato* is present above the treble staff.

Musical score for measures 41-44. Measure 41 features a treble line with chords and a bass line with chords, marked *f* and *m.s.*. Measure 42 features a treble line with chords and a bass line with chords, marked *m.d.*. Measure 43 features a treble line with a 7-measure slur and a bass line with chords, marked *m.d.*. Measure 44 features a treble line with chords and a bass line with chords, marked *f* and *m.d.*. The instruction *subito p* is present below the bass staff.

43 *p* *sfz* *sfz*

45 *p* *sfz* *più p* *pincé*

47 *pincé* *rit.* *pp*

49 *tempo rubato* *sempre pp* *5-1* *m.d.*

50 *pp* *m.d.* *m.s.*

*molto rit.* *tempo primo*

*m.d.* *m.s.* *sempre pp e lusingando*

*mf*

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

*(mf)*

tempo primo

rit.

60

62

63

*più pp*

65

*pp*

*m.d.*

*m.s.*

*pp*

*m.d.*

*m.s.*

67

*ppp*

*m.s.*

*m.s.*

*laissez vibrer*

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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, the craft of an editor becomes much more interesting. When these pieces were first written I doubt whether the composer objectively considered all the options, (at the time they had so much else to think about) and I also 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 this witty introduction by Debussy, 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 very rarely indicated metronome speeds 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, With practice it is possible to combine the sostenuto and soft pedals with the left foot, and together with the sustaining pedal, one can achieve a beautiful impressionist sound with orchestral and pianistic effect.

Debussy was not always particular about writing a perfect number of notes and rests within a beat or bar, and sometimes one finds inaccuracies and confusion in rhythm. In these instances I believe that the composer preferred to present his music visually and that means we enjoy a certain freedom in interpreting his intentions. I have noted those bars where a lack of mathematical exactitude might cause concern.

- There is neither a French nor Italian tempo indication, nor metronome speed (see above) in the original edition (Durand) and I suggest possibly choosing the tempo from bar **11**.
- **13** 2nd beat : the repeated RH thumb A flat is missing; I have included it for pianistic and aesthetic reasons.
- **21** LH slightly altered to match **20**
- **25** A bar which defies mathematical analysis... here is my solution
- **31 — 40** mostly re-presented in 2/4 time, logically following the rhythmic pattern. The term *scherzandare* has been imaginatively invented by Debussy (possibly an amalgam of *scherzando* and *andare*).
- **34** I wonder whether the RH D flats should be naturals ?
- **37** Bass octave F# is a crotchet in the original, possibly an error (see the next two bars)
- **39** Confusion here... the final 3 semiquavers could be interpreted as a triplet
- **42** 4/4 time-signature missing here — probably an oversight
- **43** Bass B — a *sforzato* quaver to match **45**
- **46 & 47** It is difficult to reconcile “*pincé*” and the tenuto sign in the original
- **49** This rubato link back to the A section is possibly one of the most magical in all Debussy’s output for piano
- **54** 3rd beat modified to match **3**
- **61** Tempo primo probably as **31** *giocososo scherzandare*
- **63** The sostenuto pedal suggestion is editorial
- **68** The pedal mark is editorial, time values of the arpeggios have been halved for consistency and the 2nd beat A flat arpeggio has been slightly modified.

**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.

lumineux    **radiant**  
                   pincé    **plucked**  
 laisser vibrer    **hold the pedal**