

études

CHOPIN the twenty-four études Op.10 and Op.25
GODOWSKY four studies on the Chopin études

Ian Holtham, piano



études CHOPIN ❀ *four studies* GODOWSKY ❀ Ian Holtham, piano

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN: THE TWENTY-FOUR ÉTUDES

opus 10

- 1 No.1 in C major (Allegro) 2'17"
- 2 No.2 in A minor (Allegro) 1'37"
- 3 No.3 in E major (Lento ma non troppo) 3'49"
- 4 No.4 in C sharp minor (Presto) 2'12"
- 5 No.5 in G flat major (Vivace) 1'48"
- 6 No.6 in E flat minor (Andante) 3'10"
- 7 No.7 in C major (Vivace) 1'35"
- 8 No.8 in F major (Allegro) 2'37"
- 9 No.9 in F minor (Allegro molto agitato) 1'46"
- 10 No.10 in A flat major (Vivace assai) 2'24"
- 11 No.11 in E flat major (Allegretto) 2'19"
- 12 No.12 in C minor (Allegro con fuoco) 2'40"

opus 25

- 13 No.1 in A flat major (Allegro sostenuto) 2'40"
- 14 No.2 in F minor (Presto) 1'21"

- 15 No.3 in F major (Allegro) 2'02"
- 16 No.4 in A minor (Agitato) 1'48"
- 17 No.5 in E minor (Vivace) 2'55"
- 18 No.6 in G sharp minor (Allegro) 1'59"
- 19 No.7 in C sharp minor (Lento) 4'35"
- 20 No.8 in D flat major (Vivace legato) 1'15"
- 21 No.9 in G flat major (Allegro vivace) 0'56"
- 22 No.10 in B minor (Allegro con fuoco) 4'05"
- 23 No.11 in A minor (Lento - Allegro con brio) 3'57"
- 24 No.12 in C minor (Allegro molto, con fuoco) 2'34"

FOUR STUDIES ON CHOPIN'S ÉTUDES BY LEOPOLD GODOWSKY

- 25 No. 1: Op.10 No. 1 2'33"
- 26 No. 3: Op.10 No. 2 : Study for the left hand alone 1'50"
- 27 No. 4: Op.10 No.2: "Ignis Fatuus" 2'04"
- 28 No. 47: Op.10 No.5 & Op.25 No.9: "Badinage" 1'39"



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FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810-1849) *the twenty-four études*

Chopin's twenty-four Études, Op.10 (1833) and Op.25 (1836), still present a formidable challenge to pianists of all ages. In particular, the performance of all these studies in succession in a concert is a feat of technical virtuosity and endurance that never fails to fascinate, and always draws large audiences.

Of course, the idea of the study or étude - a didactic work designed to concentrate on and improve one facet of performance - was not new in Chopin's time. Bach's 48 Preludes and Fugues (*The Well-Tempered Clavier*) are studies in the performance of contrapuntal textures, and many of the pieces in Couperin's *L'art de toucher le clavecin* are keyboard studies in all but name. After these peaks of keyboard literature in the early 18th century, the genre passed into the hands of other composers: Clementi, Cramer, Czerny, Dussek, Moscheles, Hummel and Kalkbrenner all wrote keyboard studies which pre-date those by Chopin, the majority of them concentrating on technical problems such as scales, broken chords and arpeggios, trills and turns, octaves and leaps. They are excellent training pieces but are at times of slender musical value.

Of this array of pianistic talent, it was Moscheles who influenced Chopin most strongly. Many of Moscheles' studies have a harmonic and textural interest which inspired Chopin's use of the genre to experiment with new keyboard textures and colours, not only in his studies but also in the twenty-four Preludes, Op.28 which exploit technical features in a similar manner.

At the same time Chopin's contemporaries, Liszt and Schumann were developing the virtuosic concert study in different ways. Liszt, profoundly influenced by Paganini's Caprices for unaccompanied violin, developed the study into a longer, more dramatic work, evident in his twelve *Transcendental Studies*. Both Schumann and Brahms linked the study with variation form, Schumann in the *Études symphoniques* and Brahms in the two books of *Variations on a Theme by Paganini*, Op.35.

Despite these further developments, Chopin's Studies remain perfect examples of the genre, wonderfully innovative in their textures, and uncompromisingly challenging in their technical difficulties. They, in turn, influenced the virtuoso pianist and composer, Leopold Godowsky (1870-1938) who was inspired to build on them in ingenious ways. It is fitting that this recording of the Chopin Studies should be complemented with some of Godowsky's fifty-three Studies based on those of Chopin.

opus 10

No.1 in C major (Allegro): the stark harmonic simplicity of this opening study belies its strength and grandeur. Géza Anda remarked on its derivation from the first prelude of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, but it may equally well derive from arpeggio studies by Czerny or Clementi. Chopin's extension of the arpeggio pattern beyond the normal stretch of the right hand creates enormous technical and endurance problems for the pianist in the alternating stretching and contraction of the hand. The sonorous octaves in the bass convert a technical exercise into a powerful dramatic utterance.

No.2 in A minor (Allegro): is surely one of Chopin's most fiendish technical creations. Keyboard players have long been fascinated by the principles of fingering, and the differing strengths and articulations of each finger and the thumb. Chopin has devised a texture which forces the pianist to play the running chromatic scales with only the 3rd, 4th and 5th fingers of the right hand while the remaining finger and thumb lightly etch in two-note chords as part of the accompaniment. It is an awesome technical demand which only the finest players can satisfy.

No.3 in E major (Lento ma non troppo): this is one of Chopin's best known melodies. For the performer it is an exercise in achieving a smooth *legato* tone with the sustaining pedal, and balancing the texture so as to produce a singing *cantabile* quality in the melodic line.

No.4 in C sharp minor (Presto): one of the finest keyboard studies in the entire literature. This is the first Chopin study to demand equal fluency and virtuosity in both hands, passing the running figuration from hand to hand in imitative fashion. Its technical problems include tightly contracted hand shapes alternating with widely spaced shapes, broken octaves and very fast, wide leaps. The exciting, *bravura nature* of the entire study is summed up by the étude's tremendous coda

No.5 in G flat major (Vivace): popularly known as the "Black Key" study because the brilliant figuration in the right hand uses only the black keys. This is a fine example of a piano texture much beloved of Chopin, in which the speed and evenness of the figuration produces a sparkling effect .

No.6 in E flat minor (Andante): the dark, brooding nature of this work makes it a study in tone colouring and intensity of expression. While the melodic lament is clearly paramount, the flowing accompanying figure adds its own expressive character to a texture which is always contrapuntal.

No.7 in C major (Vivace): the highly original figuration of this study with its alternating thirds and sixths in the right hand presents formidable difficulties to the pianist in the shaping and balance of the hand combined with the fast repetition of the lower notes.

No.8 in F major (Allegro): this brilliant, dashing study is nevertheless more conventional in its figuration and texture than the foregoing one. Skating widely across the entire keyboard and demanding the utmost agility in both hands, it is reminiscent of some of the excellent studies by the later Polish composer, Moritz Moszkowski.

No.9 in F minor (Allegro molto agitato): while the pianist is concentrating on the problems of playing the wide leaps in the left hand part accurately, the listener will be more aware of the pathos and drama of this extraordinary, miniature tone poem.

No.10 in A flat major (Vivace assai): from a texture of broken chords in the right hand over an agile bass part, Chopin builds a work of considerable subtlety with variations in the articulation and rhythmic stress of the music.

No.11 in E flat major (Allegretto): again, the technical *idea* of widely spaced, arpeggiated chords in both hands is quite conventional, but its accurate performance demands agility and precision of the highest order. The harp-like effect is much enhanced by the harmonic and melodic subtlety of this etude.

No.12 in C minor (Allegro con fuoco): known as the “Revolutionary” Etude, this is one of the composer’s best known works, in which the swirling figures in the bass and *pseudo-patriotic* melody inevitably conjure visions of victories in bloody battles.

opus 25

No.1 in A flat major (Allegro sostenuto): This wonderfully sonorous work with its chorale-like melody and subtle broken-chord texture was dubbed by Schumann the “Aeolian Harp” study.

No.2 in F minor (Presto): the juxtaposition of triplet quavers against triplet crotchets creates a problem of rhythmic conception for the pianist. Through the continually flowing, agile music one can hear the outlines of a quite simple melody, elaborately ornamented with turns and pirouettes.

No.3 in F major (Allegro): an energetic study based on chord shapes and appoggiaturas, in which much of the interest stems from the wide variety of changes of articulation and rhythmic stress.

No.4 in A minor (Agitato): a brief work of great charm, again based on chord playing. The rhythmic interplay between the hands creates a complexity of texture and balance which complements the profusion of perilous leaps in the left hand.

No.5 in E minor (Vivace): a further development of some of the technical problems of Op.25, No.3, this study also begins with diatonic chords spiced with a variety of appoggiaturas, the rhythmic notation of which shows a number of variations. The middle section in E major produces a new, flowing melody which could have been conceived for cello, singing beneath beautiful right hand figuration.

No.6 in G sharp minor (Allegro): just as the foregoing three studies have all been concerned with aspects of chord playing, the remaining ones include intensive treatment of some other standard technical problems, in particular thirds, sixths and octaves. This study deals exclusively with the problems of double thirds (i.e. consecutive thirds played by one hand) in which Chopin has devised a menu of trills, scales and leaps designed to test the most agile keyboard techniques.

No.7 in C sharp minor (Lento): the pyrotechnics are put aside for a moment in favour of an extended rhapsodic duo between two beautifully shaped melodies, the lower one perfectly conceived for cello and the upper in the style of a violin melody. It can be no coincidence that Chopin’s only significant works for other than solo piano were a sonata for cello and piano, and a violin, cello and piano trio.

No.8 in D flat major (Vivace legato): continuing the idea of No.6, this brief study is built on a succession of double sixths in both hands, again designed to test the keyboard techniques of the greatest virtuosi.

No.9 in G flat major (Allegro vivace): this tiny gem tests the agility and of the thumb and wrist of the right hand.

No.10 in B minor (Allegro con fuoco): a long study which explores certain problems of octave playing. Inevitably we associate double octave passages with Liszt whose fame as a performer was built around his thundering octave and chord playing. However, Chopin's study also tests another kind of octave playing with the slow middle section, thus creating a new dimension to the bravura effects of octaves.

No.11 in A minor (Lento - Allegro con brio): in this and the final study we return to the idea of works which test the endurance of the performer, complementing the first two of Opus 10. The similarities go still further with this study using the same key as Op.10, No.2 and an enormously difficult figuration in the right hand, again based on the chromatic scale.

No.12 in C minor (Allegro molto, con fuoco): complementing Op.10, No.1 this study uses the same key, C, but now in the minor mode, and similar figuration based on broken chords or arpeggios. This time both hands participate in the arpeggios, giving a tremendous effect of surging power and bringing the twenty-four études to a final and mighty climax.

Donald Thornton

LEOPOLD GODOWSKY (1870-1938) *four studies on Chopin's études*

Godowsky's fifty-three studies based on Chopin's études, published in five volumes, include some of the most demanding and intriguing compositions ever conceived for the piano. Godowsky used the Chopin works as a point of departure for his own individually creative approach to a myriad of pianistic textures and a huge array of technical problems. He wrote more than one version of many of the études and in two of his studies, one of which concludes this recording, actually combines two Chopin études in one work. These pieces remain a source of teasing musical intrigue for pianists and listeners alike.

No. 1: Op.10 No. 1: This study is the first of two versions of Chopin's first étude. Godowsky has added the right hand texture of the original into the left hand whilst inverting the general direction of the arpeggios and filling out the harmonic structure of what was originally Chopin's left hand octaves. The result is a titanic conception which becomes even more demanding by the addition of various octave passages as the study goes on.

No. 3: Op.10 No. 2 : Study for the left hand alone: Many of Godowsky's studies were written for the further development of the left hand. This austere version of Chopin's second étude is perhaps the most demanding of them. The work is remarkably faithful to the structure of the original in every sense, essentially transferring and condensing all of Chopin's difficulties into this one-handed work.

No. 4: Op.10 No.2: "Ignis Fatuus": This is the second version of the same étude. It has

now become a brief fantasy, exploring and expanding the chromatic nature of the original and enriching it with fiendish rhythmic complexities and harmonic shifts.

No. 47: Op.10 No.5 & Op.25 No.9: Badinage: Nowhere is Godowsky's inventive originality more evident than in this extraordinary piece. Seizing on the identical key and the similarity of harmonic design, Godowsky has fused the textures of the two G flat major études into a fascinating pianistic display. At one point Godowsky alludes rhythmically to the A flat major étude, Op. 10 No. 10, giving the impression of three études being heard simultaneously. The study, a fascinating architectural construction, is a fine example of the fertile musical inventiveness evident in these rarely heard works.

Ian Holtham



IAN HOLTHAM

Ian Holtham had specialist musical training from an early age. Scholarships took him to Europe in his teens and he was based there for nearly a decade. He studied intensively with Peter Feuchtwanger for over five years, and worked with Géza Anda in Zurich, as well as with Geoffrey Parsons and Enrique Barenboim in London. He also studied Composition and Conducting at the Guildhall School of Music. From 1974 onwards Ian Holtham performed regularly in Europe, including concerts in Switzerland, Italy, and the Wigmore Hall in London. He was also engaged by the Park Lane Group for the 'Young Artists and Twentieth Century Music Series' which occurs annually at London's South Bank Complex.

As pianist, Ian Holtham has performed in Australia, England, Switzerland, Austria, France, Italy, Hong Kong and Thailand. In his native Australia he has played in various places including Queensland, New South Wales, Tasmania and Victoria. He has broadcast regularly with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation since the late seventies and has appeared as soloist with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, as well as with many other ensembles. He has a vast and varied repertoire which, excluding works for solo piano, contains well over forty piano concertos. He returns regularly to Europe for highly successful tours which recently have included recitals at London's Wigmore Hall, concerts and Masterclasses in regional centres in the United Kingdom, France, and Austria.

In 1990 Ian Holtham performed the complete Chopin *Preludes* and the complete *Études* in one programme: an extraordinary event for any performer. Two years later he was invited to present the complete *Études* as part of a special recital series, and he has presented a number of the *Études* on his European tours. In 1991 he presented a special *Homage to Mozart* program on the exact anniversary of Mozart's death to a packed house in Melbourne. He has become known for his huge repertoire, his pianistic command and his enterprisingly innovative approach to programming.

Dr Holtham is also a respected musical pedagogue and has published a book on piano technique. He has been senior piano adjudicator of virtually all the major eisteddfods in Australia and is a member of staff of the Faculty of Music, University of Melbourne.



Op 10 on 26/vii/92; Op 25 and Godowsky on 4/vii/93 on Steinway Model D, No 507410.

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