

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SCHUMANN'S SYMPHONIC ETUDES, OPUS 13

by

MICHAEL SEREGOW

A LECTURE-DOCUMENT

Presented to the School of Music and Dance
of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

August 2014

“The Life and Times of Schumann’s Symphonic Etudes, Opus 13,” a lecture-document prepared by Michael Seregow in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in the School of Music and Dance. This lecture-document has been approved and accepted by:

Dean Kramer, Chair of the Examining Committee

August 08, 2014

Committee in Charge: Dean Kramer, Chair
 Claire Wachter
 David Riley

Accepted by:

Ann B. Tedards, Associate Dean and Director of Graduate Studies,
School of Music and Dance

© 2014 Michael Seregow

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Michael Seregow

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene
George Fox University, Newberg, Oregon

DEGREES AWARDED:

Doctor of Musical Arts, Piano Performance, 2014, University of Oregon
Master of Music, Piano Performance, 2010, University of Oregon
Bachelor of Arts, Music, 2004, George Fox University

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Piano Performance and Literature
Piano Pedagogy
Collaborative Piano, Art Song, and Chamber Music
Composition

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Adjunct Instructor of Piano, University of Oregon, Eugene, 2014-2015

Graduate Teaching Fellow, School of Music and Dance, University of Oregon,
Eugene, 2008-2014

Collaborative Piano Fellow, Music Academy of the West, Santa Barbara,
California, 2011

GRANTS, AWARDS AND HONORS:

Graduate Teaching Fellowship, Collaborative Piano, Piano Pedagogy, Opera
Accompanying, 2008-2014

University of Oregon Outstanding Performer in Keyboard, 2014

Winner, University of Oregon Concerto Competition, 2012

Travel Grant, University of Oregon, 2012

Karl Kramer Foundation full scholarship, Music Academy of the West, 2011

University of Oregon Outstanding Performer in Music and Outstanding Performer
in Keyboard, 2010

Graduate Scholarship, Ford Family Foundation, 2008-2010

Honorable Mention, Music Teachers National Association Northwest Division
Competition, Young Artist Piano, 2007

Winner, Music Teachers National Association Oregon State Competition, Young
Artist Piano, 2006

Outstanding Music Major of the Year, George Fox University, 2004

Summa cum Laude, George Fox University, 2004

Undergraduate Scholarship, Ford Family Foundation, 2000-2004

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. THE SYMPHONIC ETUDES	1
Introduction	1
Compositional and Performance History	2
Manuscript Sources	11
The Symphonic Etudes and Genre	16
Conclusion	20
II. THE POSTHUMOUS VARIATIONS	23
Publication and Editing	23
Inclusion of the Posthumous Variations in the Symphonic Etudes	25
The Posthumous Variations as a Group	30
Interpolation of the Posthumous Variations	32
III. A PERFORMANCE GUIDE TO THE SYMPHONIC ETUDES	37
Selected Editions	37
Schumann's Metronome	40
Preparation and Performance of the Symphonic Etudes	43
Theme	43
Etude I	45
Etude II	46
Etude III	49
Etude IV	51
Etude V	52
Etude VI	53
Etude VII	54
Etude VIII	56
Etude IX	57
Etude X	59
Etude XI	60
Etude XII (Finale)	62
Posthumous Variation 1	67
Posthumous Variation 2	68
Posthumous Variation 3	69
Posthumous Variation 4	70
Posthumous Variation 5	71
Concluding Remarks	73
REFERENCES CITED	74

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Theme according to the Berlin Sketch.....	13
2. Theme according to the Mariemont manuscript	14
3. Clara source-motive.....	21
4. Clara source-motive in Etude XI.....	21
5. Theme according to the Mariemont manuscript	44
6. Etude II: Use of LH thumb to play the notes of the theme	47
7. Etude II: Two solutions for measure 4	48
8. Etude III: Practice rhythm for RH.....	50
9. Etude III: Exercise for the thumb	50
10. Three practice rhythms for Etude V	52
11. Ending of Etude V in Mariemont manuscript.....	53
12. Melody of Etude VII.....	55
13. Practice variant for Etude VII	55
14. Final crescendo in Etude VII.....	56
15. Preparatory exercise for Etude IX, mm. 35-41	58
16. Additional exercises for Etude IX, mm. 35-41	58
17. Exercises for voicing in Etude X.....	59
18. Preparatory exercises for the LH in Etude XI.....	61
19. Etude XI: Execution of the RH in mm. 9-10	61
20. The opening chorus from Marschner's <i>Der Templer und die Jüdin</i> and the opening of Etude XII.....	63
21. The relationship between the theme and the finale by inversion	64
22. Preparatory exercises for Etude XII	66
23. Etude XII, measure 15, according to the Mariemont manuscript	67
24. RH melody in posthumous variation 1	67

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Different arrangements for the individual pieces within the Symphonic Etudes in the early manuscript sources.....	15
2. Various arrangements of the posthumous variations adopted by six professional pianists in recordings	33
3. Location of each of the posthumous variations in the Mariemont and Vienna manuscripts	35
4. Comparison of Schumann's tempos and suggested tempos for each individual piece within the Symphonic Etudes.....	43

CHAPTER I

THE SYMPHONIC ETUDES

Introduction

In 1834 Schumann began to compose what would eventually become known as the *Symphonic Etudes*, Opus 13. While almost entirely neglected during his lifetime, it has since taken its place among the great works in the pianist's repertoire. Composed in several distinct stages and published in two versions within Schumann's lifetime, the work's life has only grown more complex since Schumann's death. In 1861 a third version was published in an attempt to reconcile the first two editions. Additionally, in 1873 Brahms and Clara Schumann published five variations originally deleted by Schumann as a supplement to the *Symphonic Etudes*, which will be referred to as the posthumous variations throughout this document. In addition to its many technical and interpretive demands, the performer of the *Symphonic Etudes* is faced with not only choosing which version of the piece to play—the first and second editions feature a number of significant changes—but also with deciding if and how to include the posthumous variations. Since the early twentieth century, it has become common for performers to include some or all of these posthumous variations within concert performances and recordings of the work. How this is done varies with each performer, but by varying the placement of these variations, the performer has the opportunity to fundamentally alter the work's presentation and structure. As a result the *Symphonic Etudes* has continued to evolve into the present day and will continue to do so as

performers continually experiment with different arrangements for the inclusion of the posthumous variations within the work.¹

Compositional and Performance History

The life of the *Symphonic Etudes* unfolded over an eighteen-year period of Schumann's life, from initial sketches made in 1834 to the publication of a second edition in 1852. As a young man, Schumann harbored ambitions of becoming a great piano virtuoso. After deciding to leave law school in 1830, he returned to Leipzig to study piano with Friedrich Wieck. However, problems with a numbed finger forced Schumann to give up his goals of becoming a concert pianist, and he sought to make his way as a composer. In April 1834, only weeks after he had begun work on the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Schumann met Ernestine von Fricken, pupil of his erstwhile teacher. By the summer the two were engaged. In September 1834 Ernestine's father, Baron Ignaz Friedrich von Fricken, himself an amateur flautist and composer, sent Schumann a set of variations on a theme of his own invention, asking for his prospective son-in-law's assessment. Schumann responded rather critically but praised the "character and good feeling" of the theme.² Schumann went on to confess that he had in fact begun composing

¹ As the numbering for the individual pieces within the Symphonic Etudes can be quite confusing due to the differences between the first and second published editions, for ease and consistency of reference throughout this document, I will refer to the individual pieces with the designation of "etude," fully aware that Schumann vacillated between the terms "etude" and "variation." I will indicate specific etudes by Roman numeral, following the 1837 order (e.g. I-XII). The posthumous variations will be referred to with the letter "P" followed by an Arabic numeral (e.g. P1-P5).

² May Herbert, trans., *Early Letters of Robert Schumann* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1888), 239.

his own variations on the Baron's theme, which he intended to call "variations pathétiques."³

The finale seems to have been a problem for Schumann at first, for on November 28 he wrote to the Baron: "I'm still stuck in the finale of my variations. I'd like to elevate the funeral march [i.e. the theme] bit by bit into a triumphal march and, moreover, instill some dramatic interest, but I can't escape the minor mode."⁴ Schumann's troubles would not persist for long, for by January 18, 1835 he had completed the first version of the piece, which was to be called *Fantasies et Finale sur un Thème de M. le Baron de Fricken*. He would dedicate his composition to Ernestine's mother. As noted by Ernst Hertrich, editor of the Henle edition of the work, "Thus, a set of variations on a theme by the father was to be dedicated to the mother and played by the daughter, uniting his fiancée's entire family in a single piece of music."⁵

This early version of the *Symphonic Etudes* differed significantly from what would eventually be published in 1837. At this point in its existence, the work contained the Theme, Etudes I, II, IV, V, X, XII, the five posthumous variations, and an unfinished variation that has only recently been published.⁶ Schumann offered this version of the *Symphonic Etudes* to Breitkopf & Härtel along with several other compositions on December 22, 1835. As it was not accepted for publication, Schumann turned to

³ Ibid., 240.

⁴ Ernst Hertrich, preface to *Symphonische Etüden, Opus 13: Fassung 1837*, by Robert Schumann, (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2006), v.

⁵ Ibid., v.

⁶ This unfinished variation is included in the Henle edition.

Haslinger in Vienna in February of 1836. Haslinger would eventually publish the first edition, but not until June of 1837. Exactly when the remaining etudes (III, VI-IX, and XI) were composed is unknown. It is possible that Schumann's encounters with Chopin in September 1835 and September 1836 spurred him on to write these remaining etudes. On September 18, 1836, four days after the second visit with Chopin, Schumann noted in his diary: "Composed etudes with great pleasure and excitement. Spent the entire day at the piano."⁷ In any case, by the time the first edition of the work was published in 1837, Schumann had composed the remaining six etudes and had removed the unfinished variation and what would become the posthumous five variations.

Having called off his engagement to Ernestine in the summer of 1835, Schumann removed nearly all trace of the von Frickens from the *Symphonic Etudes*, noting only that an amateur had composed the notes of the theme in the first edition. Schumann ultimately dedicated his *Symphonic Etudes* to William Sterndale Bennett, an English pianist and composer living in Leipzig, who had been invited to Germany by Mendelssohn. Schumann met Bennett in 1836, and the two struck up a warm friendship. While Schumann thought very highly of Bennett, even singing his praises in the *Neue Zeitschrift*, Clara was not so convinced of his merit. She would later write: "How can a Robert Schumann who wrote such a sonata, such *Etudes*, such a *Carnaval*, who stands *so far above* a Bennett, say such a thing, and compare him to a [Mendelssohn]? But that's what friendship does."⁸

⁷ Ibid., vi.

⁸ Quoted in John Worthen, *Robert Schumann: Life and Death of a Musician* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 129.

As with many of his piano works, the *Symphonic Etudes* were played very infrequently during Schumann's lifetime. The first public performance of the composition likely took place on August 13, 1837, when Clara included three of the Etudes in a Leipzig performance, with Schumann himself in the audience. Early in 1836 Schumann had promised his love to Clara, but the two lovers would ultimately be separated for over a year due to Clara's father's disapproval of the relationship. The concert took place one month before Clara's eighteenth birthday, during this long period of her forced separation from Robert. Schumann wrote fondly of Clara's performance:

The way you played my *Etudes*—I won't ever forget that; they were absolute masterpieces the way you presented them—the public can't appreciate such playing—but one person was sitting there, no matter how much his heart was pounding with other feelings, my entire being at that instant bowed down before you as an artist.⁹

In February 1838 Schumann wrote to Clara for news of how his Etudes were received in Vienna. Clara must have elected not to play them on her program for Schumann later responded:

You were wise not to play my Etudes. That sort of thing is not suited for the general public, and it would be very weak to make a moan afterwards, and say that they had not understood a thing which was not written to suit their taste, but merely for its own sake.¹⁰

While Clara would ultimately become a champion of Robert's music after his death, she found little success in playing much of his music in public during his lifetime. She in fact

⁹ Quoted in Worthen, 134.

¹⁰ Herbert, *Early Letters*, 267.

regularly attempted to persuade Schumann to write something the public would understand. In a letter she wrote:

Listen Robert, won't you for once compose something brilliant, easily understandable, and something without titles, something that is a complete, coherent piece, not too long and not too short? I would so love to have something of yours to play in concerts, something written for an audience.¹¹

Only in the second half of the nineteenth century would Schumann's piano music make its way into the standard repertory as changes in taste resulted in a more serious kind of concert for which Schumann's music was better suited. The *Symphonic Etudes* would be performed again by Clara in Holland in 1853, after which she must have kept the composition in her repertoire for it was also included on recitals in Vienna (1856) and Frankfurt (1880). Tausig played it in Berlin in 1865, and it appeared regularly on programs by Anton Rubinstein beginning as early as 1869 in Basel. Rubinstein included it on his historic 1873 seven-recital series in New York, where his fourth program was dedicated entirely to the music of Schumann.¹² This was perhaps the first performance of the *Symphonic Etudes* given in the United States.

Indeed, Schumann's early piano works for the most part did not fare well with the public during his lifetime. As Newcomb points out, contemporary critical reaction to Schumann's music during his lifetime was quite uniform in its judgments:

Carl Kossmaly, in the first large-scale retrospective review of Schumann's output (1844), notes that the early piano music strove too much for strange, puzzling

¹¹ Quoted in Anthony Newcomb, "Schumann and the Marketplace: From Butterflies to *Hausmusik*," in *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music*, ed. R. Larry Todd (New York: Schirmer, 1990), 266.

¹² Information gathered from Kehler, which includes representative programs by major recitalists.

effects and ‘Bizzareries.’ He also complains that the music is often so difficult to play that only the Liszts and Thalbergs of the world can produce even an acceptable performance.¹³

In an 1845 survey of Schumann’s output, Franz Brendel cites five reasons that Schumann’s music failed to find a broad audience: 1) lack of press; 2) its technical difficulty; 3) its elusive nature; 4) its modern, youthful tone (*Stimmung*), which could be off-putting to older players; and 5) its harmonic harshness, which could discourage some people.¹⁴ Newcomb succinctly summarizes critical opinions of the time toward Schumann’s music:

As private music, for meditation and enjoyment at home, it was technically too difficult to play, even if bourgeois audiences had wanted to reflect on and come to terms with its challenges to musical understanding. On the other hand, the challenges to musical understanding posed by its formal games, by its complex textures and persistent syncopations, and by its extremely quick rate of emotional change made it inappropriate for the diversion-oriented public concert of the 1830s. Even the well-disposed Liszt and Clara Wieck had to admit that they found little or no success playing Schumann’s music in public concerts in the period from 1835 to 1855.¹⁵

Schumann seems to have been keenly aware of the reception of his piano music from the 1830s. In May of 1843, he sent some of his earlier piano compositions to Kossmaly for review, remarking:

They are but little known, and for obvious reasons: 1) they are too difficult in themselves both as to form and meaning; 2) I am no virtuoso, and cannot play

¹³ Newcomb, 268.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 268.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 269.

them in public; 3) I am an editor, and refrain of necessity from mentioning them in my paper; and 4) Fink who edits another paper, refrains from choice.¹⁶

At the end of 1848 Hamburg publisher Schuberth issued Schumann's *Album for the Young* to great success. This unexpected success resulted in a greater demand for Schumann's works. Since Schumann did not write as much for solo piano in his later years, publishers sought to acquire his earlier piano works from publishers who were no longer functioning properly. Schuberth was successful in obtaining the *Symphonic Etudes* from Haslinger, and in October 1849 wrote to Schumann asking for corrections and changes. Schumann dispatched these by November 3, 1849, but for unknown reasons, the work was not re-published until February 1852.¹⁷

In this revised, second edition, Schumann deleted Etudes III and IX, removed the introductory bar of Etude XI, returned to the designation "Variation" for the individual pieces and "Finale" for Etude XII, revised the middle section of the Finale, and made minor alterations to the individual pieces.¹⁸ Adolf Schubring was allowed to consult the copy on which Schumann made his corrections for the 1852 edition and reported that it actually did contain corrections for Etudes III and IX in Schumann's own hand, but that Schumann had only later decided to drop them from the new edition. In 1861 Schubring issued a third edition of the *Symphonic Etudes*, combining the first two. This edition presents the text of the 1852 edition, including the revised finale, with Etudes III and IX

¹⁶ Karl Storck, ed., *The Letters of Robert Schumann*, trans. Hannah Bryant (London: John Murray, 1907), 241-2.

¹⁷ Herttrich, preface to 1852 version, iv.

¹⁸ See "Comments" in Henle edition for a detailed description of the minor differences between the two versions.

reinstated as well as the introductory measure of Etude XI.¹⁹ It is this edition that is likely most familiar to pianists.

Besides the *Symphonic Etudes*, Schumann in fact edited a number of his earlier piano works including opuses 5, 6, 14, and 16 in the late 1840s and early 1850s, with a general tendency toward removing some of the most unconventional and musically challenging elements. Newcomb argues that it was a “substantially different Schumann” with different aesthetic goals who made these revisions.²⁰ Schumann himself confesses a certain change of attitude regarding his own success as a composer in the above quoted 1843 letter to Kossmaly:

I used to be indifferent to the amount of notice I received, but a wife and children put a different complexion upon everything. It becomes imperative to think of the future, desirable to see the fruits of one’s labor—not the artistic, but the prosaic fruits necessary to life; these fame helps to bring forth and multiply.²¹

The 1840s were furthermore a time of political and cultural change in Germany, and it was at this time the concept of *Hausmusik* took shape. In an 1849 review of Schumann’s *Album for the Young*, Alfred Dörffel reflects these ideals of *Hausmusik*, remarking:

The Master appears *volkstümlich* [popular, national, “folksy”] in the noblest fashion; the small pieces make their effect immediately and surely through their simplicity, and also through the natural strength that surges through them.... How very well suited they are to instruction—that is, not just to the technical education of the hand, but also to musical education in the general sense—must make the entire work extremely welcome to piano teachers.²²

¹⁹ Herttrich, preface to 1852 version, v.

²⁰ Newcomb, 274-5.

²¹ Storck, 242.

²² Newcomb, 273.

Schumann's editing of his earlier works might well be seen in light of both his reaction to the market and the changing cultural aesthetic of the time. Less complicated music seems to have been both more marketable and perhaps even more culturally relevant. In any case, the changes Schumann made for the 1852 edition of the *Symphonic Etudes* suggest a concern for a more concise, straightforward form. The introductory bar to Etude XI could be considered a formal anomaly, occurring nowhere else in the composition. Etudes III and IX bear little resemblance to the theme, and perhaps this is why Schumann ultimately removed them. Schumann's revisions to the Finale again aim at simplification. In changing the title of the 1852 version to *Études en forme de Variations*, Schumann seems to be affirming the importance of the variation form to the overall structure of the composition. We might also keep in mind that Schumann's good friend Mendelssohn had composed and published his own "Serious Variations" in 1841—a very well wrought work. Could this also have influenced Schumann's ideas about variation form?

The existence of multiple published versions of many of Schumann's works poses problems for the performer of his music: namely, which one is to be considered more authentic. As he grew older, Schumann seems to have grown more ambivalent toward his youthful works altogether, even dismissing some of his early piano pieces as "confused stuff" to his first biographer, Wasielewski.²³ Nevertheless, he cared enough to return to them and re-edit them. Kollen suggests that this issue is not so clear-cut in the case of Schumann's music:

²³ Newcomb, 274.

The general rule in publishing, that primary consideration be given to the authorized revision, does not always hold in Schumann's case. The early thrust of his original creative efforts is sometimes denatured by over-refinement in a later version.²⁴

Furthermore, as a young man Schumann himself confessed a decided preference for first editions, writing in his Aphorisms:

The first conception is always the most natural and the best. The understanding [Verstand] may err, but not the feelings [Gefühl].—Raro²⁵

Two different readings of the same work are often equally good.—Eusebius
The original one is generally the best.—Raro²⁶

This issue becomes even more complicated when one considers evidence offered by the autograph manuscripts and fair copies annotated by Schumann, particularly for the *Symphonic Etudes*.

Manuscript Sources

In his DMA essay on Schumann's *Symphonic Etudes*, Mark Madson lists five extant manuscript sources:

- 1) An early sketchbook, know as the "Berlin Sketch," on microfilm in the Alice Tully Collection of the New York Public Library.
- 2) An autograph fair copy, housed at the Musée Royal de Mariemont, Belgium.

²⁴ John L. Kollen, "Robert Alexander Schumann (1810-1856): Tema, Opus 13," in *Notations and Editions*, ed. Edith Borroff (Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1974), 170.

²⁵ Fanny Raymond Ritter, ed., *Music and Musicians: Essays and Criticisms by Robert Schumann*, 2 vols., trans. and annotated by F. R. Ritter (London: William Reeves, 1878), I, 74.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 78.

- 3) A copyist's manuscript with additions and corrections in Schumann's hand, prepared from Schumann's autograph fair copy, held by the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, Vienna, Austria.
- 4) The engraver's copy for the first edition, located in the archives of the Heinrich Heine Institut, Düsseldorf, Germany. This copy was prepared from an unknown manuscript and was proofread and corrected by Schumann.²⁷
- 5) A copy of the five Posthumous Variations in Clara Schumann's hand, located in the Landes- und Stadt-bibliothek, Düsseldorf, Germany.²⁸

For ease of reference I will refer to these sources as the "Berlin Sketch," "Mariemont manuscript," "Vienna manuscript," "Engraver's copy," and "Posthumous Variations manuscript" throughout this essay. The first three manuscript sources are particularly interesting because they show an early version of the *Symphonic Etudes* in which the posthumous variations are an integrated part of the whole composition as well as demonstrate Schumann's struggle to find an order for the individual pieces within the work.

The "Berlin Sketch" is the earliest known source of the *Symphonic Etudes* and contains what Schumann referred to as "Tema quasi Marcia funebre" (see Figure 1) along with eleven variations, some complete and others only partially sketched. They are in the following order:

Theme, P4 (but in 12/8 time), P3, X, unfinished variation, P1, V, a brief rhythmic sketch, beginning of P5, sketch of rhythmic pattern of II, sketch of melodic outline of II, first bar of I²⁹

²⁷ Hertrich, comments to 1837 version, 52.

²⁸ Mark Douglas Madson, "A Comprehensive Performance Project in Piano Literature with an Essay on Robert Schumann's *Symphonic Etudes*, Op. 13" (D.M.A. essay, University of Iowa, 1980), 15.

²⁹ Kathleen Dale, "The Piano Music," in *Schumann: A Symposium*, ed. Gerald Abraham (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), 25-6.

This source must date prior to Schumann's letter of November 28, 1834 to Baron von Fricken regarding his problems with composing a finale, for it contains no trace of the triumphal march in D-flat Major.



Figure 1. Theme according to the Berlin Sketch (from Kollen, 167).

The Mariemont manuscript presents an essentially complete early version of the *Symphonic Etudes*. The title “Variations pathétique” is struck out and replaced by *Fantaisies et Finale sur un thème de M. le Baron de Fricken, composées p. l. Pfte et dédiées à Madame la Baronne de Fricken, née Comtesse de Zedtwitz. par R. Schumann Oeuvre 9* [sic] (see Figure 2). The date at the end of the manuscript is January 18, 1835, and the individual pieces are referred to as “Variation,” with Etude XII called “Finale.” They appear in the following order:

Theme, II, V, P1, P3, X, P5, unfinished variation, IV, P4, P2, I, XII (Finale)



Figure 2. Theme according to the Mariemont manuscript (from Kollen, 168).

Schumann renumbered the pieces to the following order:

Theme, I, II, P1, P2, V, P3, X with P5 as middle section, unfinished variation, IV, P4, XII (Finale)³⁰

In the Vienna manuscript, the pieces are again referred to as “Variation” with Etude XII called “Finale.” The pieces appear in the renumbered order of the Mariemont manuscript, but here the unfinished variation and P1 are crossed out. The following order is specified on the flyleaf for the remaining pieces:

Theme, I, II, V, P4, IV, P3, X with P5 as middle section, P2, XII (Finale)³¹

At this point, there is no evidence that Etudes III, VI-IX, and XI had yet been composed.

³⁰ Hertrich, comments to 1837 version, 51-2.

³¹ Ibid., 52.

As can be seen from the above descriptions of the various early manuscript sources, Schumann seems to have changed his mind frequently as to the order of the individual pieces within the *Symphonic Etudes* (see Table 1 for a comparison of these different arrangements.) In fact, on June 13, 1836, Haslinger sent Schumann a letter inquiring about the definitive order of the Etudes. This would imply that the surviving engraver's copy for the first edition must have been posted after June 13, 1836, and the final order of the first edition not secured until after this date.³² The engraver's copy is the only manuscript to contain all twelve pieces of the first edition. Here the individual pieces are referred to as Etudes I to XII, with the posthumous five variations removed.

Table 1. Different arrangements for the individual pieces within the *Symphonic Etudes* considered by Schumann in the early manuscript sources.

Berlin Sketch	Mariemont MS— Original order	Mariemont MS— Revised order	Vienna MS
Theme	Theme	Theme	Theme
P4 (in 12/8 time)	II	I	I
P3	V	II	II
X	P1	P1	V
Unfinished Var.	P3	P2	P4
P1	X	V	IV
V	P5	P3	P3
Rhythmic Sketch	Unfinished Var.	X – P5 – X	X – P5 – X
Beginning of P5	IV	Unfinished Var.	P2
Rhythmic pattern of	P4	IV	XII (Finale)
II	P2	P4	
Melodic outline of	I	XII (Finale)	
II	XII (Finale)		
I			

³² Hertrich, preface to the 1837 version, vi.

In addition to his indecision regarding order, Schumann struggled to come up with an appropriate title for Opus 13. Within the eighteen years of its evolution, Schumann considered at least eight different titles. Madson lists the following in probable chronological order:

- 1) Tema quasi Marcia funèbre (Berlin Sketch)
- 2) Pathetic Variations (letter to Baron von Fricken and original title on Mariemont manuscript)
- 3) Fantaisies et Finale sur un thème de M. le Baron de Fricken, composées p. l. Pfte et dédiées à Madame la Baronne de Fricken, née Comtesse de Zedtwitz. par R. Schumann. Oeuvre 9 [sic] (Mariemont manuscript, January 18, 1835)
- 4) Zwölf Davidsbündler Etuden (NZfM, April 8, 1836)
- 5) X Etuden im Orchester Character, von Florestan und Eusebius (NZfM, May 6, 1836)
- 6) Etudes p. l. Pfte. Op. 13 (NZfM, June 24, 1836)
- 7) XII Etudes Symphoniques (first edition, 1837)
- 8) Etudes en forme de Variations (second edition, 1852)³³

These different titles suggest that Schumann's conception of the work changed over time as it evolved toward the published editions, and perhaps this can help explain why he made such drastic revisions over the course of the life of the composition.

The Symphonic Etudes and Genre

The overall conception of the *Symphonic Etudes* is quite unique in the piano repertory. In its earliest versions, the *Symphonic Etudes* contained elements of the etude, variation, fantasy, dance, and character piece. As it evolved toward its published form, Schumann seems to have given primacy to the etude and variation genres. This is particularly evident in the final title chosen by Schumann for the second edition of the work: "Etudes in the form of Variations." In the several years that transpired between the

³³ Madson, 16.

origins of the *Symphonic Etudes* and the publication of the first edition, Schumann was busy at work writing for the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik (NZfM)*. As editor of this journal, Schumann surveyed a great deal of music, both contemporary and old, recording his critical views. From his own writings, we can gain insight into Schumann's views about the etude and variation, the two genres that came to dominate Schumann's conception of the *Symphonic Etudes*.³⁴

Schumann was very well acquainted with the etude genre and seems to have regarded it highly. His writings in the *NZfM* attest to this:

Since the establishment of our periodical, we have always taken especial notice of the pianoforte etude, because all improvement in the art of pianoforte playing, more especially on its mechanical side, is soonest visible in this form of composition...³⁵

In 1836 Schumann made a survey of the etude from the time of J.S. Bach to his own day. It is an extensive list including major figures of the genre such as Clementi, Cramer, and Chopin as well as many composers now long forgotten. Demonstrating Schumann's extensive knowledge of the genre the list is organized by twenty-nine distinct technical aims, with an asterisk marking etudes "especially distinguished by a poetical character."³⁶

In a review of a set of etudes by J.P. Pixis, Schumann offers more specific information about his requirements for an etude:

In a broad sense, every piece of music is a study, and the simplest is sometimes the most difficult. In a narrower sense, we require an especial aim in the study; it

³⁴ See Madson 37-86 for a more detailed exploration of Schumann's relationship to both the etude and variation genres.

³⁵ Ritter, II, 332-3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 358-65.

must improve a certain technicality, and lead to the mastery of some particular difficulty, whether this lies in technicalities, rhythm, expression, performance, or what else; [however] if many difficulties are mingled in it, it enters the domain of the caprice.³⁷

In a review of studies by C.E.F. Weyse, Schumann also highlights the importance of clear form:

The studies display a remarkable opposition to strict form, through which they often stray into the domain of the fantastic caprice, and only return to the beaten road in discouragement. I have already observed something of the kind in the earlier collection; but it did not there result in a sacrifice of the fine form which is essential to the etude, or in the disregard of a decided mechanical aim, which we also demand in this style of composition.³⁸

In addition to a particular musical or technical aim and clear form, Schumann afforded great importance to the musical quality of a work: “Young composers can never learn too soon, that music does not exist for the fingers, but the reverse, and that no one dare be a bad musician in order to become a good virtuoso.”³⁹

During the 1830s virtuoso pianists of the day turned out sets of variations on popular tunes and opera arias in prolific numbers. Plantinga notes that this music “flooded the markets, filled the concert programs, and was enthusiastically promoted by almost all of the musical journals” to the exclusion of more serious music.⁴⁰ As a critic Schumann railed against these empty display pieces:

For no musical form has produced more insipidity than this—and will yet produce it. One has little idea how much shameless vulgarity, what poverty, blossoms in

³⁷ Ibid., 296.

³⁸ Ibid., 319-20.

³⁹ Ritter, II, 343-44.

⁴⁰ Leon Plantinga, *Schumann as Critic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 198.

these depths. Once we had respectably tiresome German airs; now we have hackneyed Italian ones to swallow in five or six watery decompositions. And we may be thankful to escape with so few. And when the Müllers, the Mayers, and whatever they are called, first come from their provinces! Ten variations, double repetitions. Even if that were all! But then we have the *minore* and the *finale* in 3/8 time—ugh! Let us not lose a word more! Into the fire with it all!⁴¹

This is not to suggest that Schumann did not care for the variation genre; he had high praise for Bach and Beethoven after all. Additionally, many of his early works were in variation form. He was advocating, rather, for more substantive composition: “The days are past when a sugary figure, a long, rapid E-flat major scale, a languishing suspension, raised astonishment; now we ask for ideas, inward connection, poetic unity, the whole bathed in fresh fancy.”⁴² In one of his reviews for a group of variations by various composers, Schumann laments this lack of substance, wryly suggesting that the reader would find the best possible review of the music in the following lines by Heine:

Black dress coats and silken stockings
Courtly ruffles white and thin,
Compliments, polite embraces,—
Would these covered hearts within!⁴³

Schumann’s writings suggest that his first requirement for good variations was musical substance, not just empty display and endless figuration. Furthermore, variations should exhibit variety as can be seen by his critique of Baron von Fricken’s variations:

As to the variations themselves, I must bring a charge against you, which the modern school is rather fond of making, namely, that they are too much alike in

⁴¹ Ritter, II, 428.

⁴² Ibid., 435.

⁴³ Ibid., 440. These lines are from Heine’s *Die Harzreise* [Schwarze Röcke, seidne Strümpfe, / Weiße höfliche Manschetten, / Sanfte Reden, Embrassieren – / Ach, wenn sie nur Herzen hätten!]

character. No doubt the subject ought always to be kept well in view, but it ought to be shown through different colored glasses, just as there are windows of various colors which make the country look rosy like the setting sun, or as golden as a summer morning, etc.⁴⁴

Perhaps in the *Symphonic Etudes* Schumann saw an opportunity to demonstrate that the variation genre could indeed be used as a vehicle for serious composition. Precedents for this do exist, particularly in works such as Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* or Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, but in the 1830s these existed in relative obscurity compared to the empty display pieces pouring forth from the pens of the virtuosos of the day.

Conclusion

The compositional evolution of the *Symphonic Etudes* was a process marked by revision and exploration. While the first version of the composition, *Fantaisies et Finale*, had been completed by January 18, 1835, Schumann would continue to explore different arrangements of the individual pieces as demonstrated by the Mariemont and Vienna manuscripts. By the time the *Symphonic Etudes* was first published in 1837, Schumann had deleted nearly half of the original composition, composing new music to take its place. Exactly why Schumann so drastically altered his composition will likely remain a mystery. However, it is interesting to view these changes in light of some of the important events in Schumann's life that took place during these several years.

Fantaisies et Finale was composed while Schumann was engaged to Ernestine von Fricken. Six months after its completion Schumann had called off his engagement to

⁴⁴ Herbert, *Early Letters*, 240.

Ernestine. Early in 1836 he promised his love to Clara, but the two lovers would ultimately be separated for over a year.⁴⁵ Is it possible that these changes in Schumann's personal life could have inspired some of the new music Schumann composed for the *Symphonic Etudes*? Robert Schauffler writes of a Clara source-motive originally derived from a melody of Clara's that can be found throughout much of Schumann's piano music.⁴⁶



Figure 3. Clara source-motive

Schauffler specifically notes the appearance of this Clara source-motive in Etude XI (see Figure 4), an etude that was not a part of the original version of the composition, remarking, "...its presence is rhythmically emphasized by coming as a quintuplet."⁴⁷ Perhaps Clara did in fact inspire some of the music in the *Symphonic Etudes*.



Figure 4. Clara source-motive in Etude XI

⁴⁵ Worthen, 118-122.

⁴⁶ Robert Haven Schauffler, *Florestan: The Life and Work of Robert Schumann* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1945), 297.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 324.

In addition, as noted above, Schumann's activity as a music critic undoubtedly caused him to reflect a great deal on both the etude and variation genres, the two genres that came to dominate Schumann's conception of the *Symphonic Etudes*. It seems reasonable then to speculate that Schumann's concerns for form and genre also played a role in his decision to recompose and rearrange such a large section of the *Symphonic Etudes*. In commenting on the rejected variations, Chissell suggests, "these early musings are very much the kind of music he might have improvised around the Baron's theme while dreaming about 'Fräulein Ernestine.'"⁴⁸ The posthumous variations do indeed exhibit a different quality from the rest of the piece. Perhaps they are less "symphonic" (variation 4 for example) or more improvisatory (variation 2), but it just these differences that many pianists find attractive. Had these variations never been published, the life of the *Symphonic Etudes* would have likely been much simpler. However, five of these deleted variations were ultimately published, further complicating the life of the *Symphonic Etudes*. Let us now turn our attention to these.

⁴⁸ Joan Chissell, *Schumann Piano Music* (Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 1972), 25.

CHAPTER II

THE POSTHUMOUS VARIATIONS

Publication and Editing

The posthumous variations were first published by Simrock in 1873. At this time the Vienna manuscript was in Brahms's possession and the Mariemont manuscript in Clara's.⁴⁹ On March 17, 1867, Brahms had performed the *Symphonic Etudes* "zum Theile noch Manuscript" (undoubtedly the Vienna manuscript, which contains the posthumous variations) in Vienna. While information regarding which specific etudes he played is not available, this could very well have been the first public performance of some or all of the posthumous variations. As early as 1868, Brahms had tried to persuade Clara to allow their publication, but she was at first very much against it.⁵⁰ Brahms must have eventually persuaded Clara to give up her opposition and allow publication.

According to an unpublished letter to Simrock on May 26, 1873, Clara agreed to copy out the variations after her return from a concert tour, but she asked that Brahms write out the beginnings of each ("only the first bar—he certainly knows them by heart") so that she could write them in the correct order.⁵¹ Brahms provided the incipits, presumably by memory, for he mentioned to Simrock that his manuscript could not be

⁴⁹ Linda Correll Roesner, "Brahms's Editions of Schumann," in *Brahms Studies: Analytical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. George Bozarth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 260.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 261.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 261. The Vienna manuscript in Brahms's possession represented Schumann's last known thoughts as to the order of the variations prior to his decision to remove them altogether.

produced at the moment as it was buried in a trunk. However, Clara still harbored strong reservations to the publication of the variations, for several weeks later, on June 14, 1873, she wrote to Simrock again, voicing her opposition to the project:

Do not believe that I had not thought about my promise concerning the *Symphonic Etudes*; but I do not know how I shall deliver them to you. It would be best if you were to release me entirely from my promise, for publishing them is so entirely against my intention.⁵²

Clara went on to suggest that if Simrock did not wish to desist in the matter, it would be better for Brahms to make the copy. Notwithstanding his role in initiating the drive towards the publication of these variations, Brahms ultimately proved unwilling to be of much help in the actual publication process.

In the end, despite her protestations, Clara did copy out the five variations from the Mariemont manuscript, which was in her possession, and in the order that Brahms had supplied. This order is based on the sequence in which the variations were entered into the Vienna manuscript with the exception of the last two, which are reversed. Clara's copy served as the engraver's model for Simrock's 1873 edition, but only after Brahms corrected it according to the Vienna manuscript in his possession, transferring into it the corrections Schumann had made.

In addition to making the copy, Clara also edited the music with some of her own dynamic and articulation markings. The Mariemont manuscript from which Clara made her copy contains almost no dynamic indications—Schumann evidently often postponed decisions about expressive details—consequently, the dynamic structure of the 1873 edition is almost exclusively from Clara. Furthermore, Schumann only articulated the

⁵² Ibid., 262.

opening bar or so and thereafter provided infrequent indications. Clara therefore supplied much of the articulation in this edition as well (mm. 9-21 of variation 3, mm. 29-43 of variation 4, and almost all of variation 5 for example).⁵³ Brahms was most likely unaware of Clara's additions when he edited the copy, for instructions in his own copy of the manuscript (the Vienna manuscript) indicated that Schumann planned to have another copy made and as a result did not add marks of expression at that time.

Simrock's 1873 edition of the posthumous variations served as the text for the Complete Works Edition published in 1893. Brahms's only comment concerning them in the preface to this edition is that they had been supplied from a copyist's manuscript corrected by Schumann. Roesner remarks that the rather haphazard manner in which the publication was prepared is "startling by modern standards," characterizing it as "the work of two unwilling editors, one who did not want the pieces to appear at all and the other who, for obscure reasons, did not want to take responsibility for choosing among and recording variant readings."⁵⁴ In the final analysis, neither the order nor much of the dynamic and articulation markings in the posthumous variations are actually from Schumann, but are rather from Brahms and Clara Schumann.

Inclusion of the Posthumous Variations in the Symphonic Etudes

In the preface to his 1948 edition of the *Symphonic Etudes*, Alfred Cortot claims to have been the first to include the five posthumous variations within the performance of the work. In 1929 he recorded the *Symphonic Etudes*, interpolating the posthumous

⁵³ Ibid., 263.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 264.

variations in the following order: Theme, I, P1, II, III, IV, V, P4, VI, VII, P2, P5, VIII, IX, P3, X, XI, XII. Cortot provides the same order in the preface of his edition, recommending it as the best solution for including the posthumous variations, but with no further justification.⁵⁵ In the years since Cortot's landmark recording, many other pianists have included some or all of the posthumous variations within the body of the *Symphonic Etudes* in numerous ways. For the pianist who decides to include them within the work, how to do so remains a problematic and even contentious issue with no easy—or in my opinion, definitive—solution. I would like to suggest that this very issue, in fact, gives the *Symphonic Etudes* a unique property among the standard piano repertory: by varying if and where the posthumous variations are included, the pianist has the opportunity to fundamentally alter the presentation of the work in performance. This might seem objectionable to some; and in fact, one does not have to look very far to find arguments against their inclusion in performance.

As noted above, Clara was against the publication of these variations from the start, even questioning their musical value in the above quoted June 14, 1873 letter to Simrock: “The pieces seem to me to be really not of great musical consequence since the first collection [i.e. the published version of the *Symphonic Etudes*] is so rich...”⁵⁶ In her survey of Schumann's piano music, Joan Chissell states her objection to the inclusion of the posthumous variations into a complete performance of the *Symphonic Etudes*, noting that to do so “is to ignore Schumann's three-year struggle to find his ideal form for the work.” She goes on to suggest that they are better played as an independent group as they

⁵⁵ Alfred Cortot, ed., preface to *Etudes Symphonique (en forme de Variations)* by Robert Schumann (Paris: Éditions Salabert, 1948).

⁵⁶ Quoted in Roesner, 262.

are “far too beautiful to waste.”⁵⁷ Maxwell and DeVan remark on the great beauty of these variations, but strongly recommend against their inclusion within a performance because “the resultant disruption of the structural and expressive unity is disastrous.”⁵⁸ In his discussion of the posthumous variations, Madson finds their inclusion “objectionable” for the same reasons, further adding, “the piece becomes too long with their inclusion.”⁵⁹

These arguments can be summed up as follows: 1) to include the posthumous variations is to ignore Schumann’s final intentions; 2) to include the posthumous variations negatively impacts the form of the *Symphonic Etudes*; 3) to include the posthumous variations makes the work too long. The first issue is probably the most complicated. However, given the fact that many of Schumann’s works (including the *Symphonic Etudes*) exist in multiple published and manuscript versions, it is worth considering several questions posed by Newcomb in regard to Schumann’s works: “What is notation supposed to establish inflexibly, what might an ‘Urtext edition’ mean, and to what extent did the composer’s intention include the concept of a single definitive text?”⁶⁰ The answers to these questions are by no means simple. Perhaps they are even best evaluated on a work-by-work basis. However, I would suggest these are questions every performer of Schumann should give due consideration. Later in his essay, Newcomb offers at least a tentative answer to the questions he posed:

⁵⁷ Chissell, 25.

⁵⁸ Carolyn Maxwell and William DeVan, eds., *Schumann: Solo Piano Literature* (Boulder: Maxwell Music Evaluation Books, 1984), 96.

⁵⁹ Madson, 111.

⁶⁰ Newcomb, 277.

The hypothesis is worth entertaining that Schumann saw himself as providing materials out of which he or another gifted performer could make a performance, but that he was reluctant to fix definitively many details of that performance... In pursuing this hypothesis, we may profitably review the various relatively finished forms (as opposed to fragmentary sketched details) in which Schumann wrote down this material. From these we may be able to get some idea of the various ways Schumann may have considered hearing his own piece.⁶¹

In fact, several fairly recent works of Schumann scholarship have championed this review of “relatively finished forms.” In a 1992 article, Thomas Warburton gives special attention to the Mariemont manuscript, detailing how Schumann changed the order of the work several times. After noting that multiple versions exist for many of Schumann’s works, he states:

Surely it is the final version of each of the works mentioned, including both the sonatas and the cyclical works, that represents the composer’s latest and authoritative thought. On the other hand, it is instructive to examine the earlier or alternate versions and perhaps to try them out in performance as well. For the *Etudes Symphoniques* the notion of the alternative performances is particularly relevant because some of Schumann’s changes affect outer form and inner detail while other changes affect the fundamental character and effect of the whole.⁶²

At the conclusion of his article, Warburton further notes: “In a day when music scholars are examining composers’ manuscripts so avidly, it is tantalizing for the performer to experiment with the possibilities suggested by the changes a composer made as he was creating a new work.”⁶³ In another article also published in 1992, Damien Ehrhardt advocates for the publication of a new edition of the *Symphonic Etudes* based on the

⁶¹ Ibid., 280.

⁶² Thomas Warburton, “Some Performance Alternatives for Schumann’s Opus 13,” *JALS* 31 (1992): 38-9.

⁶³ Ibid., 46.

Mariemont manuscript, suggesting this version as a viable performance alternative.⁶⁴

More recently, Moschenross has argued that the interpolation of the posthumous variations is a legitimate performance option, stating:

I believe that Schumann's initial integration of these variations into the early versions of this work, Brahms's and Clara Schumann's choice to publish them (rather than treat them as rejected, and, therefore, inadequate pieces), and that interpolation has, in fact, already become common practice all justify the integration of the Supplemental [i.e. posthumous] Variations.⁶⁵

As to the second argument, that inclusion or interpolation of the posthumous variations is “disastrous” to the structure of the *Symphonic Etudes*, this seems only to be a matter of opinion. If one values conciseness of form above all, then the 1852 version, with Etudes III and IX removed, takes the prize. Despite the fact that this “most concise” version of the *Symphonic Etudes* represents Schumann's final intentions, most do not actually perform it this way. Nearly every performance I have heard of the *Symphonic Etudes* retains Etudes III and IX, evidently because pianists feel that these etudes contribute something to the overall effect of the composition.

I feel the same way toward the posthumous variations—that they contribute to the form, not detract from it. Schumann's original conception for the *Symphonic Etudes* included music by both of his alter egos, Florestan and Eusebius. By the time the first edition was published, with the exception of Etude XI Schumann had removed nearly all trace of Eusebius from the work. Many of the *Symphonic Etudes* are based on perpetual

⁶⁴ Damien Ehrhardt, “Les Études symphoniques de Robert Schumann: Projet d'intégration des variations posthumes,” *Revue de Musicologie* 78/2 (1992): 303.

⁶⁵ Ian James Moschenross, “Robert Schumann's Symphonic Etudes, Opus 13: A Critical Overview with a Re-evaluation of Editorial and Performance Practice Issues” (DMA diss., The University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 2003), 48.

motion figures, possessing an intense and serious energy. The inclusion of the posthumous variations can provide contrast and variety, as much of this music came from the pen of Eusebius and is more contemplative and dreamy. Rather than sabotage the form, in my opinion, the inclusion of at least some of the posthumous variations can work remarkably well within the overall structure of the piece as it provides greater variety of mood and texture.

Regarding length, Cortot's 1929 recording, which includes all of the posthumous variations, takes less than 25 minutes. While he takes rather fast tempos and does omit some of the repeats, this certainly does not seem "too long." Brendel includes all of the posthumous variations as well as Schumann's repeats, and his performance takes around 34 minutes. In my opinion, any added length incurred by the addition of the posthumous variations is more than compensated for by the resultant change in character.

Ultimately, any performer who remains unconvinced as to the validity or value of playing the posthumous variations in performance need not perform them. For those who wish to play them, however, the decision of where and how to include them must be addressed. Two general options are possible: 1) to play them as a group, either independently or somewhere within the body of the *Symphonic Etudes*; or 2) to interpolate them at various locations throughout the work. Let us explore each option in turn.

The Posthumous Variations as a Group

Because some authors such as Joan Chissell have suggested that the posthumous variations are better played as an independent group, separately from the *Symphonic*

Etudes, I would like to first consider this as a performance option. One could conceivably play the theme followed by the posthumous five variations as an independent selection on a program. Some have even recorded them this way—Yvonne Lefébure in 1977⁶⁶ and Jörg Demus in 1996⁶⁷ for example. I find this option wholly unsatisfactory, however, as I do not believe the posthumous five variations form a convincing, cohesive whole. They were, after all, never intended to follow each other consecutively as can be seen from the various manuscript sources. I must disagree with Chissell and recommend that this option not be pursued.

A number of pianists have included the posthumous variations as a group at some point within the body of the *Symphonic Etudes*. Exactly where they are included varies by artist as can be seen from the following examples. In a 1965 recording, Vladimir Ashkenazy plays the posthumous five variations between Etudes IX and X.⁶⁸ Interestingly Ashkenazy later revised the order in which he played the *Symphonic Etudes*, including the first three posthumous variations after Etude III and the remaining two after Etude VIII. He recorded them in this form in 1987.⁶⁹ In his 1984 recording for Deutsche Grammophon, Maurizio Pollini inserts all five posthumous variations between Etudes V and VI.⁷⁰ Sviataslov Richter also plays the posthumous five variations here.⁷¹ Vladimir

⁶⁶ Lefébure (FYCD 078).

⁶⁷ Demus (Nuova Era 7316, 1996).

⁶⁸ Ashkenazy (London CS 6471, 1965).

⁶⁹ Ashkenazy (London 414 474-1, 1987).

⁷⁰ Pollini (DGG 410 916-1, 1984).

⁷¹ Richter (Yedang 10020).

Feltsman recorded four of the five posthumous variations (omitting the third) as a group between Etudes VIII and IX.⁷²

As noted above the posthumous variations are generally of a more lyrical quality, representing Eusebius's take on the theme. When inserted as a group in the middle of the *Symphonic Etudes*, these variations can serve as a sort of contrasting middle section to the rest of the piece. While I feel this solution is preferable to playing the posthumous variations separately as an independent group, I do not find it altogether satisfying for the same reason mentioned above. The reader will remember that the order of the posthumous five variations was provided by Brahms, who based it upon the order in which they appeared in his copy of the manuscript with the exception of the last two variations, which he switched. In all of the early manuscripts, these posthumous variations alternated in some form with the other etudes that Schumann had composed up to that point. In other words, they were originally integrated within the piece. Therefore, it is my opinion that to interpolate the posthumous variations at various points within the body of the *Symphonic Etudes* is the best solution for their inclusion in performance.

Interpolation of the Posthumous Variations

How to interpolate the posthumous variations within the body of the *Symphonic Etudes* is a difficult question. Table 2 presents only a sample of the many arrangements of the *Symphonic Etudes* that have been recorded. As can be seen from this table, each of these six performers created a unique solution.

⁷² Feltsman (Columbia M 2X 44589, 1988).

Table 2. Various arrangements of the posthumous variations adopted by six professional pianists in recordings. (Posthumous variations in bold.)

Alfred Cortot (1929)	Alfred Brendel (1990)	Claudio Arrau (1976)	Evgeny Kissin (1990)	György Cziffra (1965)	Géza Anda (1964?)
Theme	Theme	Theme	Theme	Theme	Theme
I	P3	I	I	I	I
P1	I	P1	P1	P1	II
II	P1	II	II	II	III
III	P2	III	III	III	IV
IV	II	IV	IV	P2	V
V	III	V	V	IV	VI
P4	IV	VI	VI	V	P2
VI	V	P2	P4	VI	VII
VII	P4	VII	P5	VII	VIII
P2	VI	P3	VII	VIII	P5
P5	VII	P4	P3	XI	IX
VIII	VIII	VIII	VIII	P4	X
IX	IX	P5	IX	X	XI
P3	P5	IX	P2	XI	XII
X	X	X	X	XII	
XI	XI	XI	XI		
XII	XII	XII	XII		

While some variations were integrated in the same way (five of the six performers included P1 after Etude I), others were positioned differently in every performance (P2 for example), with some performers choosing not to include all five variations. The various extant manuscript sources demonstrate that Schumann himself struggled to find an order. Let us consider what evidence these manuscripts can offer to the modern performer.

Warburton suggests that if the posthumous variations are to be included, they should be placed in their “original position.”⁷³ Moschenross advocates the same in his dissertation, stating:

⁷³ Warburton, 45-6.

It seems reasonable that if one chooses to interpolate according to contemporary practice, then an effort should be made to place the Supplemental Variations within the work where it appears that Schumann initially intended.⁷⁴

As the revised order in the Mariemont manuscript was the last version to include all five of the posthumous variations, Moschenross uses it as the basis of his order, arriving at the following:

Theme, I, II, P1, III, IV, V, P3, VI, VII, VIII, IX, P2, X, P5, X, XI, P4, XII.

This argument seems problematic for several reasons, however. First, the revised Mariemont order was not the final order Schumann considered for the early version of the *Symphonic Etudes*. He again reordered the individual pieces in the Vienna manuscript, deleting the first posthumous variation and moving some of the other pieces around considerably. This would suggest Schumann's dissatisfaction with the Mariemont order. Second and more importantly, the early manuscripts are all from a period pre-dating the composition of Etudes III, VI-IX, and XI. To simply force the posthumous variations into the composition based on any of the early manuscripts without considering how the etudes composed at a later stage function within the overall structure of the piece seems ill-advised as it has the potential to produce a less than satisfactory musical result.

I would like to illustrate this point with several examples. Moschenross suggests playing Posthumous Variation 4 after Etude XI and before the Finale. While Schumann did indeed place P4 before the Finale in the revised Mariemont manuscript, he evidently did not think very highly of this particular arrangement as he changed his mind in the Vienna manuscript, placing P2 before the Finale instead. Only later did Schumann compose the wonderful Etude XI, which serves admirably in the pre-Finale position. In

⁷⁴ Moschenross, 54-5.

my opinion Etude XI fills this role much better than P4, and the musical effect of placing the two together is in my opinion both redundant and entirely unsatisfactory. As a second example, in the published version of the *Symphonic Etudes*, Etude V follows Etude IV *attacca*. However, in none of the early manuscripts are these variations placed together. In the revised Mariemont manuscript, Posthumous Variation 2 directly precedes Etude V. Since it is not possible to interpolate Posthumous Variation 2 between Etudes IV and V, Moschenross is forced to arbitrarily place it elsewhere, and decides to include it before Etude X.

This is not to suggest that the evidence offered by the early manuscripts is unimportant or should be disregarded; rather, I believe these manuscripts suggest many possible options with which to experiment and can serve as a starting point for each performer’s exploration. At the very least, they show different locations in which Schumann considered placing the posthumous variations. Table 3 shows the location of each posthumous variation in both the Mariemont and Vienna manuscripts.

Table 3. Location of each of the posthumous variations in the Mariemont and Vienna manuscripts.

	Mariemont MS— Original order	Mariemont MS— Revised order	Vienna MS
Variation 1	Followed V Preceded P3	Followed II Preceded P2	Deleted
Variation 2	Followed P4 Preceded I	Followed P1 Preceded V	Followed X Preceded XII (Finale)
Variation 3	Followed P1 Preceded X	Followed V Preceded X	Followed IV Preceded X
Variation 4	Followed IV Preceded P2	Followed IV Preceded XII (Finale)	Followed V Preceded IV
Variation 5	Followed X Preceded unfinished var.	Middle section of X	Middle section of X

I myself have experimented with several arrangements of the posthumous variations in performance. As of this writing I have decided upon the following order:

Theme, I, II, III, IV, V, P4, VI, VII, VIII, IX, P2, P5, X, XI, XII (Finale)

I believe this arrangement leaves the overall sense of form intact, but provides several breaks from the presiding Florestanian nature of the *Symphonic Etudes*, with moments of fantasy and reverie interspersed to counteract any effect of monotony.

For the performer who wishes to include the posthumous variations within the *Symphonic Etudes*, where to play them is a question without a definitive answer. Rather, the solution requires imagination, creativity, and experimentation. This exploration contributes to the continuing evolution and ongoing life of the *Symphonic Etudes* as no two performers need play the piece in exactly the same arrangement. From this standpoint, the *Symphonic Etudes* is quite unique, and I believe this continued exploration creates renewed interest in the work, both for the performer and listener.

CHAPTER III

A PERFORMANCE GUIDE TO THE SYMPHONIC ETUDES

Selected Editions

Schumann's Opus 13 has been published in many editions. Moschenross provides a critical overview of three editions in his dissertation—Peters (edited by Emil von Sauer, 1925), Schirmer (edited by Harold Bauer, 1944), and Henle (edited by Boetticher, 1976)—considering both faithfulness to Schumann's text and usefulness in preparation for performance.⁷⁵ In this section I will examine several other editions I found useful under the same parameters.

Dover's three-volume edition of the piano music of Robert Schumann offers an inexpensive option and is based on the Collected Works Edition (*Robert Schumann's Werke. Herausgegeben von Clara Schumann*, originally published by Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig). While the original Collected Works Edition included both the 1837 and 1852 versions of Opus 13, Dover has only included the 1852 version (with Etudes III and IX reinstated), along with the five posthumous variations as a supplement. Fingerings and editorial markings are limited to those given by Schumann himself.

The Alfred edition, edited by Maurice Hinson, was published in 1992 and is based on the 1852 version with Etudes III and IX reinstated. In a nine-page preface, Hinson provides historical background pertaining to the work's composition as well as commentary about the theme and each of the variations. This commentary is both

⁷⁵ See Moschenross., 40-45.

descriptive and informative, with advice pertaining to interpretation as well as practice suggestions. The musical text includes Hinson's fingerings and some interpretive directions, but Hinson is careful to differentiate these from Schumann's markings. Hinson does include the introductory measure to Etude XI, noting that it appears only in the 1837 version, but offers no other variants from this earlier text. The five posthumous variations are included as an appendix.

In 2006 Henle published a new edition of Opus 13 edited by Ernst Herttrich, including both the 1837 and 1852 versions in their entirety. In doing so, Henle seeks to present each version as it appeared in Schumann's lifetime, without conflating the two together as often happens. Therefore, Henle's printing of the 1852 version omits Etudes III and IX. Each version is prefaced with pertinent historical information and also includes commentary, which notes differences between various sources. An appendix to the 1837 version includes both the posthumous five variations and the unfinished variation from the Mariemont manuscript. Herttrich details the various arrangements of the variations indicated by the manuscript sources but refrains from offering any advice on the inclusion of the five posthumous variations. I highly recommend this edition as it attempts to present both published versions of the *Symphonic Etudes* as accurately as possible.

One of the most interesting editions of Opus 13 is Alfred Cortot's 1948 edition published by Salabert. This is a "performance edition" in the best sense of the term. Alfred Cortot, pupil of Chopin disciple Emile Descombes as well as Louis Diémer, was one of the great pianists of the first half of the twentieth century. From 1907 to 1923 he was a leading professor of the piano at the Paris Conservatoire and in 1919 he founded

the École Normale de Musique where his courses in interpretation became legendary. Cortot was particularly known for his interpretations of nineteenth-century piano music and he made more recordings than almost any other pianist of his era with the possible exception of Artur Schnabel.⁷⁶ Cortot's editions for Salabert (*Éditions de Travail*) include most of the works of Chopin and Schumann as well as selections by Liszt, Weber, Mendelssohn, and Schubert. Each piece is prefaced with a musicological text and the music itself includes commentary with ideas about interpretation as well as technical exercises dealing with problematic passages.⁷⁷ In 1928 Cortot explicated his ideas on piano technique in his *Rational Principles of Pianoforte Technique*. Unfortunately only a handful of Cortot's editions are available in English translation, and his edition of Schumann's *Symphonic Etudes* is only available in French. Nevertheless, these editions offer much insight from one of the twentieth-century's great interpretive artists.

Cortot follows the 1852 version of the *Symphonic Etudes*, reinstating Etudes III and IX, but includes variants from the 1837 edition on smaller parallel staves within the score. Cortot also had access to the Mariemont manuscript and notes significant differences from that source in his commentary. Cortot is very generous with fingerings and gives his own pedaling as well. The musical text of this edition does contain a number of mistakes (two pages of errata are to be found at the beginning of the volume), but compared to other editions of the early twentieth century, such as Bauer's, Cortot remains remarkably faithful to the text of Schumann. Perhaps most helpful are the

⁷⁶ Martin Cooper and Charles Timbrell, "Cortot, Alfred," *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press).

⁷⁷ As of this writing, Salabert's editions are available in the United States through Hal Leonard.

numerous technical exercises given related to particularly difficult passages within the composition, some of which will be discussed below. The overarching philosophy to this type of technical approach can be found in the Foreword to his edition of Chopin's Op. 25 Etudes, where Cortot writes: "The essential principle of this method is to practice, not so much the difficult passage taken as a whole, but the particular difficulty it presents by reducing the latter to its elements."

Schumann's Metronome

Schumann's published metronome markings have been the source of much disagreement and speculation among pianists. Various theories have been offered to reconcile the differences between Schumann's printed markings and what pianists feel to be an appropriate tempo. One such theory, still alive to this day, is that Schumann's metronome was defective. In fact, in a letter from February 8, 1853 to composer Ferdinand Böhme, Schumann states just the opposite:

Dear Sir,

...the composition does you great credit, and I was very pleased at your intention of dedicating it to me.

Have you a correct metronome? All the tempi appear to me far too quick. Mine is correct. It always gives as many beats to the minute as the number on which the weight is placed. For instance, if the number is 50, it gives 50 beats to the minute; if 60 = 60. And, as far as I know, this is the test of correctness. Perhaps you would try your metronome in this respect. –Robert Schumann⁷⁸

According to Schlotel, Clara may have first suggested the possibility of a defective metronome as she was discussing her plans with Brahms to revise the metronome

⁷⁸ Quoted in Brian Schlotel, "Schumann and the Metronome," in *Robert Schumann: The Man and His Music*, ed. Alan Walker (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1972), 110.

markings in Schumann's works. In any case, the suggestion was first made in print by von Bülow in his preface to his 1869 edition of Cramer's studies, where he writes, "...it is generally held that Schumann used a defective metronome for an entire creative period."⁷⁹ This was later repeated as "fact" by Gustav Jansen in his first edition of Schumann's letters. Lending credence to this view, in her Instructive Edition of Schumann's music, Clara made many changes to Schumann's original markings.

It is of particular interest to note how Clara arrived at her markings. According to Schlotel: "One letter of Clara's makes it clear that her method was to use a watch with a second hand rather than a metronome. Presumably she would play for a minute exactly, and then stop and count how many beats she had played."⁸⁰ In comparing Clara's metronome markings with Schumann's, while some are the same, many are either faster or slower, sometimes significantly so.⁸¹ These divergences occur at every point along the metronome's scale. This would suggest not a faulty metronome, but simply a different preference for tempo. This raises the question: how binding should a composer's metronome markings be? Certainly, various nineteenth-century composers had different feelings toward the metronome as a guide to interpretation. Chopin left metronome markings for some of his earlier works, but avoided them later in his life. On the other hand Berlioz advised composers to provide them, stating a clear preference for the metronome as a useful guide to tempo in his *Treatise on Instrumentation*. But even he cautioned about imitating the metronome's mechanical regularity: "It is not necessary to

⁷⁹ Ibid., 110.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 111.

⁸¹ See Schlotel, 111-114 for a table of tempo comparisons for Schumann's Opus 2, 6, 15, 16, 18, and 26.

imitate the mathematical regularity of the metronome; all music so performed would become of freezing stiffness, and I even doubt whether it would be possible to observe so flat a uniformity during a certain number of bars.”⁸²

Given the fact that Schumann took the trouble to indicate metronome markings for so much of his music, I believe these markings should receive the performer’s full consideration. However, there are many factors involved in coming up with an appropriate tempo, and this will vary from person to person, even from performance to performance. We have seen that Clara herself often disagreed with Schumann’s indications. One must consider the nature and acoustical properties of both the instrument played and the performance venue. One must consider the technical and interpretive faculties of each performer. Furthermore, one will conceive of the music in a different way than another, and this results in diversity of interpretation. Schumann seems to have prized interpretive ability. In a review of his Opus 10 Concert Etudes, Schumann writes, “In No. 5 I omitted all performance indications on purpose, so that the student can plumb the heights and depths himself. I hope that this procedure may seem most fitting for testing the interpretive strength of the pupil.”⁸³ In any case, with a few exceptions (most notably Etudes VIII and XI) I find Schumann’s tempo indications for the *Symphonic Etudes* to be fairly good. Table 4 provides a comparison between Schumann’s metronome markings and my suggested tempos for each individual piece.

⁸² Quoted in Schlotel, 115-116.

⁸³ Quoted in Newcomb, 278.

Table 4. Comparison of Schumann’s tempos and suggested tempos for each individual piece within the *Symphonic Etudes*.

Piece	Unit of Pulse	Schumann’s Tempo	Suggested Tempo
Theme	Quarter note	52	52
Etude I	Quarter note	72	80
Etude II	Eighth note	72	72-80
Etude III	Quarter note	63	60
Etude IV	Quarter note	132	132
Etude V	Dotted-quarter note	108	104
Etude VI	Quarter note	60	69-72
Etude VII	Quarter note	96	96
Etude VIII	Quarter note	80	52-54
Etude IX	Dotted-eighth note	116	116
Etude X	Quarter note	92	92
Etude XI	Quarter note	66	48-52
Etude XII (Finale)	Half note	66	66-69
Post. Var. 1	Quarter note	N/A	88 or faster
Post. Var. 2	Quarter note	N/A	112
Post. Var. 3	Dotted-quarter note	N/A	66
Post. Var. 4	Dotted-half note	N/A	44
Post. Var. 5	Quarter note	N/A	60

Preparation and Performance of the Symphonic Etudes

Theme

To these notes “composed by an amateur,” Schumann originally gave the heading *Tema, quasi marcia funèbre*. This heading was later changed to *Adagio* and finally to *Andante*.⁸⁴ Schumann continued to rework the theme making several significant changes before the first published edition. Most notably, in the earlier versions of the theme Schumann intended for each eight-measure half to be repeated. Accordingly, the cadences in measures 7-8 and 15-16 are different than in later versions. Figure 5 shows

⁸⁴ See Madson, 20-36 for a more detailed discussion of the theme and Schumann’s revisions to it.

the theme as given in the Mariemont manuscript, demonstrating one of Schumann's early conceptions for the theme.



Figure 5. Theme according to the Mariemont manuscript, demonstrating Schumann's early conception in which each half of the theme would be repeated (from Madson, 26).

While the notes of the theme may appear deceptively simple on the page, a convincing interpretation is far from easy. The performer must project a long legato line at a slow tempo while negotiating large, arpeggiated chords. These chords should be rolled in such a way that all of the tones are caught in the pedal, but without any blurring

of the harmony, or loss of legato. The beginning of the theme is marked *piano*, but the tone must not sound flimsy. This is a *piano* full of gravitas and pathos. A firm touch assisted by the weight of the hand will ensure melodic projection. Equally important to the quality of tone is the support of a resonant bass. Schumann's tempo (quarter note = 52) seems right. If the tempo is too slow, the long line disintegrates. While the performer might be tempted to take a faster tempo in order to achieve a better sense of line, this comes at a price, that of causing the theme to lose some of its gravity.

At this point I would like to mention several important motives of the theme that will appear in various guises throughout the remainder of the composition.⁸⁵ The first is the arpeggio motive found in measure one. Interestingly, this motive is present both vertically (the four-note right hand chord on beat one) and horizontally (top note of each right hand chord throughout the first measure). The importance of this motive is established by its repetition throughout the theme (both descending and ascending, such as in measure 6). Another important element or motive of the theme is the motion from scale degree 6 to scale degree 5 (A to G-sharp). We first hear this in measure two, but it continues to be important throughout the theme (measures 6-7, the trill in measures 10-12, and again in measures 14-15).

Etude I

The first four bars of this march should seem to emerge little by little, as if from a distance. After the opening imitative material, Schumann recalls the arpeggio motive of

⁸⁵ For an in depth analysis of the Symphonic Etudes, see Craig C. Cummings, "Large-scale Coherence in Selected Nineteenth-Century Piano Variations" (Ph.D diss., Indiana University, 1991).

the theme combined with the etude's opening motive (measure 5). Cummings points out that this etude's opening motive is itself an inverted form of the theme's arpeggio motive, "covered by surface detail."⁸⁶ The pianist must strictly follow Schumann's careful right-hand notation in measure five. The arpeggio motive in the thumb is written in legato quarter notes, while the accompanying chords are written as eighths. I would suggest that the thumb be voiced more strongly than the rest of the chord, so that the recall of the theme is clear. Close attention to rhythm and articulation will further enhance the interpretation. The dotted rhythms should be crisp and martial, and the contrast between staccato and slur will help to define the character of this music. While I find Schumann's quarter note = 72 a little slow, I would caution against taking too quick a tempo in this etude. This is only the beginning of the piece and there is plenty of faster music yet to come. Interestingly, Schumann originally marked this etude *grave* in the Mariemont manuscript. Only later did he change it to *un poco più vivo*. I would recommend quarter note = 80.

Etude II

With its broad, stately lines and noble bearing, the music of this second etude is not unlike that of the middle section of the first movement of the later composed Fantasy, Opus 17. Perhaps the conception *Im Legendenton* would not be entirely inappropriate. While this etude is not without its technical difficulties, it seems more than anything, to be a study in sonority. For a successful interpretation, the pianist must have complete control over both balance and pedaling. By way of preparation, the performer would do

⁸⁶ Cummings, 142.

well to study both melodic lines independently of the texture. The repeated chords must never obscure the projection of a long melodic line in both bass and soprano voices. To this end, I would suggest the pianist conceive of these repeated chords less as a rhythmic element, but rather as a vibration of harmony. To achieve the proper declamation of the theme in the first four bars of the left hand, Cortot suggests the use of the thumb, accompanied by the weight of the hand, for each melodic note.⁸⁷ Whether or not the performer adopts this suggestion in performance, it can nevertheless be helpful in arriving at the right tone quality.

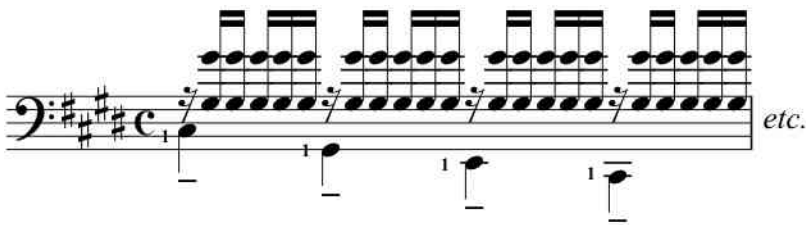


Figure 6. Etude II: Use of LH thumb to play the notes of the theme.

The beginning of this etude is without any dynamic marking. Rather, Schumann has indicated *marcato* for the theme and counter-melody, as well as *espressivo*. In measure five, Schumann indicates *forte* and in the penultimate bar of the section, the outer voices are marked *fortissimo*. In order to give a sense of crescendo to the entire section, I would suggest beginning the etude with the outer voices *mezzo-forte*, the inner chords somewhat less.

Every pianist will have to solve the problem of playing measure four. Here Schumann has written five-note chords in the left hand, and impossibly large intervals in the right hand. Figure 7 shows two possible solutions. First, the pianist can play the final eighth note of each three-note slur in the soprano ever so slightly after the chord has been

⁸⁷ Cortot, 6.

struck simultaneously with both hands. While this involves a rather precarious jump, it allows the pianist to play all of the notes written by Schumann. The second solution is to redistribute the notes slightly with several omissions. Neither solution is particularly easy, especially for pianists with small hands.



Figure 7. Etude II: Two solutions for measure 4.

The B section begins with an allusion to the second half of the theme in the tenor voice. This should be brought out along with the counter-melody in the soprano. The shaping of the theme in the tenor is made more difficult by the leaps in the left hand. Practice the theme by itself first before adding the bass octaves. Make sure these jumps do not inadvertently cause an interruption to the line. Schumann's tempo is perhaps a

little on the slow side, and a slightly faster tempo might help in the projection of the line. I would recommend eighth note = 72-80.

Etude III

Many musicians fell under the spell of Paganini in the 19th century. Schumann witnessed the great virtuoso in concert in April 1830 and was filled with an “incredible enchantment.”⁸⁸ Two years later Schumann noted in his diary: “Paganini caprices made into studies for pianists who want to develop themselves further.”⁸⁹ Several months after this, Schumann published *Etudes pour le pianoforte d’après les Caprices de Paganini*, Opus 3. In 1835 Schumann arranged another group of Paganini Caprices, which were published as Opus 10. Clearly the great violinist made an impact on the young Schumann, and this etude betrays that influence. The right hand is notorious for its difficulty, but the pianist should not underestimate the left hand either—the clear presentation of each of the three elements of the musical texture is crucial. The tenor melody should be played expressively and freely, with a rich, singing tone. The pianist can here seek to imitate the tone of the cello. I would also advise that the melody be played more prominently than the bass notes. The pianist should practice the left hand part alone to secure the proper balance between melody and bass.

To play the right hand, the pianist should not rely too heavily on individual finger articulation. In much the same way as a violinist calls forth multiple tones with a single bow stroke, the solution to this difficult right hand lies in the pianist’s use of wrist and

⁸⁸ John Daverio, *Robert Schumann: Herald of a “New Poetic Age”* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 60.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Daverio, 94.

arm. The fingers themselves should be kept very close to the keys, and a single lateral motion of the arm used to produce each group of four notes. The pianist can practice with the following rhythm:

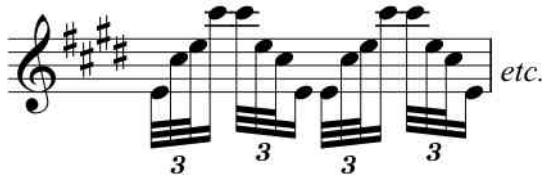


Figure 8. Etude III: Practice rhythm for RH.

To assure the agile passing of the thumb, Cortot further recommends the following exercise.⁹⁰

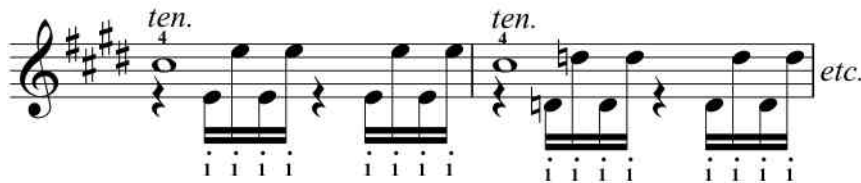


Figure 9. Etude III: Exercise for the thumb.

To incorporate this “*spiccato*” figure into the overall texture, great care must be taken to observe Schumann’s dynamic markings precisely. A crescendo is indicated as the figure ascends. In other words, there should be no accent on the first note of the figure, played by the thumb. Observance of this point will help in the clarity of the three-part texture, as the notes played by the right-hand thumb are often quite near to the melodic notes and should not interfere with the melodic line. As the left hand descends further into the bass (measures 6-8 for example), the pedal must be used very carefully so that the texture does not become overly blurred. Schumann’s quarter = 63 seems to be the fastest advisable tempo for this etude. Depending on the acoustics of the performance

⁹⁰ Cortot, 9.

space and the nature of the instrument, a slightly slower tempo might be preferable for the clarity of the three-part texture. I would suggest quarter note = 60.

Etude IV

In this etude the theme is ingeniously transformed into a strict canon at the octave. Schumann's *sforzandos* are to be played only in the hand for which they are written, which will help to project the canonic relationship between the two hands. This etude requires absolute rhythmic precision, particularly with the dotted rhythms. Schumann's intention as to the dynamics at the opening of this etude are not entirely clear; no dynamic marking is given in the first half except for a crescendo at the end of the section. The beginning of the second half is marked *mezzo forte* followed by *crescendo sempre*. The performer will need to decide whether the *mezzo forte* of the second half represents a reduction in dynamics or if the etude should be conceived as one long crescendo from start to finish with the *mezzo forte* as a sort of halfway point in dynamic intensity. Cortot favors the latter option, suggesting that the etude begin in a hushed but intense manner, like a distant march that grows in intensity measure by measure, culminating in a triumphant *fortissimo* by the end.⁹¹ No matter what dynamic level is chosen for the opening, the clear and precise attack of each chord is of paramount importance. A touch of pedal can be used to aid the production of each *sforzando*, but one should be careful not to pedal through the rests.

⁹¹ Cortot, 11. "Attaque de la variation avec une sonorité étouffée, comme d'une marche lointaine dont chaque mesure se devra par la suite d'intensifier les sonorités, suggerant par une propension insensible et jusqu'au *ff* triomphant des dernières mesures l'approche de plus en plus éclatante d'un glorieux défilé.

Perhaps the greatest interpretive demand of this etude is for the pianist to create a sense of line despite the martial rhythm and chordal texture, separated by rests. I would suggest that the pianist practice first with a single note, allowing each *sforzando* to initiate a rhythmic gesture. The first gesture lasts for four beats; the next two are six beats in length. (There is no accent on the downbeat of measure three). Schumann's tempo (quarter note = 132) seems about right. If too fast a tempo is taken, the dotted rhythms become all but impossible to play.

Etude V

This etude follows immediately from the previous one and continues a canonic imitation between the hands, although it is not strictly maintained. The pianist must immediately change the sound character at the beginning of this etude to something much lighter and more capricious. A supple wrist will help in the execution of the persistent dotted rhythmic figure, which must be played precisely. Cortot recommends the following as helpful preparatory exercises to be continued throughout the etude.

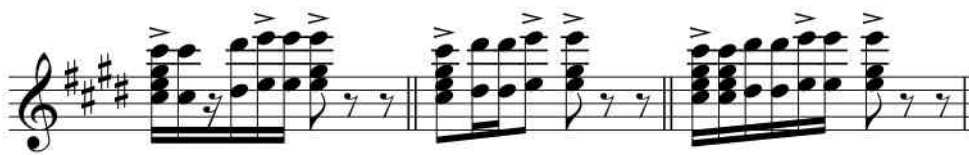


Figure 10. Three practice rhythms for Etude V.

The pianist would do well to practice hands separately at first, even practicing the top voice alone to ensure the consistent projection of the melodic line. The accents on beats two and four apply only to the left hand and help to mark the canonic imitation. The pedal should be used judiciously so as not to create an overly blurred texture. I find

Schumann's dotted quarter note = 108 a little fast. I would recommend dotted quarter note = 100-104.

It is interesting to note that etudes IV and V were not originally conceived of as a consecutive pair. In both the original and revised orders of the Mariemont manuscript as well as in the Vienna manuscript, etude V appears before etude IV with one or more pieces in between. Originally in the Mariemont manuscript, the final measure of this etude cadences in c-sharp minor instead of E Major, and is immediately followed by P1.

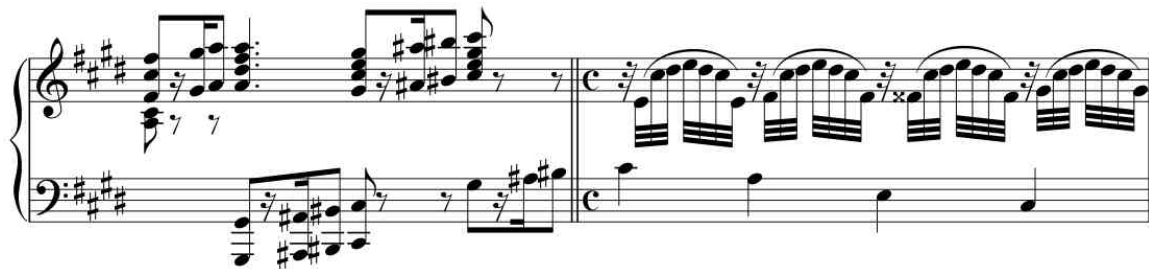


Figure 11. Ending of Etude V in Mariemont manuscript.

After renumbering the Mariemont manuscript, Schumann follows this etude with P3 instead. He apparently changed his mind yet again for in the Vienna manuscript P4 follows this etude. In my opinion the performer might successfully interpolate any one of these three variations between Etudes V and VI. As this etude cadences in E Major, I do not believe that Posthumous Variations 2 and 5 work as well in this location due to the rather jarring harmonic effect produced.

Etude VI

This etude features a *bravura* treatment of the theme, with the left hand rhythmically displaced from the right hand. Naturally, the left hand's large leaps provide one of the chief technical difficulties here, and some left hand alone practice would be

advisable. The notes of the left-hand thumb are melodic and should be played close to the key and accompanied by the weight of the hand. Despite the large leaps, the pianist should remain in the key for as long as possible to obtain a rich sonority. The bass notes by contrast are marked staccato. These should be played quickly with finger staccato, the hand moving immediately to prepare the next melodic note.

In addition to technical challenges, the pianist is faced with interpretive difficulties as well. The melody lies in the top of the right hand as well as with the left hand thumb, and the performer must carefully balance and shape both. Great care must also be taken to ensure that the left hand thumb does not sound like the downbeat. To establish the correct metric feeling from the beginning, one can think of the first *sforzando* note of the left hand as an upbeat to the *sforzando* chord in the right hand. In consideration of the direction *con gran bravura*, Schumann's quarter = 60 seems too slow. This etude should not, however, be played *presto possibile*, as taking too fast a tempo can make the rhythmic intricacies of this music all but unintelligible. I would suggest approximately quarter note = 69-72.

Etude VII

Just as the first half of the theme itself cadences in E Major, this etude provides a structural corollary within the context of the entire composition, the tonality of E Major providing a welcome relief to the prevailing atmosphere of c-sharp minor. The rhythmic element in this etude is relentless and should be strongly marked. In the 1837 edition, Schumann indicates *tenuto* for the chords in double notes on the beat. This is replaced by

“^” in the 1852 edition. In any case, it is important to bring attention to the melodic element of this motoric rhythm, giving it shape to avoid monotony.



Figure 12. Melody of Etude VII.

In order to ensure the proper attack from the wrist of each chord, as well as the slight subordination of the second and third sixteenth note of the rhythmic figure, I would suggest this etude be practiced as follows:

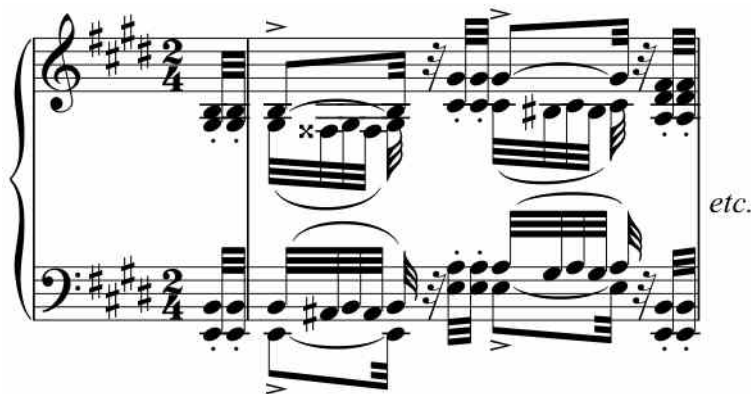


Figure 13. Practice variant for Etude VII.

Schumann’s quarter note = 96 seems right; a powerfully articulated rhythm is more effective here than sheer speed. Although it is not marked, I like to drop the dynamic level in the middle of bar 21 to make the following crescendo more effective. A more dramatic effect can be created in the final measures if the long crescendo is conceived of as shown in Figure 14.

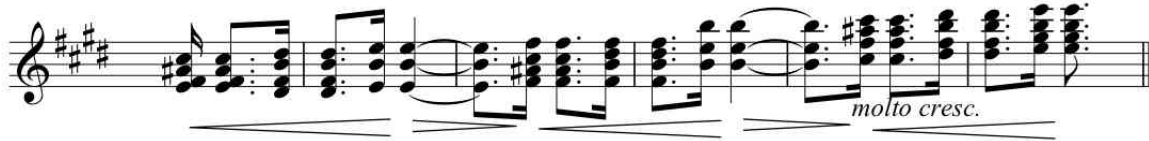


Figure 14. Final crescendo in Etude VII.

The conclusion of this etude provides another location at which one can conceivably interpolate one or more of the posthumous variations. Cortot suggests the placement of Posthumous Variations 2 and 5 here.

Etude VIII

Schumann's love of Bach is well known. Here he seems to pay homage to one of the composers he most revered. One must feel the grandeur and spaciousness of a texture that is woven together linearly. The large-scale rhythmic design should have the steadiness of the massive columns of a great cathedral. This etude's rhythmic detail must be precise, but never pedantic. That Schumann did not notate the 64ths as grace notes suggests to me they should have a melodic quality. While Schumann provides no dynamic indication at the beginning, *sempre marcatissimo* along with accents and *sforzandos* suggest a strong sound would be appropriate. In measure five, with the repeat of the opening gesture and the unexpected harmony of measure six, something changes; the music takes on a more human dimension. I suggest bringing the dynamic level down slightly here. The soprano voice's descending line beginning in measure six must sing out, soaring above the contrapuntal texture and trills of the left hand.

While this etude might appear to have little relation to the theme, the theme's opening arpeggio motive is here present in inversion, filled in by a baroque-like arabesque. Scale degree 6 features prominently in this etude (second and fourth beats of

the first measure for example), and the B section is largely based on the two-note descending motive from the theme.

Schumann's tempo marking in this etude (quarter note = 80) seems wrong. The indicated tempo feels much too fast given the rhythmic intricacies and solemnity of the writing. Could he have meant eighth note = 80? That seems too slow. Schumann had the opportunity to make corrections for the 1852 edition of the work, yet the tempo marking is the same in both versions. Furthermore Clara gives the same tempo in her Instructive Edition. The tempo for this etude is a matter each pianist will have to decide for him- or herself, but I find quarter note = 52-54 to be better.

Etude IX

Schumann makes tremendous technical demands on the pianist in this etude, with passages in double notes and even chords, to be played *presto possibile*. Schumann's tempo (dotted eighth note = 116) certainly seems fast enough. A sense of constant energy is present at both extremes of the dynamic range. At the opening, the pianist can imagine the timbre of a woodwind quartet while the *fortissimo* passage in chords channels the force of a powerful orchestra. This passage is notoriously difficult, and its execution is only possible with the proper use of the arm. The pianist must endeavor to play four measures with a single impulse of the upper arm. By way of preparation, the pianist can practice the exercise given in Figure 15 with both hands, dropping into each chord and playing the repetitions with a single impulse of the arm and a loose wrist. Afterwards, the pianist can employ rhythms such as those given in Figure 16 to link multiple chords together into a single group.

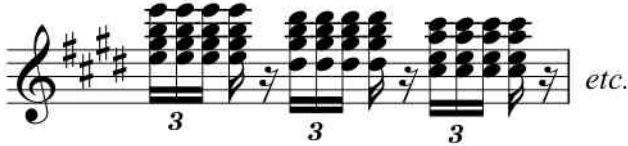


Figure 15. Preparatory exercise for Etude IX, mm. 35-41.



Figure 16. Additional exercises for Etude IX, mm. 35-41.

The relationship to the theme is much less apparent in this etude than in some of the others, which is perhaps at least part of the reason Schumann deleted it from the 1852 edition. Some have even gone so far as to suggest that this etude bears no resemblance to the theme.⁹² On the surface, this may seem to be the case. Formally, this etude takes a radical departure from the theme. Furthermore, the theme's arpeggio motive is not to be heard in this etude. The arpeggio motion has been completely filled in, resulting in a descending scale instead. With a closer look, however, we can observe several elements of the theme present in this etude. First, we can note the general harmonic plan from c-sharp minor to E Major, returning to c-sharp minor. In addition, the extended final section (mm. 41-79) is built almost entirely on the motion from A to G# and the accompanying plagal cadence first found in measure 2 of the theme.

In my opinion the conclusion of this etude sets up a wonderful interpolation point for one or more of the posthumous variations. The hushed, extended diminished seventh chord at the end creates a sense of mystery and suspense before evaporating into a

⁹² See Maxwell & DeVan, 92, for example.

fleeting cadence. I find the interpolation of posthumous variation 2 especially effective here. Another option can be found in the manuscript sources. In both the Mariemont and Vienna manuscripts, Etude X is preceded by posthumous variation 3.

Etude X

Featuring constant rhythmic motion and strong accentuation, this energetic etude has an almost vehement quality to it. Schumann notates the use of pedal very specifically in this etude, and his directions give the *sforzando* accents a certain orchestral quality. These should be scrupulously followed. The dynamic level drops only several times and is, in each instance, followed by an explosive crescendo. With the exception of measures 11-12, which provide a brief contrast in touch, this etude is non-legato. The pianist should give special attention to the voicing of the top note of the right-hand chords, as the general contour of the theme is evident here. The following two exercises can be used to practice voicing.

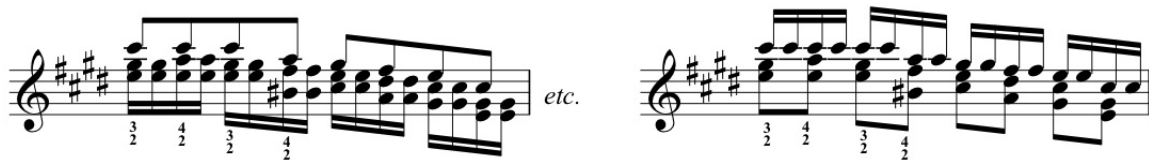


Figure 17. Exercises for voicing in Etude X.

The chords on the fourth sixteenth note of each beat can be thought of as an upbeat to the chord immediately following. These pairs of chords should be played with a single gesture of the arm. Be sure that the chord on the final sixteenth of every beat is played exactly with the corresponding left-hand note to maintain rhythmic integrity and

precision. Strong accentuation and articulation are important here, and too fast a tempo can hinder both. Schumann's quarter note = 92 seems good.

Etude XI

For the second time in the course of the composition we leave the key of c-sharp minor. The change of key is sudden, and in my opinion, the introductory measure from the 1837 edition is necessary, not only to establish the new key, but an entirely different mood from what has preceded it. Why Schumann decided to cut this introduction from the 1852 edition is unknown; perhaps he regarded the inclusion of such an introductory measure within a set of variations as a formal anomaly. In any case, I recommend that it be played.

While this etude does not (and should not) sound especially difficult, the pianist must solve numerous difficulties for a convincing interpretation. To begin with, the pianist must achieve perfect control over the left-hand thirty-second notes. These figures must never sound technical or pedantic. The pianist should imbue these with a murmuring quality, creating a vibration of harmony over which the right hand can declaim its ardent melodies. Take enough time to play the bass notes deep in the key with plenty of resonance; this provides the foundation for the musical texture. This texture needs plenty of pedal, and I would suggest changing the pedal only with each bass note. The tread of the pedal should not be too deep, however, only deep enough to sustain the bass. Great care must be taken to avoid any accent in the left hand. Cortot suggests the following preparatory exercises (see Figure 18) to ensure complete control of the fingers, to be carried out with each chord formation.



Figure 18. Preparatory exercises for the LH in Etude XI.

Difficulties for the right hand include the production of a singing tone, rhythmic flexibility, and the projection of two simultaneous melodic lines. Regarding the latter, I would suggest that the pianist practice each voice of the duet separately, with and without the left-hand accompaniment, until each is heard as an independent line. For the unreachable intervals in the final two measures of the ‘A’ section, I like to play the alto voice slightly before the soprano. On beat three, hold the F-sharp with the thumb while changing the pedal, and then play the soprano C-sharp.



Figure 19. Etude XI: Execution of the RH in mm. 9-10.

Schumann’s tempo marking (quarter note = 66) seems significantly fast for this etude, especially in consideration of the tone quality and long sustain of the modern piano. Furthermore, the notion of a metronomic tempo seems ill suited to the expressive qualities of this music, which must have a certain plasticity. The rhythmic durations of

the notes must not here be measured by the metronome, but rather by the dictates of melodic expression, which in one moment surges forward, and at another holds back. At the beginning I would suggest approximately quarter note = 48-52.

Etude XII (Finale)

Many writers⁹³ have pointed out the close resemblance between the opening passage of Schumann's finale and a passage from Act III of Heinrich Marschner's 1829 opera, *Der Templer und die Jüdin* where it is sung to words about the victorious hero Richard the Lionheart, the pride of England. Figure 20 shows the striking similarity between these two melodies. Many have interpreted this as a tribute to Schumann's friend, and the Symphonic Etude's dedicatee, William Sterndale Bennett. Eric Sams writes:

There is general agreement that this was intended by Schumann as a tribute to his admired friend Sterndale Bennett, then in Leipzig. That consensus is fortunate, since in the absence of external evidence the hypothesis I wish to advance might otherwise seem bizarre. For what Schumann did, I suggest, was first to identify Marschner's tune with a few of the words to which it was sung; then, by treating these words as a cryptic reference to his friend, he paid a compliment to Sterndale Bennett.⁹⁴

Henry Krehbiel calls this view into question, however:

To make the tribute which he wished to pay as beautiful and fragrant as possible, and at the same time a compliment to the English people, it has been said that Schumann abandoned the theme almost completely in the final variation (the march) and built up a new melody on the basis of a phrase from the romance which *Ivanhoe* sings in praise of Richard Coeur de Lion in Marschner's opera 'Templar and Jewess.' It is a pretty conceit that by quoting the first phrase of the

⁹³ Among others, Sams, Cortot, Maxwell and DeVan, and Ostwald.

⁹⁴ Eric Sams, "Schumann and the Tonal Analogue," in *Robert Schumann: The Man and His Music*, ed. Alan Walker (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1972), 401.

romance in which England is enjoined to rejoice in the possession of so chivalric a king as Lionheart an allusion to Bennett was intended. I do not wish wholly to destroy it, but it is nevertheless true that Schumann's finale might easily have come into being had Marschner's melody never been written; and, indeed, by a device which is frequently employed in the course of the preceding variations—viz., that of inversion. It is no strain to fancy that Schumann conceived the beginning of his march melody only as an inversion and transposition into the major mode of the beginning of the theme of the entire composition.⁹⁵



Figure 20. The opening chorus, “Du stolzes England,” from Marschner’s *Der Templer und die Jüdin* and the opening of Etude XII from Schumann’s *Symphonic Etudes*.

Madson also appears skeptical of Schumann’s intention to create a tribute to Bennett, pointing out that Schumann completed the Mariemont manuscript, which contains the Finale, on January 18, 1835, long before his first known meeting with Bennett in the autumn of 1836.⁹⁶ Given this timeline, I would like to state my opposition to this notion that Schumann intended the Finale as some sort of elaborate tribute to Bennett. Much like

⁹⁵ Henry Edward Krehbiel, *The Pianoforte and Its Music* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1911), 225-6.

⁹⁶ Madson, 66.

Schumann's supposed faulty metronome, this would appear to be a legend, albeit a popular one, that takes on the authority of "truth" only because it has been repeated often enough.

Whatever the personal significance of the finale's opening motto, Schumann did successfully find a way to elevate the funereal quality of the theme of the *Symphonic Etudes* into a triumphal conclusion. To focus only on the Finale's resemblance to Marschner's opera is to miss the Finale's relationship to the theme of the *Symphonic Etudes*, as rightfully observed by Krehbiel. As Figure 21 illustrates, both the arpeggio and neighbor tone motives are present in inversion within this phrase.

A. The Theme



B. The finale, an inversion of the theme

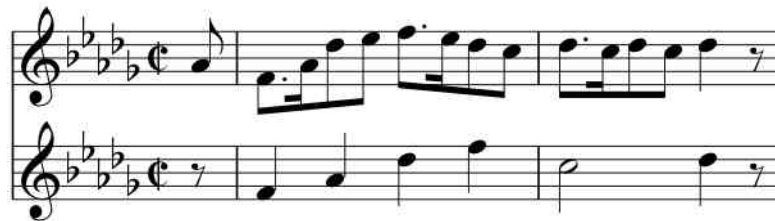


Figure 21. The relationship between the theme and the finale by inversion.

Following nearly twenty minutes of music (possibly more if the posthumous variations are included), the finale makes many demands of the pianist, both technically and interpretively. The interpretive danger is one of monotony. The same music is repeated multiple times, and is almost entirely based on the same dotted rhythm. Close adherence to Schumann's notated dynamic markings is especially important here. With much of the finale marked *forte*, dynamic pacing is important. The pianist must resist the

urge to play this march as loud as possible, saving for the climactic point at which the music moves to B-flat Major (marked *fff*). So that the listener's ear does not grow weary of too much bombastic playing, it is especially important to take advantage of all opportunities for quieter dynamic shades.

Schumann's tempo indication (half note = 66) seems pretty good, although I like to take the finale slightly faster (half note = 69). In spite of the almost obsessive use of dotted rhythms, the rhythm should not become overly vertical. The pianist should maintain a strong sense of line and avoid any temptation to overly accent each half bar. The tempo should be strictly maintained into the second theme. Here the dotted rhythm recedes slightly into the background as an accompanimental figure, while a new rhythm, the half-quarter-quarter rhythm of the new melody, comes to the fore. Although quiet, the dotted rhythm must be played very precisely. In my opinion, Schumann's *animato* in measure 38 should not be interpreted as a gross acceleration of the tempo—he did not write *più mosso*. At this point Schumann modifies the rhythmic premise slightly, the dotted rhythm occurring only every other bar. This creates a subtle change to the rhythmic feel of this music, and the pianist should feel the two-bar length of each rhythmic gesture. Sounding in different registers and finally in octaves this music suggests a call to arms or a rallying of the troops, building little by little to the triumphal restatement of the theme.

Technical difficulties include passages in chords, large intervals, and repeated notes. In order to achieve the perfect articulation of all elements in the chords of the opening passage, Cortot suggests practicing the right hand in groups of different intervals, employing all possible two-note combinations, followed by three-note

combinations, as shown in Figure 22. In these exercises, it is important to be sure to use the same fingering used to play the passage in full.



Figure 22. Preparatory exercises for Etude XII.

These types of preparatory exercises can be modified for other difficult chord passages in the *Symphonic Etudes* such as Etudes IV and X as well as measures 34-41 of Etude IX.

The passage in parallel tenths is particularly difficult, and even pianists with large hands may have to break some if not all of the tenths. I would suggest the left-hand thumb be played with the right-hand chord, the bass note struck slightly early if the tenths need to be broken. According to Cortot, Schumann actually did write the passage with broken tenths in the Mariemont manuscript (see Figure 23).⁹⁷ Perhaps here lies a possible solution for the left hand for pianists with smaller hands. In any case I find it to be a useful way to practice the passage.

⁹⁷ Cortot, 29.



Figure 23. Etude XII, measure 15, according to the Mariemont manuscript.

Posthumous Variation 1

Of the five posthumous variations, this one most closely resembles a technical exercise. Here a variant of the theme is accompanied by a flurry of thirty-second notes. This figure becomes increasingly difficult in the final two measures of each section as the spacing between consecutive notes widens and the pianist has to quickly cross back and forth over the thumb. I would suggest that the pianist slightly emphasize the melodic line played by the right hand thumb. One can imagine it written as follows:



Figure 24. RH melody in posthumous variation 1.

In the ‘B’ section, the ascending bass line played by the fifth finger can likewise be slightly marked. Schumann himself gave no tempo indication for any of the posthumous variations. While some editors such as Max Vogrich⁹⁸ have suggested this variation be

⁹⁸ Robert Schumann, *Etudes Symphoniques, Op. 13*, ed. Max Vogrich (New York: G. Schirmer, 1895), 34.

played at the tempo of the theme (quarter note = 52), I think a faster tempo is more suitable and far more satisfying. As noted above, this variation originally followed Etude V in the Mariemont manuscript *attacca*. In my opinion this would seem to confirm a faster tempo. I would recommend quarter note = 88 as a minimum.

Because so many of the other etudes in the *Symphonic Etudes* are based on a perpetual motion idea, I do not feel that the inclusion of this variation adds much to the overall effect of the composition and have opted not to include it in performance. In the Vienna manuscript, Schumann crossed it out. In the revised Mariemont manuscript, Schumann placed it after Etude II. Cortot suggests playing it after Etude I.

Posthumous Variation 2

Having the character of a written out improvisation, this variation could rightly be regarded as a fantasy on the theme. The opening suggests a musical dialogue, occurring in different registers of the keyboard. I would suggest playing the opening four measures in a *parlando* style, with plenty of flexibility. Conversation soon gives way to reminiscence, as both the theme and countermelody to Etude II are recalled. Schumann's use of tremolos and rapidly vibrating chords casts a magical aura to these recollections. These passages in sixteenth notes should never sound noisy or technical; rather, the pianist should cloak them in mysterious hues, relying upon the discreet use of the pedal. Given the fantasy nature of this variation, a precise tempo is very difficult to pin down. My suggestion of quarter note = 112 is only an approximation, and requires much flexibility. It can be helpful for the performer to feel the dotted-half-note as a fairly broad beat, rather than the individual quarter.

Early manuscripts are not particularly helpful in suggesting a location in which to interpolate this variation. In the Mariemont manuscript, this variation precedes Etude V. This is of course not possible as Schumann later placed Etude IV in this location with an *attacca* connection to Etude V. In the Vienna manuscript, this variation precedes the Finale, but that was prior to the existence of Etude XI in g-sharp minor. Given this variation's recollection of both the theme and the countermelody of Etude II, I like to interpolate it into the second half of the *Symphonic Etudes*, and find immediately after Etude IX to be a good location. The concluding diminished-seventh-chord arpeggio of Etude IX beautifully sets the stage for the fantasy element of this variation. Alternatively, Cortot suggests interpolating this variation after Etude VII.

Posthumous Variation 3

The contour of the theme is here presented with remarkable fidelity in the left hand, while the right hand provides a soaring countermelody. The pianist must bring out both elements from a texture featuring constantly flowing triplets. As already mentioned, the dynamic indications in the posthumous variations are almost exclusively from Clara Schumann. Her indication of *ff* in measure 15 and elsewhere seems to me a bit extreme for the nature of the music. The pianist should avoid any trace of bombast in these noble lines. They should rather be played with a certain breadth and fervency. Likewise, too fast a tempo would also be destructive to the overall poetic sentiment of this music. Kollen offers the “scrupulously notated rhythm” of the top voice as evidence against an overly fast tempo.⁹⁹ Indeed, the pianist should take great care to differentiate the dotted

⁹⁹ Kollen, 169.

sixteenth, thirty-second rhythm in the A section from the dotted eighth, sixteenth rhythm found elsewhere. I would suggest a tempo only slightly faster than the theme itself, approximately dotted-quarter note = 66. While I have opted not to include this variation in performance, manuscript sources suggest several possible locations for it. In the Mariemont manuscript, this variation follows Etude V. Moschenross advocates for its interpolation here, pointing out that this variation continues the compound triple meter of Etude V.¹⁰⁰ In both the Mariemont and Vienna manuscripts this variation precedes Etude X. The interpolation between Etudes IX and X is therefore another possibility.

Posthumous Variation 4

Traces of Chopin are to be found in this melancholic character piece. This *valse mélancolique* is the only music within all of the *Symphonic Etudes* in $\frac{3}{4}$ time. The theme is suggested in the opening few bars before giving way to a plaintive song. Another suggestion of the theme's arpeggio motive is hidden within the right-hand's sixteenth note arabesques (measures 17-20). The octaves that follow are a sighing reminder of the descending two-note motive of the theme. The music of this variation, while expressive and flexible, should maintain a sense of aristocratic nobility. Excessive sentimentality is to be avoided. The right hand's melody requires an expressive tone, rich legato, and a flexible rhythm. Additionally, the pianist should be aware of the ascending counter-melody found in the top note of each of the left-hand chords that accompany the opening. The phrase structure at the beginning is slightly asymmetrical—we first have a seven

¹⁰⁰ Moschenross, 57.

measure phrase arriving on a deceptive cadence, followed by a nine bar phrase.

Schumann somehow makes this sound perfectly natural.

This variation should be played in slow waltz time, the music gliding along, never feeling bogged down, but also never in a hurry. The sixteenth-note arabesques need just enough time so as not to sound technical or rushed; rather, they should speak eloquently. The music must breathe. Just like the other music from the pen of Eusebius, it is difficult to give a metronomic indication of the tempo because the quality of motion throughout is characterized by flexibility. I would suggest that the opening is somewhere around 44 for the dotted half, but again, this variation should not be played metronomically.

In the Mariemont manuscript this variation precedes the finale, and as noted above, Moschenross suggests it be interpolated here.¹⁰¹ As also stated above, I find this wholly unsatisfactory. Schumann did indeed wish to precede the finale with a piece of Eusebian character, but Etude XI fills this role admirably. In my opinion the consecutive placement of Etude XI with this variation is to be avoided. Schumann's placement of this variation immediately before the finale seems to have been short-lived anyway, as he relocated it after Etude V in the Vienna manuscript. In my opinion this variation fits nicely after Etude V as it offers a respite from the much more extroverted music that surrounds it in this location.

Posthumous Variation 5

The music of this variation exists somewhere closer to the world of dreams. Nothing of the gravity of the theme is here present. Indeed the listener is removed from

¹⁰¹ Moschenross, 63.

the severe world of the majority of the *Symphonic Etudes*. Perhaps, appropriately, the motives of the theme have almost entirely receded from the perception of the listener. Only the faintest suggestion of the theme is to be found in the left-hand's arpeggios and the rhythmically displaced descending two-note idea of the right hand. The two are separated physically by a vast space. Schumann's exploration of the more extreme registers of the keyboard lends a magical atmosphere to this music. For just a moment, time seems to stand still.

As mentioned before, most if not all of the dynamic markings in these posthumous variations are from Clara Schumann. In my opinion, a literal reading of the *f* marking for the variation's final plagal cadence is ill advised, as it disturbs the presiding sense of reverie. These chords can be played with a full and rich tone, but not with too much actual sound. The pedal is an essential ingredient throughout for producing the right sonority in this variation; changes of pedal correspond with the left hand's slurring. It is my opinion that the displaced eighth notes (the double stemmed notes) in the right hand should not be overly emphasized. They should instead be integrated into the entire texture and played as smoothly as possible. The descending line will still be heard and actually becomes more interesting as an integrated part of the whole texture. The tempo should be spacious and flexible; I suggest approximately quarter = 60.

In both the Mariemont and Vienna manuscripts, this variation serves as the middle section of Etude X. In other words, the performer would first play Etude X, followed by this variation, followed by a reprise of Etude X. While this could make an interesting performance alternative, and is even adopted by Moschenross,¹⁰² I believe that

¹⁰² Moschenross, 62.

one hearing of Etude X is sufficient, given the length of the overall work. I would suggest interpolating this variation immediately before Etude X. In my opinion, Posthumous Variation 2 leads nicely into this variation. Its extended plagal cadence in C-sharp Major suggests a sort of falling asleep, a perfect setup for the dreamlike nature of this music.

Concluding Remarks

As detailed in the first two chapters, the life of the *Symphonic Etudes* has been marked by change, both during Schumann's lifetime and beyond. Schumann continued to experiment with the order of the individual pieces, at various times called "etudes" and "variations," over an eighteen-year period. Performers have experimented with the order of these pieces for nearly the last century. Some will continue in the pursuit of a definitive text; but perhaps with regard to the *Symphonic Etudes*, the very notion of a definitive text needs to be re-evaluated. Some will insist that the posthumous variations have no place in the performance of the *Symphonic Etudes*; but pianists will continue to perform them, finding new and interesting arrangements for their inclusion within the work. Somehow, despite all of the various readings of the work, it coheres in so many different forms. Surely this is a testament to Schumann's genius as a composer. Through our own exploration of the life and times of the *Symphonic Etudes* we can perhaps gain further insight into the man who wrote them.

REFERENCES CITED

- Chissell, Joan. *Schumann Piano Music*. Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 1972.
- Cooper, Martin and Charles Timbrell. "Cortot, Alfred." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford *Music Online*. Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/06587>.
- Cortot, Alfred, ed. See Schumann, Robert.
- Cummings, Craig C. "Large-scale Coherence in Selected Nineteenth-Century Piano Variations." Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1991.
- Dale, Kathleen. "The Piano Music." In *Schumann: A Symposium*, ed. Gerald Abraham. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1952.
- Daverio, John. *Robert Schumann: Herald of a "New Poetic Age."* New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Ehrhardt, Damien. "Les Études symphoniques de Robert Schumann: Projet d'intégration des variations posthumes." *Revue de Musicologie* 78/2 (1992): 289-306.
- Herbert, May, trans. *Early Letters of Robert Schumann*. London: George Bell & Sons, 1888.
- Herbert, May, trans. *The Life of Robert Schumann Told in his Letters*, 2 vols. London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1890.
- Herttrich, Ernst, ed. See Schumann, Robert.
- Kehler, George. *The Piano in Concert*. Compiled and annotated by George Kehler. Metuchen, N.J., 1982.
- Kollen, John L. "Robert Alexander Schumann (1810-1856): Tema, Opus 13," In *Notations and Editions*, ed. Edith Borroff. Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1974.
- Krehbiel, Henry Edward. *The Pianoforte and Its Music*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911.
- Madson, Mark Douglas. "A Comprehensive Performance Project in Piano Literature with an Essay on Robert Schumann's *Symphonic Etudes*, Op. 13." DMA essay, University of Iowa, 1980.

- Maxwell, Carolyn and William DeVan, eds. *Schumann: Solo Piano Literature*. Boulder: Maxwell Music Evaluation Books, 1984.
- Moschenross, Ian James. "Robert Schumann's Symphonic Etudes, Opus 13: A Critical Overview with a Re-evaluation of Editorial and Performance Practice Issues." DMA diss., The University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 2003.
- Newcomb, Anthony. "Schumann and the Marketplace: From Butterflies to *Hausmusik*." In *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music*, ed. R. Larry Todd. New York: Schirmer, 1990.
- Plantinga, Leon. *Schumann as Critic*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967.
- Ritter, Fanny Raymond, ed. *Music and Musicians: Essays and Criticisms by Robert Schumann*, 2 vols., trans. and annotated by F. R. Ritter. London: William Reeves, 1878.
- Roesner, Linda Correll. "Brahms's Editions of Schumann." In *Brahms Studies: Analytical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. George Bozarth. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.
- Sams, Eric. "Schumann and the Tonal Analogue." In *Robert Schumann: The Man and His Music*, ed. Alan Walker. London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1972.
- Schauffler, Robert Haven. *Florestan: The Life and Work of Robert Schumann*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1945.
- Schlotel, Brian. "Schumann and the Metronome." In *Robert Schumann: The Man and His Music*, ed. Alan Walker. London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1972.
- Schumann, Robert. *Etudes en forme de Variations ("Symphonic Etudes"), Op. 13*, ed. Maurice Hinson. Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing Co., 1992.
- . *Etudes Symphoniques (en forme de Variations)*, ed. Alfred Cortot. Paris: Éditions Salabert, 1948.
- . *Etudes Symphoniques, Op. 13*, ed. Max Vogrich. New York: G. Schirmer, 1895.
- . *Symphonische Etüden, Opus 13: Fassungen 1837 und 1852*, ed. Ernst Herttrich. Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2006.
- Storck, Karl, ed. *The Letters of Robert Schumann*, trans. Hannah Bryant. London: John Murray, 1907.
- Walker, Alan, ed. *Robert Schumann: The Man and His Music*. London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1972.

Warburton, Thomas. "Some Performance Alternatives for Schumann's Opus 13." *JALS* 31 (January-June 1992): 38-46.

Worthen, John. *Robert Schumann: Life and Death of a Musician*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007.