REDEFINING VIRTUOSITY IN MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN’S

12 ÉTUDES IN ALL THE MINOR KEYS

by

BOGDAN CLAUDIU DULU

B.Mus., National University of Music Bucharest, 2007
M.Mus., Mannes College The New School For Music, 2009

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Abstract

Marc-André Hamelin is ranked among the elite of world pianists of our time. Mirroring the lost tradition of composer-pianists specific to the 19th century, his music stands nowadays as an exception. As such, his collection *12 Études In All The Minor Keys*, written over a period of almost twenty-five years and published by Peters Edition in 2010, is a purposeful contribution towards perpetuating this nearly extinct art.

This dissertation is the first academic study addressing Hamelin’s piano études. The presentation of this set is tied to the concept of virtuosity in relation to its past meanings. I offer a brief overview of the term “virtuosity,” and show that Hamelin’s études stand as far more than just “pianistic challenges beyond the reach of most human fingers.” The interviews conducted with the composer, as well as other experts in the field, allowed me to form an insightful opinion on the topic, and to offer an apprized overview of the set as a whole, with special focus on six of these études (nos. 5-10).
Preface

This dissertation, written under the guidance of Professors Jane Coop and Dr. Nathan Hesselink, is an original, unpublished work which stands as intellectual property of its author, Bogdan Claudiu Dulu. All the interviews conducted during the research for this dissertation took place in accordance with the UBC Behavioral Research Ethics Board Certificate Number H14-02493 under the supervision of Principal Investigator, Dr. Nathan Hesselink. All musical examples from Marc-André Hamelin’s *12 Études In All The Minor Keys* are reprinted with kind permission from Peters Edition. All other musical examples are in the public domain.
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Chapter One. Introductory Remarks

The aim of this dissertation is to present Marc-André Hamelin’s set of *12 Études In All The Minor Keys* from a performer’s perspective, while challenging the idea of pianistic virtuosity as merely acrobatics. For a number of reasons that will be outlined below, such a discussion of the composer-pianist’s oeuvre has not been carried out before. Four questions need to be answered: Who is Marc-André Hamelin? What has been documented so far on his artistry? Why is this topic relevant in today’s performing world? How are the findings presented?

1.1 The Who — Hamelin, “The King Of Virtuosos”

Marc-André Hamelin (b. September 5, 1961, Montreal) is a Canadian pianist, composer, and recording artist whose career spans 30 years of active concertizing on many of the world’s major concert stages. Hailed by *The New York Times* as both a “King of Virtuosos”¹ and an “Emperor of the Keyboard,”² Hamelin’s superhuman technical capabilities have earned him cult status among his peers. With nine Grammy® Awards nominations to date, his large discography (over 60 releases) reveals a daring exploration of the neglected piano music of the 19th and 20th centuries. He is equally at home with the great works of the established repertoire, recordings of which have been received to great acclaim. Complementing his busy performing and recording careers, the pianist has proven to be a composer — primarily for his instrument — of substantial


worth. Mostly self-taught, he did receive some training in composition from Maurice Wright and Matthew Greenbaum while a student at Temple University in Philadelphia.

Another facet of his extremely active musical life is his editorial work on compositions by Sergei Rachmaninoff and Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji. Although he does not teach at all, it has been my personal experience that he is very happy to share his insights about piano playing.

Hamelin is the recipient of a lifetime achievement award from the German Record Critics’ Association, an Officer of the Order of Canada (OC), a Chevalier de l’Ordre du Québec (CQ), and a member of the Royal Society of Canada.

1.2 The What — Review of the Literature

My research has revealed a relative dearth of literature on Marc-André Hamelin, with a clear discrepancy between the available materials addressing the performer and the composer. While the materials on Hamelin the performer come in the form of many articles, interviews, concert reviews, one book, and three documentaries, there are virtually no writings (scholarly or otherwise) on Hamelin’s creative output in general, or his piano études in particular. I believe that my doctoral research, synthesized in this document, is the first attempt to provide a practical guide for performers faced with understanding and solving the numerous musical and technical problems that these études possess.

Jory Debenham, a PhD student in the Department of History at Lancaster University (UK), published in Notes, the Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association, an article

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3 A complete catalogue of Hamelin’s music can be found in Appendix A, courtesy of Alistair Hinton from The Sorabji Archives.
5 A current biography of Marc-André Hamelin, as well as his complete discography can be found at http://www.marcandrehamelin.com/.
titled “Piano Music by Marc-André Hamelin.” Here she talks about the set of *12 Études In All The Minor Keys*, as well as *Con intimissimo sentimento*, a collection of seven pieces for solo piano released by Peters Edition in 2011. This article is the only scholarly-like writing published in a specialized music journal that I could find.

Debenham presents the works from a passive, observational angle. Her writing clear and well crafted, she does not present any of her own findings, but rather informs the reader mostly through quotes from Hamelin’s written *Forward*, which provides a generous and diverse amount of information. Debenham claims that “as one would expect from the title, each of these works [the études] addresses a specific pianistic or technical challenge” (p. 186). Such a claim is erroneous. Simply because “technical challenge” (expressed through truly atrocious passages) and “étude” share the same printed page does not imply that the former is in a relationship of causality to the latter. As my research will show, none of these études was started with a specific challenge (technical or pianistic) in mind. As such, none of them aims to address such challenges. These pieces were called études because of their inherent pianistic difficulties they display. Later on in the article, Debenham wrongly identifies Alexis Hollaender as “Lorin Hollander” (p. 189).

The only academic paper that appears to focus, at least in part, on Marc-André Hamelin’s creative output is a Master of Music project report by Yi-Syuan Lin called *Virtuoso Piano Transcriptions of Stephen Hough and Marc-André Hamelin: Lisztian Tradition in the Twenty-First Century* (California State University, Long Beach, 2009). The theme stated in the title of this paper does not appear to be addressed anywhere in the document. In fact, Lin does not address any of Hamelin’s or Hough’s piano works, transcriptions or otherwise. Instead, the

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6 Debenham, Jory. *Piano Music by Marc-André Hamelin*. Notes, Volume 70, Number 1, September 2013, pp. 186-189.
The author presents some generally available information on these two musicians in the form of quotes from a handful of sources. In Hamelin’s case, Lin draws all of her claims from only one book (Robert Rimm’s *Hamelin and The Eight*). Lin’s assertion that “Liszt was possibly the greatest, and last, pure example of a pianist-composer” (*Abstract*, page unnumbered) is entirely inaccurate. There are many examples of prominent pianist-composers at the turn of the 20th century, with Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943) standing very tall (both musically and otherwise). On page 9, the same author argues that “Hamelin’s personal expressive qualities, especially that of his facial features [sic], manifest themselves directly and intimately in his compositions.” This type of statement is obviously irrelevant and inappropriate.

The foundation upon which I carried my doctoral research is based primarily on the extensive interviews I conducted with Marc-André Hamelin himself. I first approached the composer-pianist in November 2012, at the end of a Q&A session offered by him at the University of British Columbia’s School of Music, which I eagerly attended. Upon learning that I was taking on the daunting task of tackling his études, Hamelin appeared both pleased and surprised. He readily agreed on remaining in touch and generously offered to provide me with any feedback the research might need. Since that time, our e-mail communication has been constant, and remains active to this day. Aside from such correspondence, Hamelin and I met in person twice: in November 2014 at the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra’s School of Music for a long audio-recorded interview, and in April 2015 backstage at Benaroya Hall (home to the Seattle Symphony Orchestra) for a long work session, during which time I played études nos. 5-10 for him. All the information and performing suggestions that I received directly from the composer found their way into the pages of this dissertation and were instrumental in creating an
informed opinion on the compositional process, sources of inspiration, performance, and the many details and challenges that these works possess.

At Hamelin’s recommendation, in January 2015 I contacted and subsequently e-interviewed Alistair Hinton, a good friend of the composer and dedicatee, along with his wife, of Étude No. 10. Hinton is a Scottish composer whose name is closely associated with Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, being the sole heir of Sorabji’s œuvre and running the Sorabji Archives. Hinton is intimately familiar with Hamelin’s études: he is, in fact, the driving force behind the existence of the set. Not only did he encourage Hamelin in the early days to compose, but after a “composer’s block” of 12 years (which I will explain later on) he persuaded Hamelin to resume writing and complete the set. Aside from the études, our discussion topics included the concepts of “mécanique” and “technique,” of which Hinton makes a clear distinction, as well as pianistic virtuosity.

Also for matters related to the concept of virtuosity, as well as performance practice, I approached Mark Ainley, whom I interviewed at his Vancouver apartment in December 2014. With a primary interest in historical recordings of the great piano masters, Ainley’s articles have been published in the *International Piano Quarterly, International Piano, Clavier Companion*, and *Classical Record Collector* magazines.

Aside from these interviews, my primary research source was the score of the études, printed and published by Edition Peters in 2010. All musical examples pertaining to Hamelin’s études come from this source, and reproduction of this copyrighted material was granted to me by the publisher. All other musical examples used originate from the Petrucci Music Library of the International Music Score Library Project (IMSLP)\(^7\) and are free of copyright.

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\(^7\) Available online at [http://www.imslp.org/](http://www.imslp.org/).
Secondary sources consulted include Hamelin’s own recordings of these études, available in two formats: audio from studio recordings (Hyperion CDA67789) and audio-video from live performances (YouTube clips).

1.3 The Why — Justification of the Study

There are many different approaches to looking at these works from a scholarly point of view. The music can be thoroughly analyzed with the careful eye of the PhD candidate in music theory; some of the music’s literary content could draw the attention of a dedicated PhD candidate in musicology; and a DMA piano candidate could do a comparative study between Hamelin’s Études and those by Charles Valentin Alkan (who wrote two sets of 12 études each, in both minor and major keys), or Leopold Godowsky (a clear influence on Hamelin), or even Frédéric Chopin or Franz Liszt. The possibilities are almost endless. My research does not claim to be exhaustive in any way; on the contrary, it is a first step in scholarly research on the music of an extraordinary composer-pianist. My intention is twofold: to relay information conveyed to me directly by the composer, and to present in more detail six of these études from the perspective of a performer who has spent many hundreds of hours studying and performing these wonderful works. Special consideration is also given to the concept of virtuosity, as applied to these pieces.

The lack of academic interest in Hamelin’s compositional output in general is complemented by a relatively small interest shown towards performing his works. I identify a few possible reasons:

1. Hamelin has thus far not produced an extended body of work, despite having composed more steadily in the last few years. In fact, the largest genre that he has tackled to date is variation form (two published sets).
2. Hamelin’s music retains an element of novelty. It was not until recent years that his music became readily available.\(^8\)

3. Hamelin’s music is not suitable for everyone. Simply put, it is atrociously demanding. It not only requires a superior technique, but also cool objectivity at blazing speeds, a pair of XXXL-size hands, and a panache for complicated and dense textures — all of which are intrinsic to Hamelin’s legendary pianism.

I believe there is much to learn from this music. It opens up a door to the times of the past when “it was as expected for a pianist to compose as it was for a chef to create his own recipe.”\(^9\)

1.4 The How — Outline of the Document

All the information received directly from the composer through the mediums explained in 1.2 is presented in this document in the form of personal communication. As most of the information contained in Hamelin’s Forward of the printed score of the Études (primary source) was also covered during our extended communication, this material is not formally cited. All the information about the composer which originates from secondary sources is used following the standard norms of academic citation. The information resulted from interviewing the other two subjects of this research (Alistair Hinton and Mark Ainley) is referenced once, the first time each of their names occurs. Any and all subsequent quotations of Hinton and Ainley are to be attributed to these interviews and are not referenced again.

This dissertation contains four chapters. Following Chapter One, which offers introductory remarks on the theme, goals, and scope of the document, including the review of the literature, Chapter Two offers an overview of the term “virtuosity,” presenting the change of its

\(^8\) It is commendable of Peters Edition to publish some of his most recent piano music.

meaning throughout the centuries. I discuss these various meanings of the term, I present the thoughts of the three subjects interviewed (Hamelin, Hinton, Ainley) on this concept, and I redefine the notion of virtuosity as applied to the Études.

Chapter Three is dedicated to Marc-André Hamelin’s 12 Études In All The Minor Keys. In this chapter I present of the set as a whole, with many interesting details conveyed to me by the composer that were never published before. I then focus on six of these études (Nos. 5-10) in more detail. Each presentation follows the same structure:

1. Printed and chronological order, year of composition, information on the dedicatee;
2. Presentation of the text with explanation of structure;
3. Performing suggestions and remarks: pedaling, dynamics, phrasing/articulation, fingerings, tempi, and possible occurring misreadings. All of these are my own findings, combined with Hamelin’s own remarks.

Note that the 2010 Peters Edition (the only existing edition) contains a number of misprints. All the identified misprints in études nos. 5-9 were verified with the composer. A comprehensive list can be found in Appendix B.

Chapter Four synthesizes, in the form of a Conclusion, some of my thoughts and findings as they gradually took shape during the course of my research.
CHAPTER TWO. VIRTUOSITY

By today’s standards, virtuosity is a double-edged sword. What one sees as a great compliment, another may perceive as unflattering affront. It is a large and complex notion that has been steadily accumulating different meanings over the course of several centuries.

2.1 Virtuosity Then and Now

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word appears to have been first used in 1443 by Bishop Reginald Pecock (c1392-?1459) in his book The Reule of Crysten Religioun (The Rule of Christian Religion) in reference to moral goodness or virtuousness (understood as meritorious conduct). In 1464, the same word appears in the Chronicle of John Hardyng as referring to strength or excellence of character. Two centuries later, virtuosity is associated with the idea of amateurism, becoming the label for a dilettante (a person with an amateur interest in the arts).10

As early as the 17th century, the virtuoso musician was expected not only to be a skillful performer, but also importantly a composer, a theorist, or at least a famous maestro di capella.11 Harvey Sachs advances the idea that sprezzatura was the performing attitude of that time.12 Defined as “studied carelessness,” sprezzatura originates from Baldassare Castiglione’s 1528 book Libro del cortegiano (The Book of the Courtier) and refers to a certain “nonchalance, so as

to conceal all art and make whatever one does or says appear to be without effort and almost without any thought about it.”

In 1703 Sébastien de Brossard defined virtuosity in relation to the Italian virtu. From his Music Dictionary:

> VIRTU, veut dire en Italien non seulement cette habitude de l’ame qui nous rend agréables à Dieu & nous fait agir selon les règles de la droite raison; mais aussi cette Superiorité de genie, d’adresse ou d’habileté, qui nous fait exceller soit dans la Théorie, soit dans la Pratique des beaux Arts au deflis de ceux qui s’y apliquent aussi bien que nous. C’est de la que les Italiens ont formé les Adjectifs VIRTUOSO, ou VIRTUDIOSO, au feminin Virtudiosa, dont même ils font souvent des Substantifs pour nommer, ou pour louer ceux à qui la Providence a bien voulu donner cette excellence ou cette superiorité. Ainsi selon eux un excellent Peintre, un habile Architecte, &c. est un Virtuoso; mais ils donnent plus communément & plus spécialement cette belle Epithete aux excellens Musiciens, & entre ceux là, plutôt à ceux qui s’apliquent à la Théorie, ou à la Composition de la Musique, qu’à ceux qui exceller dans les autres Arts, en sorte que dans leur langage, dire simplement qu’un homme est un Virtuoso, c’est presque toujours dire que c’est un excellent Musicien. Notre langue n’a que le mot Illustre qui puissance en quelque manière répondre au Virtuoso des Italiens, car pour celui des Virtuex, l’usage ne luy a pas encore donné cette signification, du moins en parlant ferieullement.

Figure 2.1: Sébastien de Brossard’s definition of Virtu in Dictionnaire de Musique (1703) [fragment from the facsimile of the first edition]

VIRTU. [it] means in Italian not only the habit of the soul which renders us agreeable to God & makes us act according to the rules of the right reason; but also this Superiority of talent, skill, or ability, which makes us excel be it in the Theory, be it in the Practice of the fine Arts, beyond those who apply themselves as much as we do. It is from that that the Italians have formed the Adjectives VIRTUOSO, or VIRTUDIOSO, feminine Virtudiosa, from which they often make Nouns to name or to praise those to whom

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14 Original title: Dictionnaire de Musique, contenant une explication des Termes Grecs, Latins, Italiens, & François les plus usitez dans la Musique.
15 A facsimile of the first edition of the Dictionnaire de Musique (public domain) is available at http://imslp.org/wiki/Dictionnaire_de_musique_%28Brossard,_S%C3%A9bastien_de%29.
Providence has granted this excellence or superiority. Thus, to them, an excellent Painter, a skillful Architect, etc. is a Virtuoso; but they more commonly & more especially give this beautiful Epithet to excellent Musicians, & among them, rather to those who apply themselves to the Theory, or to the Composition of Musique, rather to those who excel in the other Arts, so that in their language, simply saying that a man is a Virtuoso, is almost always to say that he is an excellent Musician. Our language does not have but the word Illustre [illustrious] which could in a certain way respond to the Virtuoso of the Italians, as for Vertueux [virtuous], the usage has not given it this meaning, at least when talking seriously.  

With the flourishing of opera and the instrumental concerto, in the late 18th century the term “virtuoso/a” came to refer to the violinist, pianist, castrato, soprano, etc. who pursued a career as a soloist.  

A milestone in the ever-changing perception of the term is associated with Italian violinist Niccolò Paganini who, in 1831, received an outstanding review after a concert at the King’s Theatre in London:

Our pen seems involuntarily to evade the difficult task of giving utterance to sensations which are beyond the reach of language. If we were to affirm that we have heard many celebrated violinists of various countries, and that Paganini surpasses every thing which their performance had taught us to consider possible on the instrument, we should fall greatly short of the impression we could wish to convey. If we were to declare, as some of our colleagues have maintained, that Paganini has advanced a century beyond the present standard of virtuosity, the assertion would be equally incorrect — for we firmly believe that all the centuries in the womb of Time will not produce a master-spirit, a musical phenomenon, organized like Paganini.  

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16 English translation provided by the author of this dissertation.  
17 Jander, ibid.  
This marks the beginning of a new era: the birth of the exceptionally skilled virtuoso on the technical level. One cannot talk about Paganini without thinking about Franz Liszt. If the former was the greatest virtuoso violinist of his time, the latter soon emerged as the virtuoso pianist of his century.

The tradition of 19th-century virtuoso pianists cannot be dissociated from two musical realities of those times: the ongoing development of the instrument, and the “oneness” of the composer-performer. The piano was the subject of constant experimentations from the leading European instrument makers of the time, and, similarly, the musicians themselves naturally embodied both facets of music creation.

These 19th-century realities that informed the status quo of the virtuoso pianist of the time are no longer the norm in today’s society, but rather an exception. The piano in its current form has now been around for over a century without undergoing any groundbreaking modifications, while to a music student nowadays, the concept of composer-pianist is nothing but a fossilized delicacy: a temptingly rare find, yet unappealingly hard to chew. It is the departure from this tradition that may be associated with today’s negative — oftentimes pejorative — connotation of the virtuoso: the incomplete musician who gives in to technical perfection at the expense of emotional depth and artistic creativity, such that the exhibitionist-virtuoso is born.

Erudition and virtuosity should not be mutually exclusive. Ferruccio Busoni maintains the same thought: “NO, technique is not and never will be the Alpha and Omega of pianoforte playing. (...) a great pianist must first of all be a great technician; but technique, which
constitutes only a part of the art of the pianist, does not lie merely in fingers and wrist or in strength and endurance. Technique in the truer sense has its seat in the brain.”

Alistair Hinton, the encouraging force behind Hamelin’s decision to write and eventually finish the set of études, associates the current misinterpretation of the term “virtuosity” with the commonly encountered use of the word “technique.” Hinton reasons that a more accurate term for describing a pianist’s physical facility at the piano would be “mécanique,” rather than “technique.” In his opinion, the latter should describe all aspects of the musician pianist, unifying the interpretative insights and the digital dexterity, stamina, mental agility, and hand/eye coordination. To that extent, Hinton is right in stating that virtuosity and technique go hand in hand as overall descriptors of pianism and musicianship.

Further discussion on the same topic led Hinton to direct me to the writings of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji. In chapter XII (The Way of the Virtuoso), Sorabji makes reference to Debussy’s remarks upon the adulation of the public for the virtuoso that “at the back of their minds there is always the unformulated idea that the clever virtuoso might carry the concert grand off the platform between his teeth, or balance the conductor on the end of his nose.” Sorabji continues by adding that “the adulation of the public for the virtuoso is essentially an interest in and enthusiasm for acrobatics,” noticing that “the odd thing about virtuoso mania is that it never seems to have touched organ playing seriously.”

Mark Ainley considers that “technique” and “virtuosity” are often poorly understood and defined by people who do not have one and/or the other. Ainley, an expert in historical recordings, argues that any difficult task, artistic or otherwise, does eventually come across with

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21 In the meantime, the status for organ playing has drastically changed with the mass use of display screens (as Hinton points out), as well as the appearance of organ superstars like Cameron Carpenter.
great ease if two elements are combined: the proper means (technique) to tackle a challenging goal and the patience and determination to work for attaining it. Ainley considers that there is a certain lack of awareness towards the amount of time and the amount of intelligently applied physical repetition that is required, in any field, in order to attain a superior level of facility.

With the proliferation of music competitions (nowadays almost the norm in establishing one’s career), my personal sense is that the lack of objectively quantifying the artistic element (in my opinion, unquantifiable) is oftentimes replaced by the measuring of a candidate’s technical abilities (a much more straightforward task). This shift of priorities has a longstanding conditional effect: if technical perfection is to prevail above everything else, the focus of many long hours of practice will be just on that. Music as sport is born.

The concept of virtuosity is not a trademark applied to music making only. It can be found in many fields, containing the ‘extraordinary’ element without necessarily carrying over the pejorative connotation. In sports (gymnastics), virtuosity is often regarded as “performing the common uncommonly well.” Glassman argues that out of the three elements considered for attaining a perfect score — risk, originality, and virtuosity — the latter is supremely elusive; it is always “the mark of true mastery, of genius and beauty.”

As Ken Carbone argues in his volume *The Virtuoso: Face to Face with 40 Extraordinary Talents*, virtuosity is “the unthinkable ventured, the impossible attained — humbling, exalting, and irresistible.” From the premise that virtuosity expands beyond the field of music, Carbone teamed up with photographer Howard Schatz and interviewed 40 different individuals, the

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world-famous and relatively obscure, who have demonstrated an ability to perform the impossible very well. Here are some of the results:

―Virtuosity in dance unfortunately has a bit of a vulgar connotation. (...) In my view, there is the virtuosity of the young ballerina who does thirty-two perfect fouâté pirouettes, and there is the dancer who is barefoot and doesn’t do one turn or jump. He is also a virtuoso.‖

Mikhail Baryshnikov, dancer (p. 12)

―The key to virtuosity is when the difficulty of doing something falls away. You know it when you see it.‖

Michael Moschen, juggler (p. 18)

―I can’t imagine any virtuosity that doesn’t come from dedication, study, and practice.‖

Stephen Jay Gould, paleontologist (p. 41)

―Virtuosity is the whole package of being effective as a musician, which requires physical dexterity but also mental communication.‖

Gary Burton, vibraphonist (p. 73)

―Virtuosity is something that is completely natural, and the listeners know that.‖

Evelyn Glennie, percussionist (p. 77)

―Dexterity is a skill. It’s what you do with it that makes you an artist.‖

Jack Lenor Larsen, weaver (p. 99)
2.2 Hamelin and the Concept of Virtuosity

Crowned as the King of Virtuosos, Hamelin finds the word a somewhat derogative description that implies mere showmanship. There is almost no article, interview, review, or documentary on him that does not raise his phenomenal technical abilities to cult status — Hamelin is the super-virtuoso. Nevertheless, the king is weary of his crown: “Music is not sports, and virtuosity in itself does not interest me,”25 I asked the pianist-composer for his take on the much-debated term. In his own words:

I think it is a heightened ability, a sort of super-ability to marshal your resources, either emotional or corporal, in order to bring music to life. I think that something like that is inborn, in the most part, but of course this sort of super-ability needs to be cultivated, sharpened, and maintained. Piano as sport (I guess if you want to call it that) is the kind of an acrobatic approach to piano playing which really has nothing to do with music.

Admitting that he has overcome all of the hurdles that stand in the way of communicating the main (musical) message, he perceives technique as an extension of one’s musical brain: “It is a means to an end and nothing more.” Hamelin insists that what interests him the most is to share the miracle of human creativity with the audience, the “celebration, in composition and performance, of the enormous expressive, textural, polyphonic, and orchestral possibilities of the piano as an instrument.”26

The concept of virtuosity in Hamelin’s music can be approached from various angles. There is, of course, the immediate realization of its unarguable pianistic (technical) difficulties.

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24 This rather pompous title was used in a New York Times article cited in Chapter One.
26 Burwasser, ibid.
But that is only one of the many layers of the discussion. Having now spent countless hours practicing and researching some of his music, my own understanding of virtuosity has changed.

I believe the creative act is a virtuosic act in itself (harking back to the original “virtue” meaning of the word). There is at least as much virtuosic effort put into learning Hamelin’s music as there was for the composer to give birth to his musical thoughts. When looking back at the creative process, Hamelin emerges as a virtuoso creator. It is then clear that this entire process is a three-step system: construction - deconstruction - reconstruction, in which the last two are reserved for the performer.

The construction allows for Hamelin to emerge as a virtuoso creator, in the illustrious tradition of composer-pianists. The deconstruction of the composer’s musical thoughts calls for the performer’s intellectual virtuosity, which can at times be a tedious undertaking, requiring unusual dedication and patience. The reconstruction (performance) stands in itself as pianistic virtuosity, which I see as an all-encompassing process.

Redefining the concept of virtuosity in Hamelin’s études suggests a deeper understanding of what these works really are. That they have nothing in common with what the étude as a didactic tool stood for at its emergence, it is unarguable; Hamelin’s études are not intended as a basis for the improvement of the performer’s technique. I would also reason they have little in common with the concert-étude concept that defines Chopin’s trendsetting opp. 10 and 25, for Hamelin does not target certain pianistic difficulties in a masterful musical disguise. They appear closer to Liszt’s tradition of “transcendentalism,” although Hamelin’s set stands as more varied.

\[27\] The author of this dissertation has also been learning (albeit not performed) Hamelin’s two published sets of variations: Cathy’s Variations (2007) and Variations on a Theme of Paganini (2011).
in terms of sources of inspiration than Liszt’s. Unlike Godowsky, who pushed the piano technique boundaries by drawing from one source, Hamelin taps on his refined knowledge of the instrument’s limits to test the performer’s multifaceted virtuosic capabilities. One writes *for* the piano, the other *from* the piano.

As much as Hamelin wishes for these études to be regarded as character pieces (an aspect with which I entirely agree), I argue that these études could stand as “studies in virtuosity.” As such, an alternate title could be “12 Studies In Virtuosity In All The Minor Keys.” In this case, I perceive “studies” not as the English version of the established French *études*, but rather as a synonym to “musical essays.” It is my argument then that these pieces are musical essays on virtuosity, where the latter is far more than mere finger dexterity.

Étude No. 6: *Esercizio per Pianoforte (Omaggio a Domenico Scarlatti)* does indeed require superb finger dexterity: the brilliant passage work, the neck-breaking jumps, and the acrobatic crossings of the hands are very challenging on a technical level. However, all these are nothing but tools which allow the composer to create a highly original and humoristic homage, mocking certain recurring mannerisms specific to Scarlatti’s keyboard music. With intentional wrong-note harmonies and such performing suggestions as “Don’t fall off the bench!” this étude is nothing less than a study in virtuosity as humour, a fundamental trace of Hamelin’s personality on and off stage.

More than just a single-handed approach, Étude No. 7: *after Tchaikovsky* (for the left hand alone) is an invocation of the inner “pedal virtuoso” within any performer. In order to highlight all the details of articulation and melodic continuity with utter textural seamlessness

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28 That is not to suggest that Hamelin’s études are somehow more worthy than those of Liszt. With arrangements of works by Chopin, Rossini, Liszt, Tchaikovsky, Alkan and inspiration drawn from Scarlatti and Gottschalk, Hamelin’s set simply appears as more eclectic.

29 Here I am referring to Godowsky’s *54 Studies on Chopin’s Études.*
(Hamelin’s expressed wish), the performer must be a truly versatile musician, capable of handling the most subtle of pedal gradations.

Calling Étude No. 8: *Erlkönig* an étude for the left hand (challenging sixteenth-note triplets passagework) would demote the meaning and depth of this piece to left hand dexterity training camp level. A non-vocal setting of Goethe’s famed poem, Hamelin’s *Erlkönig* is nothing less than a compelling essay in storytelling virtuosity. There are, of course, instances where finger dexterity is paramount (Étude No. 4: *d’après Alkan* or Étude No. 9: *after Rossini*), or cases in which Hamelin admits that the primary focus is on the rhythmic drive and not much else (Étude No. 5: *Toccata grottesca*). There are even times where the performer is required to appear as possessing three brains, particularly in the two “after Chopin” études, (No. 1: *Triple Étude*, a simultaneous juxtaposition of Op. 10 No. 2, Op. 25 No. 4, and Op. 25 No. 11) or must remain entirely immune to psychedelic-like effects (No. 10, a twisted treatment of Op. 10 No. 5).

All in all, the originality of Hamelin’s set stems from its treatment of virtuosic eclecticism.
Chapter Three. 12 Études In All The Minor Keys

No. 1: Triple Étude (after Chopin)
No. 2: Coma Berenices
No. 3: After Paganini-Liszt
No. 4: Étude à movement perpétuellement semblable (d’après Alkan)
No. 5: Toccata grottesca*30
No. 6: Esercizio per Pianoforte (Omaggio a Domenico Scarlatti)*
No. 7: After Tchaikovsky (for the left hand alone)*
No. 8: ‘Erlkönig’ (after Goethe)*
No. 9: After Rossini*
No. 10: After Chopin*
No. 11: Minuetto
No. 12: Prelude and Fugue

3.1 Overview of the Set

The set 12 Études In All The Minor Keys was written over a period of nearly 25 years and it represents the composer’s declared intention to contribute towards perpetuating the nearly extinct tradition of the composer-pianist. While they were conceived as gifts to friends, as marked in the dedications, the dedicatees’ personalities had no influence on the way the music was written.

Out of the 23 years of creation, 12 were spent away from the desk due to “composer’s block.” Indeed, Hamelin claims that he did not have any viable ideas between 1993 and 2005. He admits that generally he does not sit with a blank page and wait for something to happen, because nothing will. Instead, a really “potent spark” of inspiration is needed to get him going.

30 The asterisks denote those études that will be analyzed in more detail.
The following is the list of the études arranged in chronological order of their composition:

1986 – No. 12: Prelude and Fugue
1987 – No. 9: After Rossini
1990 – No. 10: After Chopin
1992 – No. 6: Esercizio per pianoforte
1992 – No. 1: Triple Étude (after Chopin)
1993 – No. 3: After Paganini-Liszt

[12-year gap]
2005 – No. 4: After Alkan
2006 – No. 7: After Tchaikovsky (for the left hand alone)
2007 – No. 8: ‘Erlkönig’
2008 – No. 5: Toccata grottesca
2008 – No. 2: Coma Berenices
2009 – No. 11: Minuetto

It can be easily noticed that there is an equal number of pieces written on either side of the 12-year compositional hiatus. Since the set can be separated this way into two halves, some people might be tempted to try to look for stylistic differences between these two periods. However, Hamelin assures us that such an enterprise would be “a waste of time.”

The inspiration to continue composing came in 2005 with the help of his close friend (and dedicatee of Étude No. 10), the Scottish composer Alistair Hinton. As Hinton recollects, it was Hamelin’s “pianistic virtuosity, his obsessively enquiring mind, and his desire to explore the arts of composition, transcription, and editing” that prompted his association with the composer’s
writing of the études. Hinton suggested that Hamelin combine contrapuntally two works of Charles-Valentin Alkan.\textsuperscript{31} Thus the “potent spark” materialized in a new etude, called Étude à mouvement perpétuellement semblable (d’après Alkan).\textsuperscript{32} This étude, sixth in chronological order, is known as Étude No. 4 in the Peters Edition.

When asked whether the études of Liszt, Alkan, and Godowsky (with which he is intimately familiar) served as “role models,” the composer declares that he tried to be “his own man.” Interestingly enough, Hamelin mentioned to me that the initial title of the set was 12 Études In All The Minor Keys (Homage to Alkan and Godowsky), but the added homage element was later dropped on the grounds of a “tenuous relationship.” Hinton considers that despite the roots of Hamelin’s études in the prime examples from yesteryear (Chopin, Liszt, Alkan, Lyapunov, Godowsky, Scriabin, Rachmaninov, Sorabji) being self-evident, that should not in any sense detract from their value, either pedagogically or as valuable performance repertoire. Indeed, it is the reverse, to the extent that they represent a conscious and/or subconscious continuation of an important tradition and illustrate a desire to keep it well and truly alive. In this way, Hinton regards Hamelin as seeker of a way of expanding the riches of the Romantic étude repertoire rather than a breaker of new ground.

One aspect that the composer insists on is that “although they are of considerable difficulty and will be primarily regarded by performers as pianistic challenges, they are at least as much compositional studies as anything else,” adding that “their degree of harmonic, textural, and contrapuntal subtlety should not be overlooked or demoted in favor of pure prowess display. (...) Reducing them to pure exercises would be utterly meaningless and definitely against my


\textsuperscript{32} In Hamelin’s words: “The subtitle is a slightly self-deprecating take-off on Alkan’s own; perpétuellement semblable implies something like ‘always and forever the same old thing.’”
wishes.” Hamelin’s wish is for these works to be seen as character pieces, and emphasizes they not be approached with the aim to conquering their pianistic problems alone.

I asked the composer what led him to choose the étude as a means of expressing his compositional ideas, and not another genre. He answered that the étude is a form of miniature, adding that had he written these kind of pianistically complicated things and not called them études, “that would have been a little bit of a head scratch.”

Asked whether this set of études was meant to challenge in any way the idea of “transcendental” virtuosity, Hamelin admits that in trying to translate his own thoughts into pianistic terms, oftentimes he aimed too high. The set as we know it today printed by Edition Peters underwent several revisions before its final printing approval in 2010. But with the experience gathered writing for the piano over the years now, he considers he could have revisited the pieces even more and made them easier, all the while sounding just as difficult. “That’s the kind of thing that you can only manage to do with time.”

According to the composer, a fascicle of manuscripts representing 4 études, all written in 1987 (Nos. 1, 7, 9 and 12), used to be available at the Canadian Music Centre (CMC). At that time, both No. 1 and No. 7 were different pieces. No. 1 was a work called Étude Fantastique sur Le Vol du Bourdon de Rimsky-Korsakoff,\(^{33}\) which was eventually excluded from the set and discarded altogether (see example 3.1).

\(^{33}\) Fantastical Étude on “The Flight Of The Bumblebee” by Rimsky-Korsakov.
Hamelin no longer shows much interest in the fate of this piece. In his own words: “I really pay it absolutely no attention. I am not going to publish it, I am not going to encourage its performance, although people seem to find their way to do it anyway, so do what you want with it. I do not think it is a very good piece.”

What used to stand as Étude No. 7, available at CMC, is “a very bad thing in slow unison, which I happily discarded.” Only 34 measures in length, this piece is very similar in style and character to Chopin’s Prelude Op. 28 No. 14, sharing the same key of E-flat minor. Hamelin
considers it a mistake which “should never have seen the light of day,” and wishes that no one would play it again.\(^{34}\)

Asked if he has any plans for writing a set of études in all the major keys, à la manière d’Alkan,\(^{35}\) the composer is decidedly not interested in adhering to that tradition, adding that he would like to concentrate on a different and more complex focus. By this he is referring to his current compositional interest towards variation sets, a genre with which he finds himself very comfortable. He expressed verbal interest in writing in larger forms, as well.

While the études were written completely out of order, Hamelin did follow a certain key sequence. This sequence was decided right after finishing writing the Prelude and Fugue: it would start with A minor and end with A-flat minor. The key sequence is as follows:

- \(A \rightarrow E \rightarrow B\)
- \(C \rightarrow G \rightarrow D\)
- \(E \flat \rightarrow B \flat \rightarrow F\)
- \(F \sharp \rightarrow C \sharp \rightarrow A \flat\)

With A-flat minor decided to end the set, and following the key sequence established, the now-defunct “Bumblebee” would thus become Étude No. 1, while the Prelude and Fugue (No. 12) would conclude the set. Although both Hamelin and Alkan chose A minor as the starting key, their key sequences are different.\(^{36}\)

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\(^{34}\) While I am in the possession of a facsimile of the manuscript, I respected the composer’s request to not reproduce any part of it, as I initially intended.

\(^{35}\) Alkan wrote a set of 12 Études In All The Major Keys, op. 35 (published in 1847) and a set of 12 Études In All The Minor Keys, op. 39 (published in 1857).

\(^{36}\) Interesting enough, both of Alkan’s sets of Études (opp. 35 and 39) are structured on a descending 5th pattern starting from A and ending on E, the only difference being the change of mode (minor and major, respectively).
In 1992 Hamelin decided to combine three Chopin études into one, at the suggestion of his friend, Donald Manildi. According to the composer, it was Godowsky who appeared to have come up first with the concept. Hamelin, who by that time was already familiar with most of Godowsky’s 54 Studies on Chopin’s Études, learned that a further eleven studies were at least conceived and very possibly even written out by the great Polish-American virtuoso. One of these was to have been a contrapuntal combination of all three A minor Chopin études (Op. 10 No. 2, Op. 25 No. 4, and Op. 25 No. 11). No manuscript of this work ever surfaced.

Hamelin proceeded to work these same three Chopin études (examples 3.2, 3.3, 3.4) into his own Étude No. 1 (example 3.5), which eventually replaced the “Bumblebee.”

Example 3.2: Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 2, mm. 1-2

Example 3.3: Chopin, Étude Op. 25 No. 4, mm. 1-3

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37 Donald Manildi is the curator of the International Piano Archives at the University of Maryland (College Park).
38 The set was written between 1894 and 1914, and contains 54 études. While Godowsky’s numbering goes up to 48, it is important to note that he gives variants for some of the same numbers, e.g. 12 followed by 12a; 15 followed 15a; etc. Hamelin recorded the complete set for Hyperion in 2000 [Hyperion CDA67411/2], project for which he was nominated for a Grammy® Award the following year.
Aside from the above mentioned references to the revised/discarded études, I am omitting detailed explorations of nos. 2, 3, 4, 11, and 12, concentrating instead on nos. 5-10. In selecting these 6 études, it was my wish to maintain the equal ratio between original pieces and arrangements, a division which characterizes the set as a whole. As such, nos. 5, 6, and 8 belong to the first category, while 7, 9, and 10 belong to the second.
3.2 Étude No. 5: *Toccata grottesca*

Despite its position as the fifth étude of this collection, *Toccata grottesca*, written in 2008, was among the last few to be composed. It is dedicated to Michael (Mike) Spring, former Sales, Export & Advertising Manager at Hyperion Records.\(^{39}\)

This étude is the result of a compositional experiment: after waking up one morning with the first eight bars fully formed in his head, Hamelin realized how similar they were to the introduction of a fairly well-known piano piece, whose identity he did not wish to reveal. It was this realization that led him to try and model the new composition closely after this very piece. In writing this étude, he set to adhere to the model without making the derivation obvious, thus wanting to see how well he could mask his source of inspiration. During one of our talks, Hamelin admitted that the model used was Louis Moreau Gottschalk’s *The Banjo*, a fairly straightforward solo piano work written in 1855.\(^{40}\) Despite ending up being practically identical to *The Banjo* in terms of form, this étude came off as a great virtuosic piece with a voice and character of its own.

Before pointing out any performing suggestions, including fingerings and pedaling, I will explain the structure of the piece. Just like its model, *Toccata grottesca* is written in a five-part form (A-B-A-B-A), with a short, eight-bar introduction and a coda. When compared side by side, the introductions of the two pieces are identical in structure and similar in texture. Gottschalk’s eight-bar phrase played in unison octaves (example 3.6) becomes, in Hamelin’s version, an

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\(^{39}\) Marc-André Hamelin records exclusively for Hyperion Records.

\(^{40}\) Original title: *The Banjo, Grotesque Fantasie, American Sketch* op. 15. Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829-1869) was an American composer and pianist who maintained an international career primarily outside of the United States.
eight-bar phrase in brief, syncopated octaves in both hands presented as an overall descending statement (example 3.7).\footnote{It is also important to note the key change: The Banjo is written in F-sharp major, the Toccata is in G minor.}

Example 3.6: Gottschalk, *The Banjo*, mm. 1-8

Example 3.7: Hamelin, Étude No. 5: *Toccata grottesca*, mm. 1-8
Before comparing these passages too closely, it is important to remember that the similarities between the two introductions are purely coincidental, as explained earlier.  

The A section in the Toccata is similar to its counterpart in that it presents a very clear rhythmic idea, repeated in four-measure phrases, in the bass range of the piano (example 3.9). The rhythmic texture is created through similar means: Hamelin’s melody comes out as the result of a crisp and incisive alternation of the hands, thus successfully imitating the style of Gottschalk’s flourished melody (example 3.8).  

Example 3.8: Gottschalk, The Banjo, mm. 9-16

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42 This is not a singular case: the Fugue (from Étude no. 12: Prelude and Fugue) turned out to have the same meter, same key (enharmonically), and a very similar subject to Sergei Taneyev’s Fugue from his Prelude and Fugue op. 29. I strongly believe these coincidences should be viewed as a naturally occurring phenomena of a musical mind such as Hamelin’s, who has amassed an astonishing amount of music.  
43 A simplified reduction will show that the melodic core revolves around the three notes of a G minor triad.
While the means are similar, the effect is different. Gottschalk’s intention was to imitate the strumming of a banjo. Hamelin kept the element of alternating hands, but fashioned a different character: a relentless drive, specific to a toccata. The title of the étude is a clear indication that Hamelin sought out to create a piece that had both originality (Toccata) and influence (grottesca).

In the B section, Hamelin incorporates all the elements that are to be found in The Banjo: incredibly fast-paced passages displaying a high-range melody filled with terrifying jumps in both hands. Gottschalk’s melody, with its repeated-note triplets, maintains the character specific to a stringed instrument (example 3.10). Hamelin, on the other hand, makes use of an Alkan-like melody, paired with a left hand seemingly addicted to electrifying jumps (example 3.11).
Example 3.10: Gottschalk, *The Banjo*, mm. 55-60

Example 3.11: Hamelin, Étude No. 5: *Toccata grottesca*, mm. 94-97

[the circled interval denotes a misprint in the Peters score: the D should carry a flat sign as indicated here]

Gottschalk was aware that some pianists might find the right-hand passage too difficult, thus offering a simplified version (*facilité*) (see example 3.10). Hamelin, with his uncanny
humour, cannot resist doing the same, and he, too, offers an alternate version (ossia), marked *pour les braves (for the foolish)* (example 3.12).\(^4^4\)

Example 3.12: Hamelin, Étude No. 5: *Toccata grottesca*, mm. 105-110

Both the A and the B sections are brought back as shortened reiterations of the preceding materials, with some minor variants.

The coda in *The Banjo* is not original material. Gottschalk uses a modified version of a famed minstrel song, *Camptown Races*, in a simplified rhythm.\(^4^5\) In a similar fashion, but

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\(^4^4\) The alternate version is offered for a left-hand passage. The English translation belongs to the composer, himself bilingual. *Pour les braves* translates as *for the brave ones* (from French). It is obvious what Hamelin went for in here: a pianistic joke, a play on words which suggests that only a fool could deem himself brave enough to play an albeit unplayable passage.

\(^4^5\) A minstrel show was an American form of entertainment developed in the 19th century, initially performed by white people in blackface. *Gwine to Run All Night, or De Camptown Races*, popularly known as *Camptown Races*, was written by Stephen Foster (1826-1864) and published in 1850.
without initially realizing it, Hamelin, too, uses pre-existing material: a modified version of *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* (example 3.13).  

Example 3.13: Hamelin, Étude No. 5: *Toccata grottesca*, mm. 270-277

This étude is a great demonstration of relentless drive paired with fantastic pianistic pyrotechnics. Marked *Molto Vivace* at the incredible tempo of $\text{♩} = 160$ (*absolutely strict*), the composer warns the daring pianist not to be tempted to play it faster than indicated, adding that room should be left for the final *accelerando*. I reason few pianists will be able to play it at the indicated metronome marking without making it sound like a horse race, hence I find the suggestion rather extraneous.  

Despite its lightning speed, I believe that over time this étude will stand a greater chance of being tackled by enterprising pianists than others: tempo aside, it is not as difficult as it might sound, and the alternation of the hands makes it possible to play even when not fully warmed

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46 The melody of the popular English lullaby *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* is in fact a tune of the French melody *Ah! vous dirai-je, maman*.

47 It may very well be that Hamelin was yet again poking fun, aspect which I can neither confirm, nor deny.
I find that the chief difficulty, apart from its obvious technical demands, resides in the proper depiction of the character. As Hamelin told me, it should not sound “nice,” but “crude.” It should sound implacable, with no room for attempting *rubatos*, except for the written *ritenutos*.

Even at such a fast tempo, the many details that the composer carefully indicated should still be fully observed. As tempting as it might sound, connecting the D octaves of the first measure to the E octaves of the next one (mm. 1-2) with the pedal should not be done. Hamelin is very strict with the slurring indications and it is his wish for minimal use of the pedal. Shortening the value of the dotted quarters should also be avoided.

It should come as no surprise that many, if not all, of the difficult technical passages require a lot of patience and many hours of slow practice. Nevertheless, and as obvious as it might sound, the answer to solving a thorny problem is oftentimes to be found in choosing the right fingering. Every pianist’s hands are different, and so are the fingering possibilities. My suggestions are based on the stretching capabilities of my own hands, very similar in size to Hamelin’s. One passage that came off easily after changing fingerings is in measures 23-26 (see example 3.14). Watching Hamelin play the passage during one of our work sessions, I realized that he was using a much more comfortable fingering: 1-4 2-5, instead of my initial 2-5 2-5. The sextuplet in measure 26, which was the issue, was solved instantly.

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48 Of a matter of interest, *Toccata grottesca* was arranged for large percussion ensemble by Dor Fisher. An excellent performance of this arrangement, done by the Tremolo Percussion Ensemble of Israel (Tomer Yariv, music director), can be viewed on YouTube at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZGqzvjtKAc
A short passage that possesses significant difficulty is found in measures 65-66. In example 3.15 below I offer my own fingerings, as well as the composer’s (shown to me, and not officially printed).

There is also the option of taking the notes played by the right hand thumb with the left hand (as marked in example 3.15), a practice with which Hamelin does not agree, on the grounds of losing the percussive aspect of it.

While the use of pedal should be minimal (with the exception of the coda), some is needed in key passages like measures 74-77. It will help emphasize the melodic contour of the inner voice played by the thumbs. There are two possible fingering solutions for the passage
below (example 3.16). I recommend practicing both (as I did), for both sets of fingerings have their advantages and disadvantages: Hamelin’s ensures a clear, detached articulation, but requires an extremely strong and precise thumb for all the fast jumps in fifths; mine offers greater accuracy gained over a shorter amount of practice time, but it tends to create a slur over each group of two notes, which is not desired.

Example 3.16: Hamelin, Étude No. 5: Toccata grottesca, mm. 221-225

Of great rhythmic importance is the passage found in measures 136-149, and the subsequent measures 243-250. In Hamelin’s own words, the passage is “pure rhythm” and nothing more: no breaths, no rubato. It is indeed a difficult passage that requires a quick shift of gears. Another aspect of difficulty is the speed with which the brain must quickly react in remembering all the small changes and minor variants that the composer operated in the reiteration of the A and B sections. As tempting as it might appear, the pianist should avoid at all times relying on muscle memory. I found it useful in the first A and B sections in the printed score to pencil in brackets the passages that later on will be taken out. Here visual memory might be of help.
The Coda is the only place where the composer writes *con Pedale*. It is a great example of the build-up of tension, which Hamelin uses in many of his études. The melody, played in octaves by alternating hands, must be sonorous and well sustained, despite all the other busy elements in the other voices. There is something menacing about this twisted *Twinkle, Twinkle* tune, as suggested by the composer (*poco minaccioso*). The tune is brought back again, but in double time, with the indication for a massive *crescendo* doubled by an intense *accelerando*. Once the quarter note reaches 180, this tempo should be strictly kept up until the very end, without any hint of slowing down. Measures 348-352 should be counted exactly, all the while refraining from accenting the downbeats of each bar (see example 3.17). On arrival at measure 353, the pedal should be cut off exactly on the short downbeat, and the following *glissando* in the right hand must be played *secco*, extremely clear, and in steady tempo (no speeding up on its duration). For a lighter and faster execution, I use only finger 3 and not the entire hand for the ascending *glissando* run. The closing statement leaves the listener downright puzzled, for Hamelin chooses to end this *tour de force* with a bang, in the most literal sense: a startlingly sudden modulation to E major.
Example 3.17: Hamelin, Étude No. 5: Toccata grottesca, mm. 347-356

3.3 Étude No. 6: *Esercizio per Pianoforte (Omaggio a Domenico Scarlatti)*

Étude No. 6 belongs to the pre-hiatus composition period (referred to previously), being written in 1992 when Hamelin was 31. An homage to Domenico Scarlatti, it is dedicated to Joe Patrych, the influential New York-based classical music record producer and recording engineer with whom Hamelin worked in the past. It is not an arrangement, but an original work.

Unlike the other études, this *Exercise for Keyboard* is yet another example that shows Hamelin the composer fully comfortable with the tools required to write in any style. In this piece we find him hard at work holding back his predilection for extremely dense textures. The result is a brilliant gem of idiomatic Baroque gestures, spiced up with a whirlwind succession of rapid runs, unexpected dissonances, terrifying leaps, and crossed-hand passages that add a humorous visual dimension to any live performance.
Hamelin was inspired by the wealth of keyboard sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757), one of the most prominent composer-performers of his time. Scarlatti’s catalogue numbers no fewer than 555 sonatas, works devised as single movements, mostly in binary form, with each section repeated once (AA-BB). From quiet serenity to melancholy to fiery exuberance to frivolous virtuosity, these ingenious works display a great variety of character and texture, and prove Scarlatti to be an unmatched experimentalist of the instrument’s seemingly limited possibilities. In what could perhaps be described as a “quality vs. quantity Scarlattian sonata” contest, the winner is clear: the former is not affected in the least by the sheer abundance of the latter. Nevertheless, the quantity itself naturally yields to certain repetitions of the keyboard approach, which Hamelin describes as “recurrent mannerisms.” It is these very Scarlattian mannerisms that Hamelin hyperbolized in what could be called a pastiche-étude. The composer openly admits being easily given to lampooning, so one may only wonder about the true nature of this (piously named) ‘homage.’ In his own words: “I can assure you that this is a purely affectionate tribute. Let’s just say I exaggerated a few things!”

This étude follows closely the structure of a typical Scarlattian sonata. Each of its two parts is repeated, observing the standard AA-BB form. Hamelin also conforms to the well-established norms of standard key relations: the first half starts in the original key of D minor, then modulates, introducing the second half in F major (relative major key). Figure 3.1 provides the overall tonal plan and structure of Hamelin’s Étude No. 6.

49 The instrument of choice was primarily the harpsichord.
50 At the end of the piece, Hamelin’s N.B. (nota bene) informs the player that the repeat of the B section is optional. Moreover, during one of our sessions, he encouraged me not to do the repeat at all.
The piece begins with an arpeggiated D minor chord, brought in by the right hand and marked *Molto allegro* and *forte*. The downbeats of the measures that constitute the descending opening phrase form a clear D minor chord as well; here we have Hamelin making it clear we are in the tonal-bound, Baroque-style territory. The right hand continues with rapid triplets in succession, typical to the style, while the left hand performs a standard contrapuntal accompaniment. Everything seems to be going exactly as the strict Baroque norms require, until the first few consecutive parallel fifths begin to creep in, forming a long set that could unsettle any hard-nosed Baroque theorist — Hamelin is back to his old tricks. After a few measures of off-beat accented dissonant clusters, the opening section ends with an ascending broken *arpeggio* of the dominant that blatantly resolves to the tonic in the most natural way (example 3.18). This right hand passage is very similar in style and scope to one from Sonata K. 119 (example 3.19).
Example 3.18: Hamelin, Étude No. 6: *Esercizio per Pianoforte*, mm. 19-22

Example 3.19: Scarlatti, Sonata K. 119, mm. 31-33

The modulating section \((b)\) is introduced by a new melodic idea in the key of G minor, which is then replicated in sequence, going through F major, and leading to C major. While continuing with a relentless Baroquian drive, Hamelin begins inserting more and more foreign elements, clearly indicating that the forbidden parallel melodic movement used earlier (the parallel fifths) was just the warm-up. As soon as this new section begins (measure 23), he inserts a couple of upsettingly dissonant low notes in the left hand (measures 24 and 26, example 3.20).

Example 3.20: Hamelin, Étude No. 6: *Esercizio per Pianoforte*, mm. 23-26
These notes are meant to imitate the low “honks” in Spike Jones records. They are meant to be completely expressionless, and should be played in absolutely strict time and not staccato. The composer also suggested to me that no pedal should be used. As for fingerings, he indicated finger 5 (which could be reinforced with finger 4) brought into the key as a direct, semi-vertical attack, as an alternative to my initial use of the thumb.

After a series of highly charged jumps in both hands (measures 29-32), the key of C starts shifting towards functioning as a dominant for the imminent F major. Here again elements from K. 119 can be easily traced. First, the left hand contrapuntal accompaniment in measures 39-45 is similar in style to measures 35-45 of K. 119. Moreover, it is obvious that the highly virtuosic hand-crossings (measures 62-75) at the beginning of c is an overblown Scarlattian mannerism (example 3.21). The hemiola effect of the eighth notes played in alternation by both hands adds an extra humorous aural effect to the already present visual acrobatics. An example of this kind of writing can again be found in K. 119 (example 3.22).

Example 3.21: Hamelin, Étude No. 6: Esercizio per Pianoforte, mm. 62-67

Example 3.22: Scarlatti, Sonata K. 119, mm. 81-89

The last section of A (coda) begins in measure 84. Its first phrase is a standard 4+4 structure, displaying a pianistically uncomfortable passage of chromatic double notes (in the right hand) against a much more harmonically stable bass (example 3.23). While the harmonic sequence is similar to Johann Pachelbel’s *Canon in D*, the right hand passage looks very similar to measures 460-467 of Maurice Ravel’s *Scarbo* (example 3.24).

Example 3.23:
Hamelin, Étude No. 6: *Esercizio per Pianoforte*, mm. 83-87
The second phrase of the coda, also a 4+4 structure, concludes A, reinforcing the new key of F major.

The B section is based on the same structural elements, with some sections appearing in inverted order. Hamelin plays around with the sections, melodies, and motifs presented in the first half. In order to reflect both the commonality and the variation that can be found at the sectional level, what was known as a in the first part now becomes a' (a prime), and so on. Here, too, one can find similarities with other pieces. For example, measures 119-121 in the étude (example 3.25) can easily pass as a quote from Ravel’s Valse Nobles et Sentimentales (example 3.26).
Example 3.26: Ravel, *Valse Nobles et Sentimentales*, VIII. Épilogue, m. 49

This second half features even more exaggerated Scarlattian idioms: written-out mordents, crossed-hand passages, and challenging jumps with both hands (this time in contrary motion). After three “unsuccessful” attempts to jump-reach the end of the keyboard (measures 169-171), the daring pianist can only hope to land on the C8, all while following the composer’s almost overly caring *don’t fall off the bench!* suggestion. A rhythmic accelerando (septuplet to octuplet to nonuplet) builds up into a grotesque bursting across the entire keyboard (measures 192-193) in preparation for the coda. Here, Hamelin suggested that the left hand chord (measure 192) should be rolled, thus fitting the overall style of the passage. The top G (downbeat of 193) may be taken over with the left hand, but not resulting in a strong accent. An overly attentive ear might recognize measure 194 as a small quote from Sergei Rachmaninoff’s *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, op. 43 (Variation X, *Dies Irae*, measure 28). The coda of the B section presents the same technically challenging material as the coda of A. It is interesting to notice how the right hand passage remains the same, fitting both F major and D minor keys. The partial release of the final cluster in the low bass register will reveal a final D, thus ending a most humorous and sarcastic work.
The chief difficulty of this étude is to maintain in a *molt" allegro* the overall transparency of lines specific to Scarlatti’s style, all the while overcoming the many challenges at the technical level. Despite the *f* dynamic at the beginning, it is the composer’s wish for a *mezzo leggiero* approach. In a piece like this, the passages of sixteenth notes are the norm, therefore the finger technique should display a harpsichord-style quality, where all the fingers are equally important and perfectly even with a percussive attack. Special attention should be given to the weaker fingers (4 and 5).\(^{52}\) The pedal should be mostly avoided. In the passage of parallel fifths (starting from measure 11), the last beat of the measure should not be connected, with the pedal or from the fingers, with the downbeat of the next one. Doing so will create an unwanted slur over the barline. When Hamelin wishes for a slur of this kind, he writes it in (measures 16-19).

The humorous passage in measures 29-32 (example 3.27), where Hamelin mocks the ever-present Scarlattian jumps, might possess some difficulties. First, there is the danger for the three thirty-seconds (right hand) to become triplets. Carefully observing the composer’s slurs and rests will prove helpful in solving this problem. For the fast, descending jump, there are two possible facilitations that I recommend. One refers to notes distribution: instead of evenly dividing the chord among the hands, as Hamelin suggests, one can play three notes in the left hand (C-G-C) and only one (E) with the right hand thumb. This will significantly increase the accuracy because of the greater availability of the right hand to move from only one note (instead of two). The other facilitation works only for pianists with a very large left hand: instead of dividing the chord among the two hands, it can be played entirely by the left hand only. While

\(^{52}\) As a fun experiment, I have tried to see how this late 20th-century work written primarily in the early 18th-century style would sound on a harpsichord. The findings are twofold: first, one cannot get passed measure 200, for you run out of keys; second, the music’s originally funny side (see clusters) gains an almost morbid character, more suitable to the soundtrack of a horror motion picture.
doing so will lessen the acrobatic visual effect as originally envisioned by the composer, this option proves extremely useful in studio recording sessions.\textsuperscript{53}

Example 3.27: Hamelin, Étude No. 6: \textit{Esercizio per Pianoforte}, mm. 28-32

As the composer pointed out to me, the hemiolas in measures 62-67 and 70-75 should be carefully observed by not placing an accent on the downbeat of every second measure of the group.\textsuperscript{54} The right hand passage that resembles Ravel’s \textit{Scarbo} (measures 84-91 and elsewhere) requires special attention. My fingering suggestions are 3-4-3-4 etc. (top voice) for the ascending passages, and 3-5-3-5 etc. for the descending one. Hamelin, who does not offer any written fingering suggestions in the printed score, uses 3-5-3-5 throughout. Each of the two voices of this line needs to be practiced separately, paying attention to the small interval changes (it is not a regular chromatic scale).

When performing the repeat of the A section, I suggest a modified, arpeggiated chord (D-A-F) of the left hand downbeat in measure 1. A harpsichord-like gesture, this rolled chord gives the re-opening a fuller sound and a distinct character, practice with which Hamelin agrees.

\textsuperscript{53} I have done so when recently recording this étude in Montreal. For all public performances, I use the two-hand, facilitated version. The video clips of Hamelin playing this piece, available on YouTube, show him using both one-hand and two-hands versions.

\textsuperscript{54} As natural as it might feel, no accent whatsoever should be placed on the downbeats of measures 63, 65, 67, 71, 73, and 75.
Traditionally, when one plays the more moderate Scarlatti sonatas, one can embellish the repeat. As both Hamelin and I agree, however, this particular “sonata” is simply too fast to even consider such a performance practice.

The second part of the étude presents similar technical challenges. Measures 112-124 are particularly difficult, for Hamelin combines multiple hand crossings with left hand jumps in the low bass register. Any clusters similar to those in measures 104, 137, and elsewhere should be preceded by an extremely short interruption, similar in style to a caesura. The clusters in question must be placed (prefaced with a brief hesitation), not rushed into. As a matter of further facilitation, I recommend taking the downbeats of measures 148 and 157 with the left hand. Such a practice is similar to Hamelin’s suggestion in the introductory measures of both A and B. The fiendishly difficult jumps in opposite directions in measures 169-172 (example 3.28) should be practiced slowly. Because of the very fast tempo, one of the hands needs to perform the jump without visual preparation. For this difficult task, I chose the left hand: both the starting and the arrival intervals are the same (perfect fifth, A-E), and the fingering remains the same (5-2). Practicing this jump “blindly” for a long time will ensure that the distance between both the two fingers and the two intervals will imprint in one’s hand and ears.
3.4 Étude No. 7: after Tchaikovsky (for the left hand alone)

Eighth in chronological order, Étude No. 7 was written in 2006 and is dedicated to Francis Bowdery.\textsuperscript{55} It bears special significance, as it is the only étude in the entire set written for the left hand alone, as well as the composer’s first and (to date) only attempt to write for this medium. With this short but highly effective work, Hamelin wanted to contribute to a distinguished tradition, but one with which the music-loving public is not well-acquainted.\textsuperscript{56}

There is an astonishing body of piano literature written just for the left hand. According to Hans Brofeldt’s extensive catalogue,\textsuperscript{57} there are over 700 composers who have written for this genre, with under a dozen widely known today.

The tradition of writing for the left hand alone stemmed initially out of necessity. The first pianist credited with writing for the left hand alone — and the first to sustain an extensive performing career single-handedly — was the Hungarian count, Géza Zichy (1849-1924), a

\textsuperscript{55} Francis Bowdery is a close friend of the composer’s; according to the latter, he is a player piano expert and a Busoni scholar.

\textsuperscript{56} With the exception of the performances and recordings of the great pianist Leon Fleisher.

\textsuperscript{57} Available online at \url{http://www.left-hand-brofeldt.dk/}. 
student of Franz Liszt. Although he lost his right arm in a hunting accident when he was 14, he became a celebrated piano virtuoso and made frequent concert tours from 1880 on.\(^{58}\)

One of the most remarkable events concerning the literature for the left hand alone is tied to Paul Wittgenstein (1887-1961) and his philanthropic activities. Wittgenstein was a wealthy pianist who lost his right arm during First World War. Determined to continue his performing career, he commissioned a large number of great composers to write concertos for left-hand piano and orchestra, the most famous being the one written by Maurice Ravel. Other composers commissioned include Sergei Prokofiev, Paul Hindemith, Benjamin Britten, Richard Strauss, and Franz Schmid, among others.

While writing for the left hand alone came out of necessity, composing for this medium also proved to be an efficient way to push the technical (or physical) limits to the absolute maximum of what one hand alone can do. Leopold Godowsky, one of the most notorious in this respect, wrote a large number of works for the left hand alone, both original compositions and arrangements/paraphrases. Among the works that belong to the latter category, his treatment of Chopin’s *Études* stands as a beacon of left hand pianistic virtuosity.\(^{59}\) From the pool of living composers dedicated to writing for the left hand alone, the Dutch Frédéric Meinders (b. 1949) is of prominence.\(^{60}\)

While a small body of works for the right hand alone does exist, writing exclusively for its use never became mainstream, for the configuration of the left hand is much better suited to

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\(^{59}\) The only études not arranged for the left hand alone are Nos. 6, 7, 8, and 11 from Op. 25, as well as No. 3 from *Trois Nouvelles Études*.

\(^{60}\) With more than 140 works for the left hand alone, Meinders is currently considered the most prolific composer and transcriber for that medium in music history, according to Brofeldt. Much like Godowsky, Meinders wrote 17 paraphrases on some of Chopin’s études, of which the first five are written on Étude Op. 10 No. 11 and conceived as a homage to Godowsky.
carry out melody and accompaniment at the same time successfully. It is worth mentioning here the existence of Alkan’s *Trois Grande Études*, op. 76, where the first is written for the left hand alone, the second for the right hand alone, while the third is written for both hands playing in unison two octaves apart.\(^{61}\)

Hamelin’s Étude No. 7 is an arrangement of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s *Lullaby*, op. 16 no. 1, for voice and piano.\(^{62}\) The key of E-flat minor presents a departure from the original’s A-flat, for the reason that A-flat minor had already been used in the much earlier *Prelude and Fugue*. Due to its popularity, the song was arranged (for two hands) by composers like Sergei Rachmaninov, Paul Pabst, and even Tchaikovsky himself.

With this work, Hamelin is presenting a different type of pianistic virtuosity. First, he admits that it was not his intention to display pianistic proficiency at the purely mechanical level, but rather use the techniques of writing for the left hand alone to set himself a personal challenge. In employing very rich textures, he is trying to make one hand sound like two, and admits that the chief difficulty of the piece resides in the proper control of the pedal.

In terms of structure, this arrangement is a verbatim account of Tchaikovsky’s original. It employs the ABABA form, preceded by a short introduction (prologue), and followed by a coda (epilogue). Both the introduction and the coda contain the same thematic material, and belong to the piano solo in the original song. The music is set to a text by Russian poet Apollon Nikolayevich Maykov (1821-1897), and familiarity with the poem is crucial in understanding the

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\(^{61}\) It is the latter (*Étude en mouvement semblable et perpétuel*) that Hamelin used as one source of inspiration in composing his Étude No. 4.

\(^{62}\) An alternate English translation is *Cradle Song*. Originally Колыбельная песня (Kolîbel'nya pesnya), in Russian.
character of this étude. The flow of the lines should obviously be as natural as possible, in an attempt to imitate the singing voice.

Hamelin was originally planning to present two versions of this piece. While both would have consisted basically of the étude as it is now, the second would have had some ethereal arabesques added towards the middle. The composer later decided to drop the second version. It is interesting to note that this étude lacks entirely the “tongue-in-cheek” mood of some of the previous pieces. It is serious, thoughtful, and deep.

When learning this étude, I found that familiarizing myself with the poem helped me get a good grasp of the dramatic structure and form. I also learned and eventually performed the original Tchaikovsky song, which gave me further musical perspective.

In acquiring such a rich and dense text, Hamelin creates three different layers of texture. These voices often overlap, creating a profound sense of calm. The composer strongly suggests practicing with both hands at first, so that the desired sonic result would be imprinted in one’s ear, especially in regard to all of the interlocking slurs. Throughout the piece the melody is almost always performed by the strong left hand thumb; however, in the short introduction and the coda, the line is hidden in the middle of the texture. The performer should pay close attention to the fourth sixteenth note of measure 1: the E-flat played by the thumb should not stand out and interfere with the melody (example 3.29). In measure 5, the second beat requires masterful voicing in successfully realizing the proper voice leadings. An unusually large hand is required to play the last two subdivisions of the beat, all the while holding the A-flat for its entire duration. I recommend finger 4 on A-flat and finger 3 on C-flat which I believe is more comfortable than the composer’s suggested 5-4 exchange on A-flat.

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63 An English translation of the poem is available in Appendix C.
Example 3.29: Hamelin, Étude No. 7: after Tchaikovsky, mm. 1-5

In measures 3-4 (and elsewhere), two different sets of fingerings are possible for the main line (A-natural A-flat G-natural G-flat, see example 3.29). My initial choice was 4-1-3-2, which allows the hand to stretch and reach for the next interval. Watching Hamelin perform, he uses 5-1-5-2, fingerings which prove more reliable in creating a richer and deeper sound.

The main melody makes its presence in measure 8, with a large stretch of a 10th (example 3.30). The handling of the pedal might prove a little tricky in the following measure, due to the lower neighbour D-natural and the need for the low E-flat in the bass to resonate into the second beat. A proper way of realizing it is a very artful ‘fluffer’ effect of the pedal together with proper voicing of the main notes of the chord and a slight speeding up into the next beat of the measure. The speeding up should occur only naturally, as a result of proper shaping of the phrase. The overall impression in measures 8-10 should be an E-flat minor harmony held under one pedal.
Example 3.30: Hamelin, Étude No. 7: after Tchaikovsky, mm. 6-11

Even though not indicated, a small stretch of time in measure 13 (and elsewhere) is needed in order to highlight the detail of the quiet bass figures and the voice leadings. It should be noted that measures 8 and 16 are identical and should be played as such. In all the recordings available (including the Hyperion disc), the composer performs measure 16 slightly altered, carrying in the figure of the melodic line from the previous measure (C-flat and B-flat from the second beat of measure 15 are kept into the second beat of measure 16 as well). I consulted with Hamelin on this matter, and he would prefer it played just as printed: “this is simply a case of my memory of the score being altered over time.”

The B section is brought in with measure 28 and the indication caloroso (example 3.31). The new section brings with it a new character and a new dynamic (mf). The register is expanding and the stretches between the melody and the bass line are becoming larger. With a more urgent flow, the melodic line employs now more than just the thumb, the second finger helping in creating a better shaping of the phrase. I opted for changing some of the fingerings suggested by the composer in measures 28-29 on grounds of better fluency of movement.
Example 3.31: Hamelin, Étude No. 7: after Tchaikovsky, mm. 28-31

As difficult as it may seem, special attention in practicing should be given to the middle voice of measures 30-34. While this line is of secondary importance, its melodic contour must be imprinted in the performer’s ears. This type of understanding of the text will help not only with mastering the textural seamlessness, but also with memorizing the work in a highly efficient manner.

The following sections are reiterations of the same material, but with a greater compositional command of even more complex textures. When practicing this étude, I strongly encourage comparing and practicing the similar sections back to back. All occurrences of the thematic material from section A were ingeniously treated by Hamelin and a careful comparison will reveal interesting aspects of pedaling, tone production, and harmonic structure. With each reiteration of the A section, the composer tends to bring the melody (thus the thumb of the left hand) higher and higher, and in doing so, the left hand needs to travel greater distances up and down. Despite the Andantino marking at the beginning of the piece, the growing stretches between the high pitch placement and very low notes in the bass do make these jumps feel really fast.
The second B section should also be carefully analyzed in light of its previous occurrence. The harmony in measure 61 is different from its analogous passage (measure 32). Throughout the entire section the texture becomes extremely thick, and only a determined soul will hunt down the melody in Hamelin’s multi-stemmed forest (example 3.32).

Example 3.32: Hamelin, Étude No. 7: after Tchaikovsky, mm. 57-64

Unlike the thumb and second finger treatment in the first B section, a closer look at this passage reveals that all five fingers of the left hand are needed in rendering this passage playable. It is indeed a virtuosic approach, both musically and technically.

A few more details pertaining to the correct interpretation of the printed text must be highlighted. In spite of its absence, a big crescendo should be applied in measures 55-56, leading into 57. Hamelin does it so on all his recordings, yet the score shows a very small one just at the end of the line. In his own words: “The crescendo in measure 55 really came about gradually through performance experience, after I’d notated the piece. I may well add it in a future
printing.” Even with big hands like mine, I soon discovered that certain large non-arpeggiated chords in the second B section are much easier played when arpeggiated, a practice which would also help greatly in better highlighting the melody (measures 59, 60, and especially the last two chords of 63, see example 3.32). Upon careful listening to Hamelin’s recordings, I noticed the composer himself does the same thing. Suspecting another situation of possible misprints, I queried him on the subject. His answer: “No, I would ideally like chords without signs not to be arpeggiated, though with some smaller hands that would be impossible, obviously.”

3.5 Étude No. 8: ‘Erlkönig’ (after Goethe)

Among the last études to be composed, *Erlkönig (after Goethe)* was written in 2007. It is an original piece, in which Hamelin set to music Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s famous poem, *Der Erlkönig*. Given the German theme of the work, the composer found it fitting to dedicate it to his German manager, Paul Lenz, and his wife, Moni.

While sharing the same poetic source, this étude does not share any musical features with Franz Schubert’s famous song of the same name. Hamelin is not the first to use Goethe’s poem for a non-vocal setting. According to the composer, the distinction belongs to Alexis Holländer who, in 1921, published *Erlkönig, Piano linke Hand*, Op. 69 No. 1, a work for left hand alone.

The poem *Der Erlkönig* (The Erlking) was written in 1782 and is based on a Germanic legend of an evil spirit who lures children to their deaths. Three distinct characters are presented

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64 This was addressed to me in an e-mail exchange. Some months later, when I performed for him, he encouraged me to roll the chords, for better voicing of the melody. When told about his previous email, amused he said “I might change my mind again, it depends on the day!”

65 It is not my intention to compare Hamelin’s piece with any other works inspired by the source material. Apart from Schubert’s setting, this includes works by Johann Friedrich Reichardt, Carl Friedrich Zelter, Ludwig Spohr, and Carl Loewe; it is interesting to note that Beethoven also left sketches of a setting, but the work was never finished.

66 Alexis Holländer (1840-1924) was a German pianist, conductor, and composer.
By Goethe: a Father, his gravely ill Child, and the Erlking. A narrating voice is also heard at both the beginning and the end of the poem. Late in the night, a father rides his horse holding his child tightly in his arms. The child begins to have visions of death. As the drama unfolds, he appears to see and hear the luring Erlking, while the father does not. Three persuasive attempts later, the child screeches under the invisible attack. The father rushes to the farmhouse for help, but once arrived it is too late: the child had died in his arms (“In seinem Armen das Kind war tot”).

In setting the poem to music for piano solo, Hamelin adhered as closely to the text as any vocal setting would, with some small exceptions: the four lines of the first stanza, as well as the last line of each of the third and the fifth stanzas, are repeated for structural reasons. The result is magnificent. The entire dramatic narrative of the poem is reflected brilliantly in Hamelin’s choice of expansive themes and musical motifs, bold harmonic language, extraordinary dynamic palette, and a grand structure. This étude is the one about which Hamelin feels the proudest, adding that he really attained what he had set out to do.67

It is somewhat surprising that, given its fundamental role, the text is to be found nowhere in the printed score. The composer considers that having the text printed would have resulted in people taking it for granted, therefore he wanted performers to work a little and research it for themselves.68 Generally, each syllable falls on one beat of the musical text. There are instances, however, where vowels are elongated over two beats or more.69 In this sense, a special place is in measures 213-215: the word leids (harm/suffering) gets stretched over five beats (full measure 213 and two beats of 214) while the two syllables of getan (done) are placed on the third beat of

67 It should be noted that this is the composer’s first and, to date, only attempt to set a poem for a non-vocal medium.
68 While I understand Hamelin’s reasoning, who sees this research more as a virtuous initiative, I believe that the lack of printed text is somewhat detrimental. It takes a significant amount of time, patience, and dedication to match each word of the poem with every beat of the musical text. While I enjoyed this process tremendously, not every pianist will. In Appendix D I provide the entire poem printed to match the melodic lines.
measure 214 and the downbeat of 215. Albeit very rare, there are also cases in which words are compressed, with two syllables on one note: Knaben (boy) in measure 56, deine (yours) in measure 191, and Mühe (effort) in measure 230. For Knaben, Hamelin creates one short sixteenth note stem in the tenor register to be played with the right hand thumb to compensate for the second syllable. For Mühe, there is a left hand chord on the third beat that could substitute for a missing melodic beat.

Structurally, the piece is defined by the treatment of the different roles presented in the poem. Hamelin carefully created different themes and motifs for each recurring character. Figure 3.2 is my reading on how one can look at this étude in terms of structure and general tonal plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>‘Horse’ (intro)</td>
<td>[6+6+6] pedal point (v p.p.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Narrator</td>
<td>[6+6+18] (v p.p.) B b → G b + → B b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>[6+2] B b → B+ →</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>[8+8] G+→ C+ → v7B+ →</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>[4+4] (C+ in parentesi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Erlking</td>
<td>[8+8+3] B+ → (... vi - ii - v77♭3↑♭) → B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>[8+1] B b → (m7 b 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>[10+4] C♭ (enh. spelled as D b) → E+ →</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Erlking</td>
<td>[8+8+4+3] C+ → (... vi - ii - v77♭3↑♭) → // (interr.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>[8+1] D7♯. . . . . . . . →</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>[11; 1 overlap] C♭ . . . . . . . . →</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Erlking</td>
<td>[4+8] D b + → D+ → B75♭ →</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>[8+2+4; overlap] (B75♭) → D+→ B b →</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Narrator</td>
<td>[12+13] … → B b</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.2: Hamelin, Étude No. 8: Erlkönig, structure and general tonal plan
The various appearances of each character led me to group them in five distinct sections, which I explain below.

A is an expansive descriptive section, comprised of an introduction and a narrative musical depiction (the Narrator). The introduction is a 12-measure section with sixteenth-note triplets (see example 3.33). With 3/8 as the time-signature of the piece, and marked *pp non secco*, fast triplets on each beat paint a telling image of a horse running in the dead of night.\(^{70}\) Given the narrative of the poem, one can only assume that the horse’s gait is not slow, but running at a considerable speed (with a significant increase towards the end of the poem).

Most horses possess four natural gaits: walk, trot, canter, and gallop. Of these, the faster are the last two. The canter is a three-beat gait with an average speed of 16-27 km/h, characterized by a period of suspension after each stride. The gallop is a four-beat gait and, with an average speed of 40-48 km/h, it is the fastest gait of the horse. Similar to the canter, the gallop is followed by a period of suspension, as well. In gallop, a horse generally cannot run long distances (up to 3.2 km) before it needs to rest.\(^{71}\)

Judging by the specifics of each gait and the type of pianistic writing in the introduction, I consider that the music clearly suggests a horse running at canter (example 3.33). Moreover, the short period of suspension specific to this gait comes off naturally from the repeated note in the triplets played by the right hand — the repetition prevents the line from sounding continuously even.

\(^{70}\) It should be said that Schubert’s song is characterized by repeated triplets as well (but in solid octaves).

Apart from the introduction, the gait of a horse can be heard again towards the end of the piece (starting from measure 215). The passage of quintuplets (four sixteenth notes and a sixteenth note rest), marked *Più mosso, fff, poco pressando*, and *con somma forza, agitatissimo*, subtly morphs into regular four sixteenth notes (of a quarter) as a result of an ever-growing *accelerando* (example 3.34). It is interesting to note that the change of meter does not happen over a barline; it was the composer’s intention for the transition to be as smooth as possible, and not obvious.
This is the greatest moment when poetic and musical drama reach paroxysmal levels: the Father’s desperation to reach for help yields to a quick change of pace to almost uncontrollable speeds. The meter change is a clear indicator of the horse’s abruptly changed gait from the more comfortable canter to the more dramatic gallop. One can almost hear the horse neigh after being spurred. The treatment of the quintuplet fits a gallop perfectly: the four notes are followed by a short rest which completes the subdivision, in the same way a four-beat gallop gait is followed by a short period of suspension. Starting to gallop increasingly faster, the horse’s speed is so great that one can no longer hear the suspension (thus the transition to four sixteenth notes).

Checking with the composer on the different changes of meter discussed above, he confirmed the intention of transitioning from canter to gallop as something done on purpose. At the same time, and following my explanations, he admitted to getting the specifics wrong: it was the quintuplets-to-sixteenths that he envisioned as a canter-to-gallop transition. Moreover, the introduction has no particular caballine meaning to him, adding it should prompt a feeling of restless movement.\(^72\)

The section of the Narrator begins with a pickup to measure 13. The left hand continues the restless sixteenth-note triplets. Marked *p espres. ma mezza voce*, the voice of the Narrator is a compelling and penetrating melody of foreboding qualities which emulate perfectly the words of the poem. The ascending line leading to measure 16 is an inspired way of mirroring the questioning first line of the poem: “Wer reitet so spät durch Nacht und Wind?”\(^73\) The answer, coming from the same Narrator, is treated musically with two short descending lines that shape melodically two different seventh chords (one is a major seventh chord, the other a minor seventh).\(^72\)

\(^72\) This can only demonstrate how different people see different things in the same work, attesting to the creative subjectivity of interpretation, so specific to all artistic endeavours.

\(^73\) “Who rides so late in the night and the wind?” A side-by-side translation of the poem can be found in Appendix E.
seventh chord; see example 3.35). It is important to note that seventh chords, suspensions, and major/minor shifts play a significant role in Hamelin’s harmonic choices throughout the entire piece.

Example 3.35: Hamelin, Étude No. 8: *Erlkönig*, mm. 13-24

The above melody evolves from an introduction whose harmonic function is a sustained pedal point on the dominant. With a timid occurrence in measure 15, the key of B-flat major is fully felt in measure 19. A constant harmonic inquietude is specific to this piece. The passage wanders from the B-flat minor to D-flat and F, the latter becoming the dominant for the return of the original key. Once returned to the original key, Hamelin repeats the entire section of the Narrator, with some modifications: the melody is brought in octaves in the medium-high register and suffers some pitch alterations (a fourth higher from measure 49).
Section B starts from the pickup to measure 73. It is the Father, a character whose voice — always in the low bass register — we hear for the first time. He is asking why is his son hiding his face in fear. The middle voice played in thumbs alternation and marked *vibrante* gives a truly chilling sound effect, as anticipation to the child’s response. The ailing child’s fragile answer (*con fragilità*), itself a set of questions, is carefully crafted by the composer. Every inflection of the voice (words) is observed by the way each line’s melodic contour is treated.

Of utmost importance is the dominant seventh chord in measure 93, which precedes the Father’s answer (*in parentesi*) and the first appearance of the frightening Erlking. Hamelin devised this chord to be resolved 12 measures later into B major. The sonority of the dominant seventh chord should remain imprinted in the performer’s ear all the way through the father’s brief insertion (played deeply, but *in parentheses*). The D-sharp C-sharp B (measures 103-105) are marked *distinto*, and should come out very clearly despite the *ppp* dynamics.

The following three sections are mostly tailored on the same tripartite structure: the Erlking, the Child, and the Father. The musical themes used for each of these characters are ingeniously maintained throughout. For these reasons, I chose to represent these sections as C, C\(^1\), and C\(^2\), for they generally follow the pattern of model-sequence-sequence. The only exception is made in C\(^2\), when, hearing his son shriek of horror and pain, the Father finally gives up his comforting words to pursue a course of action. The Narrator then begins to describe his rush for seeking help.

The three appearances of the Erlking are ever increasingly ‘menacingly sweet’ (*minacciosamente dolce*). To musically paint this unearthly creature that makes hollow promises in exchange for life itself, Hamelin chose a distressingly simple and appealing melody (measures 105-112 and elsewhere). The listener might find it familiar: the incipit of the Child’s first
appearance (example 3.36) becomes the starting point of the Erlking’s theme (example 3.37). It is obvious what Hamelin went for in here: by mimicking the child’s voice, the Erlking appears as an even more ominous creature.

The composer recalls the precise genesis of this tune. He was on an airplane, standing in line waiting to deplane, when inspiration struck. He then desperately began to search for a pen and a piece of paper, for he admits “no matter how strong an idea, if I don’t immediately write it down, I’ll forget it forever!”

With each appearance, the Erlking’s theme occurs one step higher: B major, C major, and finally, D-flat major. The chords that carry the melody (always in octaves in the upper register of the piano) are altered with various simple and double accidentals, creating a frightening sound
effect — there is definitely something disingenuous about all of these nice promises. In all three sections, the Erlking’s song is abruptly cut short by the sudden screams of the Child (pickup to measure 124), calling his Father (example 3.38).

Marked agitato, ansioso, ansioso di nuovo, and disperato, each of the three appearances is an escalation of anxiety and tension. Hamelin chose alternating chords between the two hands, in which the melody in the left hand thumb is closely shadowed by the top voice of the right hand. He maintains the same intervallic content of ascending-descending minor second from the previous appearance of the Child’s theme, with alteration of rhythm in C and C¹. As the composer points out, at the end of his second Erlking hallucination (measures 167-169), the Child can be felt trying to say “Mein Vater, mein Vater” before he fully wakes up and actually says it. Hamelin wishes for the different dynamics in each hand to be carefully observed.

For the Child’s last spoken words, the composer went for massive chordal writing with gripping harmonic language (example 3.39). Hamelin confesses that he is still not fully satisfied.
with the final result, despite spending a lot of time trying to capture the most gratifying harmonic solution.

Example 3.39: Hamelin, Étude No. 8: Erlkönig, mm. 209-214

In matching the drama of the poem, for the ending of the story Hamelin brings in nothing but the heavy artillery: dissonant chords in triple forte, octave jumps in the very resonant low register in the left hand, and constant alternation of the hands (creating the horse gallop discussed earlier), all marked con somma forza, agitatissimo. Rarely can a piano alone make so much sound. For the last two lines of the poem, Hamelin chooses to return to the beginning, bringing in recitativo style the incipit of the Narrator (example 3.40). Suspended over two measures of rests, the familiar phrase finally finds its completion in what I consider to be one of most lugubrious closures ever written.\footnote{In the NB (\textit{nota bene}) printed in the score, the composer warns against shortening the two-measure rest in this last phrase, adding that the pedal should not be held through it.}
Marked *Alla ballata, narante (ma sempre movimentato)*, the introduction must be enveloped in an aura of mystery. Marked ‘not dry,’ the pedal should be carefully planned. The use of half pedal proves to be extremely useful in avoiding an undesired dynamic buildup throughout the passage. All the inner voices (measures 34-39 and elsewhere) should not appear as too prominent, given they are of secondary nature. In measures 48-49 Hamelin wrote *non forte! sempre mezza voce!* as an attempt to prevent overzealous pianists from playing the theme in Rachmaninoff’s style. Despite being written two octaves higher, the Narrator’s repeated appearance should be penetrating, but remain quiet. The hemiola effect in measures 69-71 should be assisted with short pedal changes. The *vibrante* effect in measure 73 will come off a lot more convincingly if played *secco*.

A possible misreading might occur in the left hand passage starting in measure 113: the fifth sixteenth note should read A-sharp, in direct contrast with all the A-naturals that are played by the right hand. As a matter of facilitation, the last two sixteenth notes in measure 177 in the right hand may be taken by the left. The same observation applies to measure 182, for the lower F-sharp in the fourth sixteenth.
In measures 201-206, the alternating repeated chords in thirty-second notes should not be shortened at all. Because of the fast tempo and the jumps, some of the notes might tend to go missing. Hamelin pointed out to me to pay special attention not to miss any of them.

The Erlking theme needs careful voicing. While the melody in octaves must prevail at all times, the internal dissonances of each chord need to be clearly heard. The beginning of the third occurrence of this theme (measures 189-192) went through different revisions. Initially, it followed the same rhythmic pattern as the other two. Hamelin later realized it can be rhythmically altered by subdivision: eighth and quarter notes became sixteenth and eighth notes. This procedure allowed for a much more interesting and vibrant result, as well as being very suitable to the moment: this is the point when the Erlking becomes impatient and, for the first time, shows his true face (“I love you, I am charmed by your beautiful form, And if you are not willing I will use force!”).

In learning this great work, as much time should be spent at the instrument as away from it. Mere familiarity with the poem is not enough. A successful performer should be able to comfortably recite the poem, in its original German language, out loud on the rhythm of the music. Doing so will help understand the shape and the phrasing of the line, the spots where musical breaths are needed, and the overall architecture of the piece.

While some might regard it as an étude for the left hand (given its intricate textures), Hamelin’s Erlkönig is far more than that: it unlocks the door to the boundless world of imagination. The pianist is no longer a diligent technician trying to showcase a highly adept left hand with beautiful tone and singing lines in the right hand. The pianist is, in fact, no longer a pianist, but has evolved into a virtuoso storyteller of the highest order.
3.6 Étude No. 9: after Rossini

Among Hamelin’s earliest compositions, Étude No. 9 dates from 1987 and was the second to be composed. Dedicated to Russell Sherman, it was conceived as a highly virtuosic transcription of Gioachino Rossini’s famed Neapolitan tarantella, La Danza.

Étude No. 9 was written over a very short period of time (three to four days), when the composer confesses to have felt particularly cheerful and mischievous. In fact excruciatingly difficult, this piece is filled with every pianist’s nightmare: double notes. Hamelin, jokingly admitting the very likely possibility of having been born with a double-note gene, does not shy away from using almost every possible interval ranging from the minor second to the major tenth, all brought in various combinatorial successions.

Hamelin is not the first to make a transcription of La Danza. Attesting to the song’s popularity, Franz Liszt transcribed it for the piano in 1838, only three years after it was composed. In 1841, Frédéric Chopin used the song as inspiration for his Tarantelle in A-flat major, Op. 43, while Ottorino Respighi featured it in his La Boutique fantasque, a one-act ballet from 1918-1919 with music based on pieces by Rossini. Noteworthy is also György Cziffra’s arrangement, a treacherous concoction of barely-recognizable Rossinian melodies.

Similar to Étude No. 7, after Rossini could not be written in the same key as La Danza, because A minor was already reserved for the Triple Étude (now Étude No. 1). Instead, the composer opted for F minor, a transposed major third down. While the same key could not be used, the consistency of the tempo marking was observed. The $\text{♩} = 152$ marked Allegro con brio.

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75 Russell Sherman (b. 1930) is a famed American classical pianist, educator and author, with whom Hamelin studied privately in the early 1980s.

76 The Dance (from Italian), written in 1835, is the eighth song of the collection Les soiûrés musicales (1830-1835). It is set on a text by Carlo Pepoli, librettist of Vincenzo Bellini’s opera I Puritani. A full English translation of the poem can be found in Appendix E.
in *La Danza* remains the same in Hamelin’s transcription, with the modified indication *Vivace e scherzando*. After I expressed to the composer my opinion that such a tempo is hardly attainable by even the most technically gifted pianists, he admitted that the tempo does not really need to be that fast, adding that bringing the right character is really the most important thing. That being said, his verbal recommendation is a tempo somewhere around \( \downarrow = 136 \).

Structurally, Hamelin maintains the overall frame of the original, but employs several motivic shifts (figure 3.3). He also treats the recurring motives differently every time that they occur. This yields to sudden major-minor shifts, plenty of cleverly crafted melodic inversions, a tune that starts a third too high, blue-note chords, and an ending that he compares to “a full-blown epileptic seizure.” Figure 3.3 provides a side-by-side comparison of the structure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rossini’s <em>La Danza</em></th>
<th>Hamelin’s Étude No. 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( a + b + c + d + e + f )</td>
<td>( a + b + c + d + e + f )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( X + b )</td>
<td>( X + c )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( Y + c + d )</td>
<td>( Y + c + d )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( Z )</td>
<td>( Z + \text{extension (rhythmic motif from } Y) )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( a )</td>
<td>( a + b + c + d + e + f )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( X + b )</td>
<td>( X + c )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( Y + c + d )</td>
<td>( Y + c + \text{extension} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( Z )</td>
<td>( Z )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( a + f )</td>
<td>( f + \text{reversed } d )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.3: Structural comparison between Rossini’s *La Danza* and Hamelin’s Étude No. 9: *after Rossini*
Each of the lower-case letters (from a to f) represents a distinct musical idea that Rossini wrote. All six short melodies, presented in succession, constitute the lengthy introduction played in the piano solo. Each of them is a standard 4+4 phrase, in which the first four measures are simply repeated twice. The only exception is made by phrase d, which breaks the pattern in showcasing an extended, 6+6 phrase. As is easily seen from the table above, Hamelin’s introduction is entirely truthful to the original. The upper-case letters (X, Y, Z) also represent unique musical ideas, but they are always introduced by the singer. These three are interspersed with phrases from the piano introduction, thus creating a great sense of both variety and familiarity. It is in these moments when Hamelin breaks free (sometimes wildly so) from the original.

The side-by-side comparison reveals that Hamelin’s departures from the model are fairly moderate and done, perhaps, for the sake of better structural unity. It is not necessarily at the structural level that Hamelin operates his strokes of ingenuity, but rather in the way of treating each recurring musical motif. It should be said that Rossini’s tarantella is, in fact, a patter song. In this transcription, Hamelin manages brilliantly to retain this stylistic aspect. Despite the incredible number of notes per measure, the texture must remain extremely supple, the line flowing, and each melodic gesture carefully enunciated.

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77 Phrase f is a 4+1, but the fermata in the last measure will give it some extra length.
78 Patter singing denotes a highly virtuosic delivery of music and text, in which each syllable of a word corresponds to one note only. A staple of comic opera, this singing style initially referenced the way Catholics recited the Lord’s Prayer (Pater Noster, in Latin, from which ‘patter’ derives): rushing through the words as quickly as possible. One of the most well known examples of patter singing is Figaro’s Largo al factotum from Rossini’s Il barbiere di Siviglia.
While learning this étude, I was surprised at how often I needed to change the composer’s fingering suggestions, a practice to which he has no objection. The first example of this is at the very beginning. Despite the two of us having similarly sized hands, I find the fingerings offered in the second half of measure 3 to be straining (example 3.41). As a result, I offer an alternative which I believe suits even smaller hands better.

Example 3.41: Hamelin, Étude No. 9: after Rossini, mm. 1-5

Perhaps most puzzling in this passage is the composer’s wish for legato playing. In my experience, in order for them to come off, extremely fast and difficult passages of double-notes almost always require a certain non-legato attack. I believe Hamelin’s legato does not refer to creating a nice, singing line (in the style of Chopin, for instance), but rather it informs the performer to play as close to keys as possible, with absolute minimal movement of the fingers. A slightly elevated wrist will allow the fingers to naturally sit on the keys, making the transition from one interval to the other more accurate.

At the fingerwork level, this étude is targeting the extremities of the right hand: at one end, our weakest of all, fingers 4 and 5; at the other, the thumb — strong, but not so dexterous/agile. Oftentimes fingers 4 and 5 carry the melody, while the thumb plays part of a secondary line.
For passages like example 3.41, each right hand line must be practiced separately in order to gain independence of the lines and build stamina in fingers 4 and 5. In tempo, the thumb may have a tendency of getting stuck (see measures 10-11). Suppleness and precision of attack are to be looked after at all times, with the thumb gliding along gently but not stiffly. Mental grouping of the notes in different ways other than the standard 3+3 specific to a 6/8 time signature will ensure efficiency in solving this problem.\textsuperscript{79}

Hamelin offers an abundance of carefully notated indications of character. Looking at the first page, it is important to not only notice but hierarchize the roles of the \textit{staccatos} in the left hand bass, the only two grace notes, the accents, and the \textit{sforzandos}.\textsuperscript{80} While the \textit{sf} is definitely stronger than an accent, it is also a clear marking for the beginning of a much longer phrase that connects smaller slurs at the micro level. It is also important to notice that Hamelin chose different starting intervals for the two statements of the \textit{c} phrase: a perfect fourth the first time (measure 17), a minor sixth the second time (measure 21). Carefully observing these small but tricky details will ensure that the hand will not enter the dangerous zone of muscle-memory.

For the \textit{d} phrase (measures 25-37), Hamelin uses the Rossinian melodic element primarily as a rhythmic one, and assigns it to the left hand instead. With a former melody now turned into rhythmic accompaniment, he then creates a new melody for the right hand in a most impressive ascending run of double notes (example 3.42). It is this statement that will be used in inversion later on. While the tendency will be to focus on the right hand with its challenging passage, equal attention should be given to the left hand thumbs. Doing so will indirectly help the right hand by informing a more efficient grouping of the notes.

\textsuperscript{79} I am primarily thinking of a practice scenario in which the last eighth note of any group of 3 will become a pickup to the next downbeat/strong beat.

\textsuperscript{80} With the exception of the \textit{staccatos}, all the others come from Rossini’s original. Hamelin brings in each of the two grace notes three beats earlier, on a downbeat, for reasons that appear to be both pianistic and musical.
Example 3.42: Hamelin, Étude No. 9: *after Rossini*, mm. 26-29

Equal attention should similarly be given to the two distinct lines that Hamelin combines in phrase *e* (measures 37-44). Here, the tendency will be to engage more with the left hand line: a new and haunting melody in the tenor voice, indicated *marcato espressivo*. Nevertheless, the omnipresent double-notes of the right hand should be clearly audible as a primary voice, for they carry the original Rossinian melody (example 3.43).
Example 3.43: Hamelin, Étude No. 9: after Rossini, mm. 36-44

A possible misreading of the text can easily occur in this passage (see example 3.43). In the last eighth note (right hand) of measure 39, B in the alto voice is natural (the natural sign carries over from two beats before). Initially, I mistakenly learned it as B-flat, which had unfortunate results: the composer’s fingerings did not make sense in the context of the wrong note, which made me re-finger the entire passage. Only much later did I notice the overlooked detail, thus painfully needing to make the necessary fingering changes.

The *glissando* in measure 49, an extended reference to the whistle-like, five-note run that Rossini uses in the song, should not be played too fast. I recommend using finger 3 alone, with both crescendo and accelerando towards the end of the passage. The ending note coincides with the last available key of the piano’s upper register.\(^{81}\) Intended as a theatrical gesture, no doubt, this C can be played in different ways: by the left hand, crossing over the right hand (as marked

\(^{81}\) As we have seen, Hamelin likes to explore the entire range of the keyboard. The same C is used in Étude No. 6.
in the score); by the right hand, with a separate attack at the end of the *glissando* run; or, as Hamelin suggested during one of our sessions, not attacked at all but coming off as a sped-up ending of the *glissando* gesture. After experimenting with all three, I am still debating which one I like better.

In arranging the Rossinian song, Hamelin borrowed from Liszt as well. Marked *shades of Liszt*, the passage starting from measure 49 (phrase X) is very similar to what Liszt did in his own arrangement. It is in this passage that Hamelin pokes a little fun, bringing in the melody a third too high.\(^{82}\) The *cantabile armonioso* section (phrase Y) that follows from measure 73 on requires careful voicing. While marked *più dolce*, left hand chords should nevertheless sound deeply resonant and full bodied. In repeating the section an octave higher (*en carillon*), a short quote from J. S. Bach’s *Gigue* from French Suite No. 5 unintentionally finds its way in the middle voice (example 3.44). The left hand in this passage requires huge stretches in a very fast tempo. A secondary but interesting line in the left hand thumb can be heard starting in measure 85 and resolving quite nicely on the downbeat chord of measure 89.

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\(^{82}\) Compared to the original song. In Rossini, this tune starts on a C (third of A minor). Hamelin brings the tune on the same C, but in the key of F minor (thus making it a third too high compared to the original). By comparison, Liszt remains faithful to the original song.
An outburst of exuberance (measures 109-124, *giubiloso*) marks the occurrence of the Z phrase in what appears to be a whirlwind of electrifying octaves distributed across both hands. An extended passage with rhythmic reminiscences from Y brings us to the end of the first half of the étude. What follows next is structurally the same as the first half, but significantly varied in terms of compositional treatment of the themes. With each appearance of the established recurring melodic motifs, Hamelin makes inventive changes: double notes in both hands in contrary motion, inverted melodies, minor-major shifts, hemiolas, extreme dynamic markings (up to ***fff**) and character indications (*nervoso, con massima forza*) that test the endurance of both the piano and the pianist.

As mentioned before, Hamelin is much in favour of reviewing the distribution of hands, particularly in technically challenging passages. As such, I am presenting a few facilitations. In measure 151, the fourth 8th note (E in the right hand) can be easily taken by the left, which will
successfully avoid the overlapping of the thumbs and the easy-to-miss jump in the right hand (example 3.45).

Example 3.45: Hamelin, Étude No. 9: after Rossini, mm. 149-153

In measure 250, the third and sixth 8th notes in the left hand (F and G) can be taken by the right hand, thus avoiding some unnecessary risks of missing the accented basses (example 3.46).

Example 3.46: Hamelin, Étude No. 9: after Rossini, mm. 247-251

Despite the long slur over measures 159-160, Hamelin suggested to me that the entire passage of sixths may be played detached, almost en carillon, and without much pedal. The section marked nervoso (measures 212-227) should not come across as excessively violent, as I initially played for the composer. The overall feeling of irritability that the Italian term suggests should come primarily from the unexpected hemiola clusters in the right hand which clash with the more rhythmically established melody in the left hand, rather than sheer sound volume. In what initially appeared to not be such a challenging passage (from measure 260 to the end), I
later experienced great difficulties in being able to finish the descending left hand run (example 3.47). It seemed that the more often I performed the piece, the more notes would go missing.\textsuperscript{83}

Apart from the obvious slow practice, I recommend different combinations of accents (thus changing the meter) and truncating the passage in sections. Practicing hands in alternation (each of the hands serving as downbeat, at a time) might prove to be useful. It should also be observed that the run does not start on a downbeat, but with a pickup.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example.png}
\caption{Example 3.47: Hamelin, \textit{Étude No. 9: after Rossini}, mm. 260-266}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{83}Just like unraveling a sweater by pulling a loose yarn. Hamelin admitted that he experienced a similarly uneasy feeling in Chopin’s \textit{Étude Op. 10 No. 12}. I have encountered it also in Op. 25 no. 11 (measure 88).
3.7 Étude No. 10: after Chopin

Étude No. 10, the third in chronological order, was composed in 1990, and is an arrangement of Frédéric Chopin’s Étude Op. 10 No. 5, in G-flat major (Black Keys). It is dedicated to Alistair Hinton and his wife, Terry. Hamelin started sketching this piece shortly after musicologist Marc-André Roberge showed him a double-note setting of Chopin’s famous étude done by Gottfried Galston\(^4\) — in Hamelin’s words, “a barely-playable atrocity that is surely not meant for the concert hall!” (figure 3.4)

![Figure 3.4: Gottfried Galston’s double-note setting of Chopin’s Étude Op. 10 No. 5](image)

\(^{4}\) Gottfried Galston (1879-1950) was an Austrian pianist and composer who studied in Vienna with Theodor Leschetizky and later on was an assistant to Ferruccio Busoni. His double-note setting of Chopin’s Black Keys can be found in a book of his titled Studienbuch, available at [https://archive.org/details/studienbuch00gals](https://archive.org/details/studienbuch00gals).
Feeling inspired by such a sighting, Hamelin began work, and the result is an astonishing transcription in the style of Leopold Godowsky.\textsuperscript{85} I asked the composer if, at the time of writing \emph{after Chopin}, he was fully familiar with Godowsky’s seven different versions of the \emph{Black Keys}.\textsuperscript{86} He admitted that his knowledge of them was not complete. In 1990, the ones that he knew the best (and only from reading them) were the first four. In fact, he was familiar with Godowsky’s second version since the early 1970s.\textsuperscript{87} The remaining three versions were learned only in 1998-1999, for his famed recordings.

Of all 12 études that Hamelin wrote, No. 10 is the only one which did not undergo any revisions or modifications: what we see is exactly what was originally written. As a matter of interest, this étude is one of the composer’s favourites. He also mentioned to me that No. 10 was the very first one to have been type-set. Despite being readily available for quite a while now, \emph{after Chopin} has yet to receive as much attention from pianists as some of the others.\textsuperscript{88}

Texturally, Hamelin describes the piece rather simplistically as the original Chopin étude heard through about 20 feet of water: everything is distorted, be it melody, mode, harmony, timbre, texture, or even the pianist’s physical feeling when playing the original. Structurally the

\textsuperscript{85} Godowsky made no fewer than seven different transcriptions of Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 5, including one for the left hand alone. As pointed out earlier, Hamelin recorded Godowsky’s complete \emph{Studies on Chopin’s Études}, twofer for which he received a Grammy Award nomination in 2000.

\textsuperscript{86} The seven versions are: one for both hands reversed, a transposition to C major for the white keys, a \emph{Tarantella} in A minor, a \emph{Capriccio} on “black and white keys”, an inversion for the left hand, an inversion for the right hand, and a version for the left hand alone.

\textsuperscript{87} Around 1972-1973, Hamelin’s father had painstakingly punched a piano roll (which the composer still has), so that he and his very young son could hear it.

\textsuperscript{88} Hamelin believes that, apart from him, I currently might very well be the only other pianist to be publicly performing this piece. My rendition of this challenging work is currently the only one available on YouTube, and can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-S4HU-\_ZCo.
piece is, measure for measure, a verbatim account of the original. Thus, the ternary form ABA with its 85 measures is strictly observed, and no deviations from the model occur.\(^{89}\)

While in some of his other transcriptions Hamelin retains the original tempo marking of the original source, such a practice is most definitely not applicable here. During our extended conversations, this very important aspect was discussed as well. It is obvious that the texture is far too thick for anyone to play it up to the original tempo and, moreover, that is not how the piece was conceived. Hamelin admitted that the tempo marking of \( \frac{\text{♩}}{\text{♩}} \) = ca. 88-96 is still somewhat on the extreme side, and recommended as a satisfying alternative \( \frac{\text{♩}}{\text{♩}} \) = 82 instead. Perhaps because this is one of his earliest compositions, I find that Hamelin was a lot more generous with his fingering suggestions than in others, an element that I personally welcome, particularly in his music.

Marked *Tenebroso*, the étude begins with two distinct lines played in contrary motion by the two hands. While Chopin’s original melody is discernable in the conglomerate of alternating single and double notes aptly reserved for the right hand (*legato possibile sempre*), a *poco oscuro e pesante* line in the left hand finds its way up in an ascending passage. The two hands ‘clash’ at the end of measure 2, where the melodic lines cross each other (example 3.48). It is Hamelin’s expressed wish to use no *rubato* throughout, and to ensure that the bass line has as deep and penetrating a sound as possible.

\(^{89}\) In writing a set of études in all the minor keys, Hamelin had to change Chopin’s original key of G-flat major to the one of F-sharp minor.
Example 3.48: Hamelin, Étude No. 10: *after Chopin*, mm. 1-6

The same passage occurs again from measure 9 on, with some minor but significant changes: the passage of broken ninths in the left hand, mischievously notated *legatissimo!*, is no small feat for small hands (example 3.49). For people with a significant stretch, I have provided recommended fingering.

Example 3.49: Hamelin, Étude No. 10: *after Chopin*, mm. 9-10

Given the enormous number of notes that needs to be amassed when first approaching this piece, I find that misreadings are a potential danger for any pianist. One example can be
found in measures 4 and 12, where the passages in the right hand are extremely similar, but not identical (example 3.50). A careful comparison of the last two sixteenth notes in the right hand in measure 4 with their counterparts in measure 12 will reveal that the first time the B is natural, while the second time it is sharp.

Example 3.50: Hamelin, Étude No. 10: after Chopin, mm. 4 and 12

Passages like those in measure 17 (and elsewhere), in which the left hand faces some serious technical challenges in fast tempo, will eventually come off only after closely observing the composer’s slurs (example 3.51). Hamelin’s distinct pleasure in twisting a melody through the use of subsequent intervals of a major second can be fully noticed in measures 19-20.\(^{90}\)

\(^{90}\) Subsequent intervals of minor or major seconds has become one of Hamelin’s compositional trademarks. One great example is his re-writing of Chopin’s *Minute Waltz* (more specifically, the recapitulation of the A section), wittily titled *The Minute Waltz, in Seconds*. This short piece was written in 2012 and will be published in the near future.
Of interest is a little hidden melody in measure 24 (example 3.52) that Hamelin pointed out to me: C-sharp C-natural C-sharp D-natural E-sharp D C-sharp C-natural C-sharp.

He admits that its occurrence was noticed only after the passage was written. While this voice need not be brought out, Hamelin recommends a certain level of awareness for this little detail, which might otherwise be neglected.
Measures 29-32 serve as a perfect example of compositional aspects of which a performer might not be fully aware at the time of learning a new piece. Not only could these put Godowsky to shame, but they are transposed 12-tone rows, too (example 3.53). While the knowledge of such a fact may or may not influence the learning process of this étude, it is nevertheless an interesting window into understanding the creative process of the composer. Hamelin clearly remembers writing the left hand first: the low basses for each slurred gesture are in fact the same bass notes as the ones in the *Black Keys*. Once the left hands passages were finished, he started sketching in the right hand line. It was at this point when, writing the first few notes, he realized building a 12-tone row was entirely possible.

Example 3.53: Hamelin, Étude No. 10: *after Chopin*, mm. 28-33
In order for this passage to work, I have a few recommendations:

1) Regrouping of the notes in what could be called micro-phrasing. While the notated gesture is one slur per measure, the regrouping of the notes in micro-slurs will prove to be very effective. Not only will the passage eventually feel more comfortable, but it will also appear to be truly pianistically written: each smaller group of notes will fit in one hand position.91

2) Finding common notes in both hands that will act as ‘arrival/pivotal points,’ thus helping the ear and the hands find a common stabilizing factor in a sea of dissonance.

3) Understanding how the sequence works. While at first the passage might make no sense, it is well crafted from a compositional standpoint: the first two measures are the model and the sequence, followed by a diminution of the said sequence (two gestures, measure 31) and ending with a final statement in the style of the model, with much larger intervals, but without following the 12-tone row pattern.

4) As both hands play completely different lines but in the same direction (ascending and descending, covering almost the entire span of the keyboard), assigning completely opposite dynamic shapes to each hand will be of invaluable help: while the right hand makes a crescendo from A4 to F-sharp7 (measure 29), the left hand plays a decrescendo from F1 to D-flat5, and so on. Eventually, the performer should come to feel that both the tactile impression and the harmony are one, fused together.

Indicated as espressivo ma agitato, and in pp dynamics, perhaps the second most difficult passage is found in measures 57-60 (example 3.54). Four different voices (two in each hand) must be clearly heard at all times. A good understanding of the chord reduction, combined with

91 Applicable to decently large hands only.
slow practice, will prove very efficient in learning the passage. The tenor voice in the left hand thumb (measures 59-60) can be elongated just enough to be heard, followed by the very difficult jump down. Hamelin admits it is not a really prominent voice, but rather a relatively unimportant counterpoint. While he could have written it in one voice, he wanted to delineate the melodic movement. Nevertheless, he maintains it does not necessarily have to be highlighted.

Example 3.54: Hamelin, Étude No. 10: after Chopin, mm. 57-60

Hamelin did not write any pedaling suggestions, leaving it up to the performer. It goes without saying that the use of pedal is absolutely necessary. During one of our sessions, the composer had one specific suggestion: the pedal used in the *molto crescendo* passage (measures 63-64) should be promptly released on the climactic downbeat (measure 65), with the rest of the measure being *secco* (example 3.55). This will enhance the *poco precipitato* suggestion.
Example 3.55: Hamelin, Étude No. 10: after Chopin, mm. 64-66

Despite general expectations, and in direct contrast with the Black Keys, Hamelin’s coda showcases only the softest of dynamics. The passage in measures 79-82 is required to be played furtivo (furtive, fleetingly) and consists of a melody played by mostly thumbs in alternation (example 3.56). When I asked the composer about his use of alternating thumbs, a compositional technique which he tends to favour in other études as well, he admits it occurred to him musically first, and pianistically it happened to work. When I learned this passage, finding the common notes in the two hands proved to be of immense benefit.

92 See Étude No. 9: after Rossini, measures 150-151, for instance. During one of our conversations, Hamelin referred to this as tricotage (knitting, in French).
There are many ways of practicing this piece. One that I found to be most helpful is to change the meter from 12/16 to 3/4. This practice allows the newly-formed four-note groups to emphasize and strengthen certain notes and intervals that would otherwise be ignored. Applying different rhythms — the so-called stop-practice — in this new meter will ensure that no note or interval will pass unemphasized. The pedal should never be used all the way to the bottom. Half- and quarter-pedal practice will ensure a supple shaping of the line, all the while sounding not too dry. Fingers 4 and 5 should not come across as being any weaker than their much stronger companions.
Chapter Four. Conclusion

The conditions around my encountering Marc-André Hamelin’s piano études are rather peculiar. Some years ago, while I was searching for a late 20th-century étude for an international piano competition, Hamelin’s set fell into my hands. I chose Étude No. 10 and learned it quickly to accommodate a tight deadline. Those four laborious weeks proved to be as arduous as they were soul-searching. The experience made such an impact on me that the decision of spending the last year of graduate school researching the set was made almost instantaneously. Having now learned and performed half of this set, all the while having the great opportunity to be in close communication with the composer, I feel that I have broadened my understanding of pianistic virtuosity and the depths of piano technique. In this chapter I wish to synthesize some of the discoveries that I made during this journey.

I learned that each étude is more than one piece of music in itself. With these works inspired mostly by 19th-century composers and writers, Hamelin invites one to discover more than just what is written on the page. One cannot grasp the depth of his musical treatment of Goethe’s Erlkönig, for instance, without being intimately familiar with both the original German text, as well as the tradition of other composers’ settings. His arrangement of Tchaikovsky’s Lullaby will be rendered plain and lack substance if the source model is not explored thoroughly, while his transcription of Rossini’s tarantella will become mischievous enough only through matching the vocal patter singing that characterizes the original. All of a sudden, the pianist is invited to become an intellectual musician with knowledge of German, Russian, and Italian languages, a virtuoso in the true sense of the word. The same approach applies to almost every étude in the set, for almost each one has something more than meets the eye.
I find that these pieces are very pianistically written: they feel comfortable under the fingers, despite their technical demands. Unarguably, a pianist with hands any smaller than mine will disagree. It is important to remember that Hamelin does not write music to fit one’s hands, small or big; on the contrary, he uses their stretch capacity as a tool for creating unusually rich and dense textures — the larger the hands (his own), the richer and denser the textures.

While Hamelin generally conveys his musical intentions through very clear and suggestive performing indications, I find that one of the very few shortcomings of this set is his inconsistency in providing fingering suggestions. On one hand there are passages in which the fingerings offered are the most obvious option, therefore they appear unnecessary. On the other hand, there are cases when a simple suggestion from the composer would save the performer a few good minutes of discombobulation. I am well aware this topic is very personal in nature, and I readily admit being one of those players who need to write down fingerings for the music they perform. I consider, however, that in such music where the composer’s hands span plays a crucial role in the making of the musical text, more indications of this type would have been helpful. Asking Hamelin about this particular aspect, he attributed it to a lack of experience in composing. He also added that he did not offer fingering suggestions to passages whose solutions appeared obvious to him. This only attests to the highly subjective nature of our artistic personalities.

Of tremendous significance is Hamelin’s CD recording of his own études. Firstly, it serves as an accompanying tool to the printed score, offering a readily available barometer to enterprising pianists. The composer publicly performed his set in its entirety only twice, “and never again!” he told me, attesting to the difficulty of the works. Given the rarity of performance, the recording allows listeners to hear the works through the composer’s hands. His recording is
also essential in that it gives a glimpse into the composer-pianist tradition of the past eras, as well as preserving something for posterity. One can only ponder how performance practice would differ today if, for example, our understanding of performing Chopin’s music stemmed from the great composer’s recordings of his own works, rather than being aurally transmitted from generation to generation through pedagogical lineages.

* * *

Stating the overstated, Marc-André Hamelin’s études are vastly difficult; it is the kind of music that demands from the performer a similar pianistic proficiency that is characteristic to Hamelin’s own playing. While some will be deterred by their technical challenges, others will be drawn to them, and some will approach them for their freshness and novelty. Despite “already achieving cult status by reputation as pianistic challenges beyond the reach of most human fingers,” these études are still pending approval of acceptance as mainstream works from the current generation of pianists. It appears that the music is almost overshadowed by the fame of their own creator. Playing the music of a living composer-pianist brings with it the dangers of comparison; and when the element of said comparison is not only the creator of the music, but also one of the most accomplished pianists of our time, the prospect of learning his music suddenly becomes rather intimidating.

When the decision of embarking on this project was made, my goal was to challenge myself and to benefit from the end result. This included improving my technical skills; learning a compositional language with which I was not at all familiar; and, through the studying of his music, gaining a glimpse into the bizarrely creative mind of the famed Canadian pianist. At the

end of this project, not only do I find that my technique has greatly improved, but the entire way of approaching the instrument has changed. Learning these études has helped me to develop a greater understanding of minimal body movement exerted when playing, as well as to reassess and prioritize the mental commands required for increased efficiency. It has boosted my performance confidence on stage and has yielded to a more efficient system of learning and internalizing the musical text. This music, paired with the guidance of the composer, has helped me to re-evaluate the meaning of virtuosity and to apply it to my own playing. It is then my wish that this dissertation will serve as a catalyst for further explorations of Marc-André Hamelin’s Études, both on stage and at the writing desk.
Bibliography

Books and Articles


**Scores**


**Audio-Video**


## Appendix A. Musical Works by Marc-André Hamelin

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94 Courtesy of Alistair Hinton from The Sorabji Archives.
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Appendix B. Misprints and Omissions in Études Nos. 5-10

The following is a comprehensive list of misprints, omissions, and other errors that are found in the 2010 Peters Edition. All of these have been confirmed by the composer.

Étude No. 5: Toccata grottesca (pp. 44-60)
Measure 50: fourth 16th - B needs a ♭
Measure 97: first 16th (right hand downbeat) should read E♭ D♭ instead of E♭ D
Measure 101: last two 16ths in right hand - fingering suggestions potentially misprinted. It should read 3-4 1 instead of 2-3 1
Measure 146: third 16th - both notes and fingerings are misprinted. The notes should read D♯ E♮ F (just like the downbeat). The fingerings suggested (3-4-5) belong to the previous 16th.
Measure 178: third 16th should read A♭ B♭ instead of A♭ B
Measure 195: seventh 16th should read E♭ instead of E
Measure 243: second 8th (right hand) - the A and D in the cluster should be read as A♭ and D♭
Measure 313: fourth 16th - the ♭ belongs to the B and not to the A
Measure 315: fourth 16th should read G♭ A♭ instead of G♭♭ A
Measure 324: second 16th should read A♮ B♮ instead of A♮ B(♭)
Measure 324: fifth 16th - observing the previous modification required, flat signs will be needed for the two Bs
Measure 328: second 16th should read F A B♭ E♮; the natural sign in front of A is superfluous
Measure 333: downbeat should read G D♭ E♮ G instead of G D♭ E♭(♭) G

Étude No. 6: Esercizio per Pianoforte (Ommaggio a Domenico Scarlatti) (pp. 61-69)
Measure 181: the bass clef at the end of the measure is superfluous
Measure 192: downbeat - left hand chord needs an arpeggiato sign
Measures 215-216: missing tie connecting the two Ds in the left hand

Étude No. 7: after Tchaikovsky (for the left hand alone) (pp. 70-73)
Foreword: page v - ‘Tchaikovsky’ instead of ‘Tschaikowsky’ (consistency of spelling)
Measure 5: second beat on the upper staff - the two Ds are tied
Measure 70: second 16th - fingering should read 3-5 instead of 5-3
Measure 72: sixth 16th should read D♮ F instead of D♭ F
Measure 73: first 16th should read G♭ A♮ instead of G♮ A♭

Étude No. 8: ‘Erlkönig’ (after Goethe) (pp. 74-84)
Measure 128: downbeat - left hand should read B♭ D♭ E instead of B♭ D♮ E
Measure 172: second 8th note - left hand natural sign should be a sharp (carrying over from the previous beat)

Étude No. 9: after Rossini (pp. 85-95)
Measure 92: fifth 8th note - right hand E C should read E♭ C (otherwise the ♮ will carry over from the downbeat)
Measure 119: third 8th note - right hand B♮ F B♮ should read B♭ F B♭
Measure 203: fourth 8th note - right hand G B♭ should be in parentheses (similar to measure 64)
Measure 264: downbeat - right hand given fingering is unrealistic; 3-5 should read 1-5

Étude No. 10: after Chopin (pp. 96-102)
no misprints found
Appendix C. *Lullaby* by Apollon Nikolayevich Maykov\textsuperscript{95}

Sleep, my baby, fall asleep!
Beckon sweet dreams to yourself:
I've taken as nannies for you
The Wind, the Sun and the Eagle.

The Eagle has flown back home,
The Sun has hidden under the waters,
And three nights later
The Wind is hurrying away to her Mother.

The Wind's mother asks:
"Where have you been for so long?
Have you been fighting the stars?
Have you been chasing the waves?"

"I haven't been chasing the waves of the sea,
I haven't been touching the golden stars,
I have been guarding a baby
And rocking his cradle."

Sleep, my baby, fall asleep!
Beckon sweet dreams to yourself:
I've taken as nannies for you
The Wind, the Sun and the Eagle.

\textsuperscript{95} Translation from Russian to English provided by Irina Morozova.
Appendix D. Goethe’s *Erlkönig* as set by Hamelin

13. \( \text{ma mezza voce} \)

\[ \text{Wer} \]

19. \( \text{Es} \)

\[ \text{reitet so spät durch Nacht und Wind?} \]

25. \( \text{Er} \)

\[ \text{ist der Vater mit seinem Kind;} \]

31. \( \text{Er fasst ihn} \)

\[ \text{hat den Knaben wohl in dem Arm} \]

37. \( \text{Er hält ihn warm} \)

\[ \text{dim.} \]

\[ \text{(non cresc.)} \]

43. \( \text{Wer} \)

\[ \text{reitet so spät durch Nacht und Wind?} \]

48. \( \text{Es ist der Vater mit seinem Kind;} \)
Er hat den Knaben wohl in dem Arm.
Er fasst ihn sicher.

Hält ihn warm.

„Mein Sohn war birgst du so bang dein Ge-
sicht?"

Siehst, Vater,

du
den Erl- König

nicht?

Den

Erlenkönig mit Kron- und Schweif?
"Mein Sohn, der ist ein Nebelstreif."

poco rit.

"Du liebes Kind, komm, geh mit mir! Gar schöne Spiele spiel’ ich mit dir; Manch bun-

Blumen sind an dem Strand meine Mutter hat manch gülden Gewand manch gülden Gewand

Vater, mein Vater und hörest du nicht Was Er len

könnig mir leise verspricht? "Sei ruhig, bleibe ruhig, mein

grave
135 Kind - In dür - ren Blä - ttern său - selt der

141 Wind"-

146 Willst, fei - ner Kna - be, du mit - mir gehen? Meine

(8)

151 Töch - ter sol - len dich war - ten schöen; Meine

(8)

155 Töch - ter füh - ren den nächt - lichen Reihn und

(8)

159 wie - gen und tan - zen und sin - gen dich ein, und wie - gen und

(8)

164 tan - zen und sin - gen dich ein, und wie - gen und tan - zen und

(Mein Va - ter, mein

109
Vater) Mein Vater, mein Vater, und siehst du nicht
dort Erlnigs Töchter am düstern Ort?
"Mein Sohn, mein Sohn, ich seh es genau. Es schei-
Ich liebe
nen die alten Weiden so grau.
dich, mich reizt deine schöne Gestalt; Und
bist du nicht — Wil—
lieg so brauch ich Gewalt.

Mein Vater, mein Vater, jetzt

fasst er mich an!

Erl-könig hat mir ein leidsgewartan!

Dem Vater grausets

er reitet geschwind, Er hält in

Armen das ächzende Kind
Er reicht den Hof mit Mühe und

Not; In sei-nen Ar-men das Kind war tot.
Wer reitet so spät durch Nacht und Wind?  
Who rides so late through the night and wind?

Es ist der Vater mit seinem Kind;  
It's the father with his child;

Er hat den Knaben wohl in dem Arm,  
He has the boy safe in his arm,

Er faßt ihn sicher, er hält ihn warm.  
He holds him secure, he holds him warm.

«Mein Sohn, was birgst du so bang dein Gesicht?» –  
“My son, what makes you hide your face in fear?” –

Siehst, Vater, du den Erlkönig nicht?  
Father, don't you see the Erlking?

Den Erlenkönig mit Kron und Schweif? –  
The Erlking with crown and flowing robe? –

«Mein Sohn, es ist ein Nebelstreif.» –  
“My son, it's a wisp of fog.” –

«Du liebes Kind, komm, geh mit mir!  
“You dear child, come along with me!

Gar schöne Spiele spiel' ich mit dir;  
Such lovely games I'll play with you;

Manch bunte Blumen sind an dem Strand,  
Many colorful flowers are at the shore,

Meine Mutter hat manch gülden Gewand.»  
“My mother has many a golden garment.”

Mein Vater, mein Vater, und hörest du nicht,  
My father, my father, and do you not hear

Was Erlenkönig mir leise verspricht? –  
What the Erlking promises me so softly? –

«Sei ruhig, bleibe ruhig, mein Kind;  
“Be quiet, stay quiet, my child;

In dürren Blättern säuselt der Wind.» –  
In the dry leaves the wind is rustling.” –

«Willst, feiner Knabe, du mit mir gehn?  
“Won't you come along with me, my fine boy?

Meine Töchter sollen dich warten schön;  
My daughters shall attend to you so nicely.

Meine Töchter führen den nächtlichen Reihn,  
Und wiegen und tanzen und singen dich ein.»  
My daughters do their nightly dance,  
And they'll rock you and dance you and sing  
you to sleep.”

Mein Vater, mein Vater, und siehst du nicht dort  
Erlkönigs Töchter am düstern Ort? –  
«Mein Sohn, mein Sohn, ich seh es genau:  
Es scheinen die alten Weiden so grau.»  
My father, my father, and do you not see over there  
Erlking's daughters in that dark place? –  
“My son, my son, I see it most definitely:  
It's the willow trees looking so grey.”

«Ich liebe dich, mich reizt deine schöne Gestalt;  
Und bist du nicht willig, so brauch ich Gewalt.»  
“I love you; I'm charmed by your beautiful form;  
And if you're not willing, then I'll use force.”

Mein Vater, mein Vater, jetzt faßt er mich an!  
Erlkönig hat mir ein Leids getan! –  
“My father, my father, now he's grabbing hold of me!  
Erlking has done me harm! –

Dem Vater grausets, er reitet geschwind,  
Er hält in Armen das ächzende Kind,  
Erreicht den Hof mit Mühe und Not;  
In seinen Armen das Kind war tot.  
The father shudders, he rides swiftly,  
He holds in (his) arms the moaning child.  
He reaches the farmhouse with effort and urgency.  
In his arms the child was dead.
Appendix F. *La Danza* by Carlo Pepoli

Già la luna è in mezzo al mare, mamma mia, si salterà!  
L’ora è bella per danzare, chi è in amor non mancherà.  
Già la luna è in mezzo al mare, mamma mia, si salterà!

Now the moon is over the ocean;  
The hour is beautiful for dancing,  
Now the moon is over the ocean;  
Mamma mia, we're going to leap!

Presto in danza a tondo, a tondo, donne mie venite qua,  
un garzon bello e giocondo a ciascuna toccherà,  
finchè in ciel brilla una stella e la luna splenderà.  
Il più bel con la più bella tutta notte danzerà.

Soon we’ll be dancing, round and round, my ladies, come here,  
A beautiful and playful lad will have a turn with everyone.  
As long as in heaven sparkles a star,  
The most beautiful boy and girl will dance all night.

Mamma mia, mamma mia, già la luna è in mezzo al mare, mamma mia, mamma mia, mamma mia, si salterà.  
Frinche, frinche, frinche, frinche, mamma mia, si salterà.

Mamma mia, Mamma mia, Now the moon is over the ocean;  
Mamma mia, mamma mia, Mamma mia, we're going to leap!  
Faster, faster, faster, faster, faster, faster, faster, Mamma mia, we're going to leap!

Salta, salta, gira, gira, ogni coppia a cerchio va, già s’avanza, si ritira e all’assalto tornerà.  

Hopping, jumping, turning, spinning, every couple have a turn, now advancing, now receding, and returns to the excitement.

---

Già s’avanza, si ritira
e all’assalto tornerà!

Serra, serra, colla bionda,
colla bruna và quà e là
colla rossa và a seconda,
colla smorta fermo sta.
Viva il ballo a tondo a tondo,
sono un Re, sono un Pascià,
è il più bel piacer del mondo
la più cara voluttà.

Mamma mia, mamma mia,
già la luna è in mezzo al mare,
mamma mia, mamma mia,
mamma mia, si salterà.
Frinche, frinche, frinche,
frinche, frinche, frinche,
mamma mia, si salterà.

Now advancing, now receding,
and returns to the excitement.

Keep close, keep close with the blonde,
with the brunette go here and there,
with the redhead follow along.
with the pale one, keep still.
Long live dancing, round and round!
I am a king, I am a lord,
It is the world’s greatest pleasure
The most beautiful delight!

Mamma mia, mamma mia,
now the moon is over the ocean;
Mamma mia, Mamma mia,
Mamma mia, we're going to leap!
Faster, faster, faster,
faster, faster, faster,
Mamma mia, we're going to leap!