

**A SURVEY OF DAVID RAKOWSKI'S PIANO ÉTUDES**

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music  
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the  
Graduate Faculty in Music in satisfaction of the  
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## ABSTRACT

### A SURVEY OF DAVID RAKOWSKI'S PIANO ÉTUDES

by

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This dissertation will explore the piano solo Études written by David Rakowski (b. 1958), providing historical context, description of the body of works as a whole, analysis of selected Études, and guidelines for performance. Despite the large number of Études composed after World War II, few have gained a place in the standard repertory.

This study will focus on an overall comparison in the techniques, forms, and technical difficulty of Rakowski's piano Études. His composition repertoire includes a ten-book collection of piano Études, making his not only among the largest sets of études written by a post-war composer, but also among the most comprehensive surveys of every type of piano technique. From utilizing every intervallic degree in the traditional Études to using fist and string plucking seen in contemporary composition, these highly technical Études are necessary for meeting every need as a virtuoso in contemporary music. Books one through ten are published by Peters Editions. As twentieth-century composers have developed new techniques to produce different sounds in their music, I will include a brief chapter with an overview of post-World War II piano solo Études. I will categorize the Études into ten different groups according to the techniques that composers were focusing on, and discuss various extended techniques that were used in specific

Études. I will analyze selected piano Études by Rakowski in accordance with each category.

This study will examine Rakowski's works from a performance perspective. I will examine both performance challenges and the interpretive elements for each Étude discussed. This study aims at providing technical advice, suggestions on interpretations, and performance solutions specifically targeted at Rakowski's Études. I hope that this dissertation can bring more interest and attention to Rakowski's piano Études. I also hope that this research will serve as a link for both performers and listeners with new ways to appreciate today's contemporary music.

To my family

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction.....	1
Biography and compositional stylistic evolution.....	5
Methodology.....	10

### CHAPTER 2: ÉTUDES ON REPEATED NOTES, SWIRLS OF NOTES AND IMITATION

Introduction.....	12
Étude No. 1 “E-Machines”.....	17
Étude No. 2 “BAM!”.....	24
Étude No. 3 “Nocturnal”.....	31

### CHAPTER 3: SPECIFIC FINGERS, ALTERNATING HANDS OR ONE- HAND ÉTUDES

Introduction.....	36
Étude No. 11 “Touch Typing”.....	38
Étude No. 5 “Mano á Mano”.....	45
Étude No. 12 “Northpaw”.....	51
Étude No. 61 “Menage a Droit”.....	56

## CHAPTER 4: ÉTUDES ON SCALE, CHORDS OR ARPEGGIO EXERCISE

<b>Introduction</b> .....	61
<b>Étude No. 33 “Sliding Scales”</b> .....	63
<b>Étude No. 28 “You’ve Got Scale”</b> .....	71
<b>Étude No. 57 “Chord Shark”</b> .....	77
<b>Étude No. 58 “Wound Tight”</b> .....	81
<b>Étude No. 29 “Roll Your Own”</b> .....	85

## CHAPTER 5: EXTENDED-TECHNIQUE AND SPECIAL –EFFECT

### ÉTUDES

<b>Extended-Technique Études</b> .....	89
<b>Étude No. 13 “Plucking A”</b> .....	91
<b>Étude No. 69 “Palm de Terre”</b> .....	100
<b>Étude No. 25 “Fists of Fury”</b> .....	103
<b>Special-Effect Études</b> .....	111
<b>Étude No. 22 “Schnozzage”</b> .....	112
<b>Étude No. 74 “Not”</b> .....	115

## CHAPTER 6: ÉTUDES ON ORNAMENTS

<b>Introduction</b> .....	123
<b>Étude No. 4 “Trillage”</b> .....	127
<b>Étude No. 30 “A Gliss is Just a Gliss”</b> .....	139
<b>Étude No. 62 “Name That Turn”</b> .....	144

## CHAPTER 7: INTERVALLIC ÉTUDES

<b>Introduction</b> .....	151
<b>For Interval Second, Fourth Fifth and Sixth</b> .....	152
<b>For interval thirds</b> .....	158
<b>Étude No. 15 “The Third, Man”</b> .....	158
<b>For interval octaves</b> .....	164
<b>Étude No. 56 “Crazy Eights”</b> .....	166

## CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION.....172

## APPENDIX.....176

## BIBLIOGRAPHY.....180

## DISCOGRAPHY.....183

## LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLE

<b>2.1</b>	Rakowski: Étude, “Wiggle Room,” mm. 1-8.....	14
<b>2.2</b>	Rakowski: Étude, “Upon Reflection,” mm.1-13.....	15
<b>2.3</b>	Rakowski: Étude, “Narcissitude,” mm.1-8.....	16
<b>2.4</b>	Rakowski: Étude, “E-Machines,” mm.1-12.....	20
<b>2.5</b>	Rakowski: Étude, “E-Machines,” mm. 35-43.....	21
<b>2.6</b>	Rakowski: Étude, “E-Machines,” mm.49-56.....	22
<b>2.7</b>	Rakowski: Étude, “E-Machines,” quote from “Für Elise”, m. 84.....	23
<b>2.8</b>	Rakowski: Étude, “E-Machines,” ending with the “BAM” chord, mm. 96-97.....	23
<b>2.9</b>	Rakowski: Étude, “BAM!,” mm. 1-8.....	27
<b>2.10</b>	Rakowski: Étude, “BAM!,” features E-pedal point, mm. 28-36.....	28
<b>2.11</b>	Rakowski: Étude, “BAM!,” featuring repeated F-sharp, mm. 84-89.....	29
<b>2.12</b>	Rakowski: Étude, “BAM!,” with “KAREN” motive, mm. 100-104.....	29
<b>2.13</b>	“KAREN” motive is formed from a chromatic scale in alphabetical order starting with C... .....	29
<b>2.14</b>	Rakowski: Étude, “BAM!,” mm.137-144.....	30
<b>2.15</b>	Rakowski: Étude, “Nocturnal,” mm.1-12.....	32
<b>2.16</b>	Rakowski, “Nocturnal,” “ <i>Poco meno mosso</i> ” section, mm. 28-30.....	34
<b>2.17</b>	Rakowski: Étude, “Nocturnal,” mm. 31-33.....	35
<b>2.18</b>	Rakowski: Étude, “Nocturnal,” mm. 41-42.....	35
<b>3.1</b>	Rakowski: Étude, “Touch Typing,” mm. 1-6.....	40

<b>3.2</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Touch Typing,” “ <i>Poco più mosso, agitato</i> ,” mm.24-26.....	42
<b>3.3</b> Rakowski, “Touch Typing,” the slow section, mm. 39-49.....	43
<b>3.4</b> Rakowski, “Touch Typing,” opening returns with hand reversed, mm. 52-55.....	44
<b>3.5</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Mano á Mano,” mm. 1-8.....	46
<b>3.6</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Mano á Mano,” incomplete motive “LISMRE,” mm. 13-16.....	47
<b>3.7</b> “Mano á Mano,” the motive “LISAMOORE” in both hands, m. 24-27.....	48
<b>3.8</b> “Mano á Mano,” thick texture with sextuplets, mm. 46-49.....	49
<b>3.9</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Mano á Mano,” “Going for the glory,” mm.54-57.....	50
<b>3.10</b> “Mano á Mano,” ending of the étude with “LISA” in grace notes, m. 70.....	50
<b>3.11</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Northpaw,” mm. 1-10.....	53
<b>3.12</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Northpaw,” mm. 13-19.....	54
<b>3.13</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Northpaw,” mm. 23-28.....	55
<b>3.14</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Northpaw,” mm. 35-42.....	55
<b>3.15</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Ménage a Droit,” mm. 1-6.....	58
<b>3.16</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Ménage a Droit,” mm.16-20.....	59
<b>3.17</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Ménage a Droit,” mm. 35-36.....	60
<b>4.1</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Sliding Scales,” mm. 1-10.....	66
<b>4.2</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Sliding Scales,” mm. 35-41.....	67
<b>4.3</b> Rakowski, “Sliding Scales,” broken octaves at mm. 45-51.....	68
<b>4.4</b> “Sliding Scales,” climactic moment with scalar passages in octaves, mm. 63-68.....	69
<b>4.5</b> “Sliding Scales,” four against three rhythms in recapitulation section, mm. 74-76.....	70
<b>4.6</b> Rakowski: Étude, “You’ve Got Scale,” mm. 1-10.....	73
<b>4.7</b> Rakowski: Étude, “You’ve Got Scale,” mm. 30-39.....;	74
<b>4.8</b> “You’ve Got Scale,” series of descending scales, mm. 47-56.....	75
<b>4.9</b> “You’ve Got Scale,” recapitulation in an octave apart, mm. 82-84.....	75

<b>4.10</b> “You’ve Got Scale,” arpeggios in sustained and note accumulation style, mm. 85-92.....	76
<b>4.11</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Chord Shark,” mm. 1-9.....	79
<b>4.12</b> Brahms, Intermezzo, op. 116, no. 6, mm. 1-11.....	80
<b>4.13</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Wound Tight” mm. 1-12.....	83
<b>4.14</b> Rakowski, “Wound Tight,” “ <i>Poco meno mosso a piacere</i> ,” mm. 47-60.....	84
<b>4.15</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Roll Your Own,” mm. 1-12.....	87
<b>4.16</b> “Roll Your Own,” “ <i>Poco meno mosso</i> ” section with the recurrence of the beginning material in the middle register, mm. 27-28.....	88
<b>4.17</b> “Roll Your Own,” ending with recall of the beginning, mm. 31-33.....	88
<b>5.1</b> Rakowski, recomposition of Étude “Plucking A,” mm. 1-10.....	95
<b>5.2</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Plucking A,” mm. 1-10.....	96
<b>5.3</b> Rakowski, “Plucking A,” series of plucked notes, mm. 20-31.....	97
<b>5.4</b> “Plucking A,” climax takes place at m. 37 and slap-swipe-stopped-pluck motion features at m. 43-44.....	98
<b>5.5</b> Rakowski, ending of étude with the last “Plucking A,” m. 47-49.....	99
<b>5.6</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Palm de Terre,” mm. 1-8.....	102
<b>5.7</b> Rakowski: Études, “Palm de Terre,” mm. 1-6.....	106
<b>5.8</b> Rakowski, “Fists of Fury,” B-section with D pedal point, mm. 20-22.....	107
<b>5.9</b> “Fists of Fury,” Fist pounding on low register with “Bb-Db,” mm. 54-61.....	108
<b>5.10</b> “Fists of Fury,” climatical with two hands pounding, mm. 68-71.....	119
<b>5.11</b> “Fists of Fury,” Quotation from “Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, mm. 78-88.....	110
<b>5.12</b> Rakowski: Études, “Schnozzage,” mm. 1-6.....	114
<b>5.13</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Not,” mm. 1-7.....	118
<b>5.14</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Not,” the second section, mm. 39-48.....	119
<b>5.15</b> Rakowski, Étude, “Not,” the third section, mm. 63-73.....	120

<b>5.16</b> Rakowski, Étude, “Not,” the forth section, mm. 89-100.....	121
<b>5.17</b> Rakowski, Étude, “Not,” repeated A exhibits in the fifth section, mm. 101-111.....	122
<b>6.1</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Once Bitten,” mm. 1-6.....	125
<b>6.2</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Usurpation,” mm.1-3.....	126
<b>6.3</b> Rakowski: Étude “Trillage,” Theme, mm.1-9.....	131
<b>6.4</b> Rakowski, “Trillage,” Variation I, mm. 12-16.....	132
<b>6.5</b> Rakowski, “Trillage,” Variation II, mm. 30-36.....	133
<b>6.6</b> Rakowski, “Trillage,” Variation III, mm. 44-47.....	134
<b>6.7</b> Rakowski, “Trillage,” Variation IV, mm. 55-59.....	135
<b>6.8</b> Rakowski, “Trillage,” Variation V, mm. 61-66.....	136
<b>6.9</b> Rakowski, “Trillage,” Variation VI, mm. 67-70.....	137
<b>6.10</b> Rakowski, “Trillage,” Coda, mm. 81-90.....	138
<b>6.11</b> Rakowski: Étude, “A Gliss is Just a Gliss,” mm. 1-6.....	142
<b>6.12</b> “A Gliss is Just a Gliss,” quotation of “New York, New York,” mm. 37.....	143
<b>6.13</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Name That Turn,” mm. 1-8.....	147
<b>6.14</b> “Name That Turn,” “ <i>Pochissimo meno mosso a piacere</i> ” section, mm. 18-24.....	148
<b>6.15</b> “Name That Turn,” C pedal point and climax with the inverted turn, mm. 29-36.....	149
<b>6.16</b> Rakowski, the trill-turns in stretto and the reprise of the beginning, mm. 37-44.....	150
<b>7.1</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Secondary Dominance,” mm. 1-6.....	153
<b>7.2</b> Rakowski: Étude “Luceole,” mm. 1-9.....	154
<b>7.3</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Fourth of Habit,” mm. 1-11.....	155
<b>7.4</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Taking the Fifths,” mm. 1-8.....	156
<b>7.5</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Sixth Appeal,” mm. 1-9.....	157
<b>7.6</b> Rakowski: Étude, “The Third, Man,” mm. 1-13.....	161

<b>7.7</b> Rakowski, middle section of the “The Third, Man,” mm. 28-37.....	162
<b>7.8</b> Rakowski, “The Third, Man,” the reprise of the beginning, mm. 44-48.....	163
<b>7.9</b> Rakowski, “The Third, Man,” quotation of “Clair de Lune,” m. 51.....	163
<b>7.10</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Eight Misbehavin',” mm. 1-9.....	165
<b>7.11</b> Rakowski: Étude, “Crazy Eights,” mm. 1-9.....	168
<b>7.12</b> “Crazy Eights,” the left hand exhibits cross-over and plays octave higher than the right hand, mm. 19-23.....	169
<b>7.13</b> “Crazy Eights,” the black/ white keys switch between two hands, mm. 43-48.....	170
<b>7.14</b> “Crazy Eights,” the opening reprises with hand reversed, mm. 52-60.....	171

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The word “étude” was first used in the early eighteenth century, and referred to studies which aimed to develop a performer’s instrumental technique. Since then, études have become an essential aid for the development of the technique needed for finger independence and articulation, as well as coordinating forearm fluency and wrist flexibility. Some composers started to introduce compositions for the specific purpose of allowing a performer to study specialized technical elements without calling them “études”. These study pieces usually addressed only one technical aspect, with the goal of developing strong fingers. The works of Carl Czerny (1791-1857) and Johann Cramer (1771-1858) play an important role in the piano repertoire and meet the goal of technical study without being called études. Their works teach students aspects of technique in each study, including training various patterns on scales, arpeggios, broken chords, and articulations. These studies are very helpful for pupils and are still commonly used today, but are not generally performed in concert. These exercises or studies evolved into études and became a well-known musical genre with an increasing popularity as part of the concert repertoire.

Beginning in the nineteenth century, études become a major and well-established genre within the piano repertoire. Études are distinguished from studies by their equal attention to technical issues and artistic expression. The genre reached maturity with Chopin’s two sets of

Piano Études, op. 10 and op. 25. Since then, études have served not only as a way to improve pianists' techniques, but also to help achieve a deeper musical sense and expressiveness. The étude plays a crucial role in challenging a pianist to continually improve his or her technique while still possessing a greater identity on musical interpretation. The étude is, in its own right, a fully realized musical composition that represents the composer's ideas and musical views. Early in the evolution of études as compositional pieces, the best-known composers are Chopin, Liszt and Schumann. Chopin's two sets of études exhibit strong musical content with a profound focus on one technique in each étude. Chopin gives musical content and technique equal importance to create the virtuoso quality for this genre. Études became part of the concert repertoire because they combined artistic demands and pianistic problems. Unlike Chopin, who only focused on a single musical technique, Liszt composed for several different technical problems in a single étude. Liszt further influenced the étude's metamorphosis by giving a title to each composition. Schumann pushed the basic étude even further by writing étude variations that deal with different technical aspects in each variation. The genre of études reaches another peak when Debussy's twelve études are published. With a dedication to Chopin, his études bring more sonority with colorful harmony, along with technical demanding.

It is important to note that études are not an outdated method of study; numerous études have been composed in the last century. The modern étude generally requires more physical endurance and imagination. It challenges the performer to understand its complexity and to perform every detail precisely. From the end of World War II to the present, many composers have written substantial sets of études: Gyorgy Ligeti composed his three volumes of famous piano études between the years 1985 and 2001, Virgil Thomson wrote his "Ten études for piano" in 1944 and "Nine études" in 1954, Maurice Ohana composed two books of "Douze études

d'interprétation" in 1982 and 1984, George Perle wrote two sets of "Six Études" in 1976 and 1984, William Bolcom composed two sets of "Twelve études for piano" in 1971 and 1988, and more recently, David Rakowski's ten volumes of piano études, which he began writing in 1988. There are other composers who have composed only one set of études, including Igor Stravinsky, Vincent Persichetti, Erno Dohnányi, Alexandre Tansman, Ned Rorem, Emma Lou Diemer, Benjamin Lee, Noël Lee, Louise Talma and others.

Composers in the twentieth century have focused on different technical aspects in their études. Unlike the nineteenth-century études which focused on training for specific intervals (thirds, sixths, octaves), embellishments, repeated notes, arpeggios, and legato melody lines, twentieth-century composers may incorporate register shifts, large leaps, sharply contrasting dynamics, massive chords, rhythmic complexities, polymeters, varied sonority and color, and extended techniques. Although the basic finger techniques are still drawn from the larger body of piano études, contemporary composers tend to focus more on sound, tone color, and complex rhythms, such as cross-rhythm, syncopations, and irregular divisions, as well as indeterminacy of rhythm. These multitudinous rhythms make it extremely difficult for performers to play the notation precisely.

Composers who write music in new notations and use extended techniques for special effects are typical of the new direction in modern music. These "new" techniques are created when the fingers are used in a non-traditional way: playing the piano either internally or by plucking the strings to create sound. William Bolcom's two sets of études belong in this category. He uses an extended notational system and extended techniques in these sets, resulting in tremendous new effects from the piano while creating extreme complexity for the performer. Noël Lee's études also require the plucking techniques as well as the difficult maneuver of

stopping with one hand while the other hand is playing with the same sound.

Another distinctive aspect of the twentieth century composer's études is that they often add another title to their études, like the programmatic music of earlier periods. Sometimes the title describes the technique that is to be employed by the performer for the piece. The title may also allude to the composer's emotional world as well as the practical impetus for the piece's creation. The title provides the listener with a first impression as to the musical journey they are to embark upon. In the case of études, composers include titles for the important purpose of telling the performer what kind of technique is demanded to master the composition. George Perle used the classic suite titles on his "Six New Études": "Praeludium" and "Gigue", romantic titles like "Papillons" and "Romance", and also the descriptive title "Perpetuum mobile". Virgil Thomson had two types of titles on his "Ten Études": one described the techniques to be employed, such as "double glissando", while the other signified the genre, such as "Waltz".

Many études in past centuries were written to address numerous piano techniques. David Rakowski stands alone in this category in the twenty-first century, with a more polished and stylish approach to his étude collection, which gives both the performer and listener a great source of enjoyment when engaging with his contemporary music.

### **Biography and compositional stylistic evolution**

David Rakowski, born on 13 June 1958 in Vermont, is a Pulitzer Prize finalist and the Walter W. Naumburg Professor of Composition at Brandeis University. Growing up in St. Albans, Vermont, he taught himself piano, played trombone and keyboards in local bands, and began composing in high school. After graduation, he entered the New England Conservatory studying composition under the guidance of Robert Ceely and John Heiss. He also studied trombone with John Coffey. He received his Bachelor of Music in 1980. Later that year, he studied with Milton Babbitt, Peter Westergaard, and Paul Lansky at Princeton University where he received his Masters and Doctor of Philosophy degrees. He also studied with Luciano Berio on a Fellowship in Composition at Tanglewood Music Center in 1982.

David Rakowski has received numerous awards for his compositions. His honors include the Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome in 1995-6, an Academy Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2000, the 2006 Barlow Prize, the 2004-6 Elise L. Stoeger Prize from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and the Joseph H. Bearns Prize. Rakowski has also been honored with awards and fellowships from various artist colonies, which include the Guggenheim Foundation, BMI, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Rockefeller Foundation.

Besides his numerous honors and awards, Rakowski has also been commissioned by a large number of foundations and societies including the Koussevitzky Music Foundation, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the U.S. Marine Band, Speculum Musicae, and many others. David Rakowski's composition, "Persistent Memory" for chamber orchestra, commissioned by the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Music in 1999. In 2002, his

Symphony No.2 “Ten of a Kind”, commissioned by "The President's Own" U.S. Marine Band, was also a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. He has been composer-in-residence at the Bowdoin Summer Music Festival, Wellesley College Composers Conference, Roosevelt University, and many other universities and conferences. He is a founder of the Griffin Music Ensemble of Boston, which is a major forum for the performance of contemporary music in the Boston area.<sup>1</sup> Rakowski has taught at Princeton University, Stanford University, Harvard University, the New England Conservatory of Music and Columbia University. Currently he is a faculty member at Brandeis University and the New England Conservatory.<sup>2</sup>

Rakowski’s compositional output is rich and diverse. He has written several orchestral works, including three symphonies in 1990, 2000 and 2003, and a few pieces for wind ensemble and chamber orchestra. He has written five solo concertos, one each, for horn, cello, clarinet, violin, and piano as well as numerous pieces of chamber music and vocal music. After his marriage to Beth Wiemann, a clarinetist, composer and faculty member at the University of Maine, Rakowski began making contributions to the clarinet repertoire: music composed for E-flat clarinet, B-flat clarinet, and bass clarinet and other clarinet chamber music. Rakowski’s most notable clarinet compositions are “It takes nine to funk” (2005) for six clarinets, two bass clarinets and one contrabass clarinet (which he arranged for the piano in étude No. 68), and “Martian Counterpoint” (2000, arr. 2003) for twenty-five clarinets, which is written for the clarinet section of the US Marine Band.<sup>3</sup> Many of these pieces as well as Rakowski’s other musical achievements are recorded on the Albany, Americus, Bridge, CRI, and Innova labels.

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<sup>1</sup> The Griffin Ensemble composers are Allen Anderson, Ross Bauer, Anthony Brandt, Timothy Geller, Jeff Nichols, David Rakowski, Beth Wiemann and Arlene Zallman.

<sup>2</sup> Biographical information in previous and following paragraphs is taken from Rakowski’s homepage [http://home.earthlink.net/~ziodavino/album1\\_005.htm](http://home.earthlink.net/~ziodavino/album1_005.htm). (Accessed on 8 March 2008).

<sup>3</sup> From Rakowski’s homepage [http://home.earthlink.net/~ziodavino/album1\\_007.htm](http://home.earthlink.net/~ziodavino/album1_007.htm). (Accessed on 8 March 2008).

Although Rakowski's compositional interests extend widely across different areas, his output of piano études is of special interest. He started to compose piano études in 1988, when he composed "E-Machines", and now, after almost twenty years of composing them, he has completed eighty eight piano études. Influenced by Chopin and Debussy, his études focus on one technique per piece. Rakowski describes his compositional relationship with études by saying:

"I've been writing piano études since 1988. At first they were respites from longer compositional projects—little recreational pieces that distracted me when I came to an impasse in a bigger piece, so that I could return to the bigger piece refreshed. Eventually they have also become projects to fill up compositional time when I know I only have a brief amount of composing time between professional or academic obligations. My rules are that an étude must be written in six days or fewer, that it cannot be revised (only restarted), and that there is no great *a priori* thinking that goes into any of them. As such, I have enjoyed the obsessive nature of writing an étude, and have learned a great deal about the simple act of invention from being forced, quickly, to come up with as much variation as I can, given that I am writing pieces about only one thing. I have especially found the études of Frederic Chopin and Claude Debussy very useful as models"<sup>4</sup>

In the program notes of the Boston Modern Orchestra Project there was a brief introduction of his études:

Like Ligeti's piano études, these pieces are studies from both the composer's and the pianist's point of view. Rakowski calls them "snapshots," since they represent one way of looking at one aspect of composition and piano playing at one "moment" of his life. They are études and bagatelles and musical puns or one-liners, as a body vast in their conceptual and technical basis but mostly wee in their individual scope.<sup>5</sup>

The études by Rakowski explore virtually all the techniques that a pianist might be required to know, which include scales, arpeggios, ornaments, finger independence, specific intervals, dynamics, articulations, register shifts, ostinato, pedal, alternating hands, hand

<sup>4</sup> < <http://artofthestates.org/cgi-bin/piece.pl?pid=252#composer> > (Accessed on December 2008).

<sup>5</sup> < [http://www.bmop.org/season/program\\_notes.aspx?cid=120&from=concert](http://www.bmop.org/season/program_notes.aspx?cid=120&from=concert) > (Accessed on November 2008).

crossing, and glissandi. In addition, he has composed études acknowledging extended techniques, including inside-the-piano, cluster, and fist. It is important to note that Rakowski's études are not simply finger exercises. The compositions are pieces that train the performer in musicianship and virtuosity. With regards to the characteristics of his music, Rakowski says it is "difficult, not tonal in the traditional sense, somewhat traditionally structured and it has lots and lots [of] notes."<sup>6</sup>

His études are written in various styles, and they all last approximately three minutes. Despite being short in duration, Rakowski's études are effective as concert repertoire. Another important feature of these pieces is that some include very short quotes from other composers' works. For example: Beethoven's "Für Elise" in "E-Machines" (Book I, no. 1); Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde" in "Nocturnal" (Book I, no. 3); and Martin Boykan's Piano Sonata no. 2 in "Usurpation" (Book IV, no. 1). Some have a Jazz idiom: "Ice Boogie" (Book II, no. 6); "Close Enough for Jazz" (Book I, no. 8); "Boogie Ninth" (Book IV, no. 2), and "Bop" (Book V, no. 1). Another special characteristic of Rakowski's études is that the descriptive title of each étude is witty and informative while serving as an impetus for the performer's imagination. This variety and virtuosity makes these piano études "the most formidable set of piano études since Ligeti's."<sup>7</sup>

Rakowski's études have been performed and recorded by many concert pianists, including Teresa McCollough, Marilyn Nonken, Stephen Gosling, Steven Weigt, Sandra Sprecher, Geoffrey Burleson, Karen Harvey, Lyn Reyna, and of course, Amy Dissanayake. Dissanayake has recorded all of Rakowski's études from Book 1 to Book 5, as well as another album of his études in June 2008.<sup>8</sup> This impressive list of concert pianists gives credence to the

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<sup>6</sup> Rakowski's homepage <[http://home.earthlink.net/~ziodavino/album1\\_001.htm](http://home.earthlink.net/~ziodavino/album1_001.htm)>

<sup>7</sup> Gimbel, Allen. Review of "Rakowski: Études Vol. II," *American Record Guide* 68, no. 2 (Mar/Apr 2005): 150.

rich life present in David Rakowski's piano études.

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<sup>8</sup> Amy Dissanayake took back her maiden name, Briggs, and uses that name on her recording of Rakowski Études, Vol. III (Bridge Records).

## Methodology

The purpose of my dissertation, through detailed studies, is to explore the solo piano études written by David Rakowski, providing historical context, a description of his body of work as a whole, analysis of selected études, and guidelines for performance. Rakowski has explored nearly every type of piano technique in his études. Whether it focuses on instrumental technique or compositional form, each étude contains a distinctive creative idea. His compositional repertoire includes a ten-book collection of piano études, making his not only among the largest sets of études written by a post-war composer, but also among the most comprehensive surveys of every type of piano technique. From utilizing every intervallic degree in the traditional études to using the fist and string plucking often seen in contemporary composition, these études form a compendium of contemporary virtuoso piano techniques making them a significant and vital member of the étude canon.

Writing piano études is an ongoing project for Rakowski, who has published books one through ten with Peters Editions. I will only discuss books one to eight. I have divided all of his études into ten different categories, according to technique:

- 1) Repeated notes and rhythmic devices
- 2) Intervals
- 3) Specific fingers, alternating hands or one-hand
- 4) Dynamic contrast, articulation, and pedaling
- 5) Scale, chord or arpeggio exercise
- 6) Ornament
- 7) Extended techniques
- 8) Jazz
- 9) Special effect
- 10) Miscellaneous

This study will focus on an overall comparison in the techniques, forms, and technical difficulty of Rakowski's piano études. The primary sources for this project are the scores published by CF Peters. In addition to his scores, there are a number of short articles and reviews available through David Rakowski's website<sup>9</sup>, which remains the best single source of information about his music.

This study will also examine Rakowski's works from a performance perspective. I will examine both performance challenges, and the interpretive elements for each étude discussed. Out of the ten categories of études, I have selected representative examples from five categories that will give a sense of the collection's depth and range. This study aims to introduce different techniques among the piano études, providing technical advice and suggestions on interpretations for these études. I hope that this dissertation can bring more interest and attention to Rakowski's piano études, in addition to giving opportunities for pianists to explore and perform these contemporary piano études.

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<sup>9</sup> <[http://home.earthlink.net/~ziodavino/album1\\_001.htm](http://home.earthlink.net/~ziodavino/album1_001.htm)> (Accessed on September 2007).

## CHAPTER 2

### ÉTUDES ON REPEATED NOTES, SWIRLS OF NOTES AND IMITATION

The first few piano études composed by Rakowski all require a display of virtuosic technique. Early études in this category feature repeated notes and chords, fast-paced groups of notes, and special imitation devices. The group includes the first three études: no. 1, “E-Machines,” a repeated note étude; no. 2, “BAM!,” an étude on swirls of notes; no. 3, “Nocturnal,” an étude on slow repeated notes, and other later études: no. 43, “Wiggle Room,” an étude on fast notes moving in parallel; no. 52, “Moody’s Blues,” a rock and roll étude on repeated chords; no. 78, “Upon Reflection,” a slow mirror étude (étude based on inverted lines); and no. 79, “Narcissitude,” a fast mirror étude.

David Rakowski’s first three études are usually played as a set and are related through compositional devices. “BAM!” begins with the last chords from “E-Machines,” and “Nocturnal” has the same pitch sequence as “E-Machines,”<sup>1</sup> “Wiggle Room” is based on the C minor prelude from the Well-Tempered Clavier, book I, by J. S. Bach (see example 2.1).<sup>2</sup> Although there is no thematic relationship between the two, the notes move in a parallel motion in a manner reminiscent of the technique used in Bach’s prelude. The two mirror études are similar compositionally to “Wiggle Room.” Both hands of the slow mirror étude, “Upon Reflection,” are in parallel motion and strictly imitate each other (example 2.2). The fast

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<sup>1</sup> Rakowski’s piano concerto borrows thematic motives and passages from his own études, and some passages were clearly derived from the “E-Machines” in both the first and the fourth movements.

<sup>2</sup> All musical examples reprinted with permission of C.F. Peters, publisher.

mirror étude (example 2.3), “Narcissitude,” is in canonic style, where the left hand follows after the right hand in its repetition. In this chapter, I am going to discuss only Rakowski’s first three études.

Étude #43

# WIGGLE ROOM

Étude on fast notes moving in parallel

after the C minor prelude from WTC I

N.B. All dynamics, articulations, and pedalings  
are left to the discretion of the performer.

David Rakowski  
2002

Fast and free ♩ = 126-152

*Ped. ad lib.*

Example 2.1 Rakowski: Étude, “Wiggle Room,” mm. 1-8.

Étude #78

# UPON REFLECTION

Slow mirror étude  
to Michael Kirkendoll

David Rakowski  
2007

Slowly, Freely, Dreamily ♩ = 54-60

The musical score is presented in two systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system (measures 1-3) begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic and includes the instruction *And. ad lib. (molto)*. The second system (measures 4-6) features a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes triplet markings. The third system (measures 7-9) returns to a piano-piano (*pp*) dynamic. The fourth system (measures 10-13) features a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes multiple triplet markings. The score concludes with the page number 69.

Example 2.2 Rakowski: Étude, "Upon Reflection," mm.1-13.

Étude #79

# NARCISSITUDE

Fast mirror étude  
to Michael Kirkendoll

David Rakowski

2007

Very fast and even ♩ = 120+

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs).  
System 1 (measures 1-2): The right hand features a rapid sixteenth-note pattern with a *ff* dynamic. The left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. A *8va* marking is present above the first measure.  
System 2 (measures 3-4): The right hand continues with a melodic line, marked *mp* in the first measure and *p* in the second. The left hand maintains the eighth-note accompaniment.  
System 3 (measures 5-6): The right hand has a melodic phrase, marked *ff* in the second measure. The left hand continues the accompaniment. A *8va* marking is present above the second measure.  
System 4 (measures 7-8): The right hand has a melodic phrase, marked *p*. The left hand continues the accompaniment.

Example 2.3 Rakowski: Étude, "Narcissitude," mm.1-8.

## **Étude no. 1 “E-Machines”**

David Rakowski’s first étude, “E-Machines,” was written as a repeated-notes exercise. It was written in 1988 for a fellow composer, Martin Butler, and inspired by Butler’s tape piece, “Night Machines.”<sup>3</sup> The pianist Lyn Reyna offered the debut performance, and Amy Dissanayake, Marilyn Nonken, Geoffrey Burleson and Steven Weigt have also recorded this piece.

“E-Machines” is marked *Allegro troppo*, (literally, *too fast*, a typical Rakowskian play on *Allegro ma non troppo*) which Rakowski advises should be played “as fast as possible.” The piece starts with the high F-sharp repeated in four notes as a group, and the meter changes frequently. The lack of a steady meter, with no regular-pattern repeated notes, produces an unsettling feeling. The piece is in three clear sections with different characters.

The A section is from measure 1 to measure 34, and starts with a single melody line in a repeated high F-sharp, with the second voice joining in at measure 14. The B section begins at measure 35, with the right hand playing the repeated note while the left hand carries the melody. Here, the single repeated notes appear in the low register until m. 48. The C section (measures 49 to 80), showcases the juxtaposition of jumping, staccato repeated notes in conjunction with a legato melodic line. The melody shifts back and forth between the two hands. At first the melody is in the right hand with repeated notes in the left hand, then the roles of the hands are reversed as the melody moves to the left hand with repeated chords in the right hand. The Codetta begins with a repeated E at measure 80, which is a quote from “Für Elise” as the composer states at measure 84.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> <<http://www.dramonline.org/albums/david-rakowski-hyperblue/notes> > (Accessed on March 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Rakowski, David. “*David Rakowski Piano Études Book I*”(New York: C.F. Peters, 2001), on the notes with performance directions.

“E-Machines” does not have a rich melody line. Instead, section A possesses a few groups of repeated notes performed by a single hand. At measure 2, the first eight notes (F-sharp, E, D, F, E-flat, D-flat, B, C) are introduced; they play a central role in this piece. All eight notes are used in a scrambled order as the repeated notes throughout the piece. Both the first four notes (F-sharp, E, D, F) and last four notes (E-flat, D-flat, B, C) belong to the set class (0124). The second group is T5I of the first group, but implies a T9 relationship between chromatic clusters. This happens again at measure 4 when the second group of the five notes is T9 of the first group in the set class (01245). These sets contain chromatic fragments of various sizes, one or two semitones apart. The two groups in one passage are like a reflection in a mirror, where the second group is either a transposition or an inversion of the first group.

Another aspect of this étude is the large leaps between repeated notes that are eleven semitones apart. This employs a somewhat pointillistic compositional construction. The dynamic in section A stays at *pianissimo* most of the time. The only abrupt change between *piano* and *forte* occurs at measure 26, when the intensity is built up by repeated ascending arpeggios. At measure 29, the descending chromatic scale in the set class (023457) is first introduced, becoming the principal set class at sections B and C (example 2.4).

The B section begins in measure 35 with the repeated notes in the right hand and the melody in the left hand. The set class (023457) becomes the essential pitch material of this section, even though the hands are alternating all the time with the repeated notes in *pianissimo* in the right hand, one can clearly hear the pitch material in the left hand. The first phrase (measures 35-36) uses the aggregate row. When it is divided into two hexachords (023457), the second set is T6 of the first set. When it comes to the second phrase at measure 42, it is in the reverse order with T6 and then T0 (example 2.5).

The C section starts at measure 49, when the melody is back in the right hand with repeated notes in the left hand. The texture becomes thicker and thicker, and the single repeated notes build up into double notes. At measure 56, when the repeated *fortissimo* chords increase the intensity, the climax emerges. Here, Rakowski presents a new hexachord, (024579), also adding up to twelve tones in the right hand (example 2.6).

The codetta begins with a repeated E at measure 80, and it connects to the quotation from “Für Elise” at measure 84. Another hexachord, (012345), takes place in both hands right after measure 86. When the étude reaches its end, there is an intense dynamic change when a repeated F-sharp goes from *pianissimo* to *niente* (fade out), and then suddenly the last hexachord shows up in the original form (012345) in *fff*, followed by a *ffffff* “BAM” chord played with the fist (example 2-7).

Technically, the étude “E-Machines” demands clean sixteenth-note passage work. The repeated notes should be played by different fingers (4-3-2-1) to make a smooth and clear tone. The étude encourages the pianist to develop dexterity by utilizing accuracy and speed. This piece can also be played as a set with the second étude, “BAM!.” The last B-flat – D-flat chord, played with the fist, is the “BAM” chord in the second étude. The last few notes before the ending, [C, C-sharp, D, E-flat, E, F]-(012345) become the initial set of the second étude (example 2.8).

# ÉTUDES, BOOK I

Étude #1

## E-MACHINES

for Martin Butler

Repeated-note étude

David Rakowski

1988

**Allegro troppo** ♩ = 144+ (fast as possible)

*pp*

*Ped.* *Ped.*

4 *Ped.* *Ped.* \* *Ped. ad lib.*

7

10 *Ped.* *Ped.*

Example 2.4 Rakowski: Étude, "E-Machines," mm. 1-12.

B

35 *pp* *sempre*

37 *mf* *sempre* [4, 6, 7, 8, 9, E] (023457) T<sub>6</sub> [T, 0, 1, 2, 3, 5] (023457)

40 *pp* *f* T<sub>4</sub> [1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8] (023457) *p*

42 *p* *sempre* *f* *sempre* [T, 0, 1, 2, 3, 5] (023457) T<sub>6</sub> [4, 6, 7, 8, 9, E] (023457)

Example 2.5 Rakowski: Étude, "E-Machines," mm. 35-43.

C

49 *mp* [T, 0, 1, 2, 3, 5] (023457) *mf* T<sub>1</sub> [5, 7, 8, 9, T, 0] (023457)

*pp* *p*

52 *mf* *f*

*pp* *p* *f*

Topline T<sub>1</sub> [5, 7, 8, 9, T, 0] (023457)  
 bottom T<sub>7</sub> [E, 1, 2, 3, 4, 6] (023457)

55 *ff* (024579) T<sub>6</sub> (024579)  
 [5, 7, 9, T, 0, 2] [E, 1, 3, 4, 6, 8]

T<sub>4</sub> [8, T, E, 0, 13] (023457) T<sub>10</sub> [2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9] (023457)

*senza ped.*

Example 2.6 Rakowski: Étude, "E-Machines," mm.49-56.



## Étude no. 2, “BAM!”

This is another virtuoso étude on a swirl of notes. It was written for Karen Harvey in Italy in 1991, and premiered in Boston by her in 1992. “BAM!” is an étude that bears an amusing title, but requires demanding techniques. The title comes from a sforzando chord that Rakowski had written in another piece for Karen Harvey.<sup>5</sup> It features a humorous tempo marking “*Pipistrello in uscita dal inferno*” (Bat Out of Hell). Derived from the last chord of “E-Machines,” the “BAM!” chord makes a surprising effect that occasionally occurs in the extreme dynamic of *sfff* and is always followed by running sixteenth notes in pianissimo.

Rakowski’s “BAM!” is written in through-composed form, without a restatement of the first theme or motive. This is not typical of most of Rakowski’s études. The meter changes frequently, the dynamics change abruptly, and the rhythm is syncopated, all characteristics present in other études by Rakowski. The étude starts in a very low register, and the melody is syncopated, featuring sustained notes on the top with fast sixteenth notes moving along on the bottom. The “BAMi” (notes B, A, E=Mi, which is different from the “BAM!” chord), is introduced at the end of the first phrase along with the “BAM” chords. The set class (012345) (from “E-Machines”) is used but only appears in the first measure to recall the previous étude “E-Machines” (example 2.9). The E pedal point occurs at measure 28, when the sixteenth notes are in a wide leaping arrangement (example 2.10). The melody is clearly heard in the top register with running sixteenth notes as accompaniment from measure 36. The sixteenth-note passages continue between different registers without breaking the rhythmic drive. Both hands move to a high register with a few bass notes played occasionally. At measure 43, the swirl notes sweep

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<sup>5</sup> Theresa McCollough, “New American Piano Music,” <<http://www.innova.mu/notes/552.htm>> (Accessed on April 2008),

down from high to low registers, and that becomes a motivic pattern in the later sections of étude “BAM!” Starting at measure 56, the contour of the passages sweeps down in descending motion. The A pedal point is followed by several other pedal points (C-F-E-G-D-sharp) with running sixteenth notes, driving down to the bass register. However, the music moves back to the high register with a F-sharp at measure 84, which is reminiscent of the motive from the “E-Machines” (example 2.11).

The motive “KAREN” (B-flat, C, F, E, C-sharp) (see right corner of example 2.9) is introduced for the first time at measure 100, partially anticipated at measures 98-99 of “B-flat, F, E, C-sharp” (“KAREN” without note C). The “KAREN” motive is formed from a chromatic scale in alphabetical order starting with C (K=B-flat, A=C, R=F, E=E and N=C-sharp)(see examples 2.12 and 2.13). Rakowski uses the technique of fitting each letter into the chromatic scale. At this point, it is also the first time both hands have sixteenth notes in parallel motion, a technique which is also used later in étude no. 43, “Wiggle Room.” While the music shifts back and forth between treble clef and bass clef at measure 121, the low F-sharp shifts as a bass harmony from measure 123. The “BAMi” shows up again at measure 128 with the “KAREN” motive recurring at measure 130. The tension is built by accented chords between the sixteenth notes. At measure 137, with “*Poco a poco accelerando*,” a surprising *diminuendo* is marked with a reprise of the “BAM” chord in subito *ffff*, bringing this étude to a restless end (example 2.14).

The “BAM!” étude requires flexible fingers and fast movement. Like Chopin or Liszt concert études, virtuoso techniques are presented throughout the piece. The swirls of notes are nonstop sixteenth notes, running all over the keyboard from high to low registers. Although the sequences of several patterns are similar, none of the thematic material is repeated. The performer needs to study the score carefully, and divide the sixteenth notes between his or her

two hands according to the most comfortable positioning when meets big leaps occur while maintaining the singing lines for the melody. Tempo is another challenge when performing this étude. With the marks “*Poco a poco accelerando*” at the last part of the étude, the performer may find it difficult to perform from *Presto* to *Prestissimo*. It is important to remember “*Pipistrello in uscita dal inferno*” in the beginning of “BAM!,” which is a feeling of disorder. Therefore, it is possible to capture composer’s idea by playing the speed as fast as possible to create the restless atmosphere. This piece truly displays a model of a virtuoso étude.

# BAM!

Étude on swirls of notes



for Karen Harvey

David Rakowski  
1991

Pipistrello in uscita dal inferno ♩ = 144+

*sfff pp sub.*

(8<sup>th</sup>)-----

*sfff pp sfff pp*

(8<sup>th</sup>)-----

*sfff pp*

(8<sup>th</sup>)-----

Example 2.9 Rakowski: Étude, "BAM!," mm. 1-8.

28

*poco f*

30

33

*sff poco f*

36

*sub. p poco a poco cresc.*

Example 2.10 Rakowski: Étude, “BAM!,” features E-pedal point, mm. 28-36.



**Poco a poco accelerando**

137

*(f)* *(mf)*

139

*(mp)*

141

*(p)* *pp*

**Veloce possibile**

143

*sub. ffff*

*loco*

(8<sup>th</sup>)

(8<sup>th</sup>)

(8<sup>th</sup>)

Example 2.14 Rakowski: Étude, “BAM!,” mm.137-144.

### Étude no. 3, “Nocturnal”

This étude was composed in Massachusetts in 1991, and was premiered by the pianist Lyn Reyna, to whom it is dedicated. This is the second étude that focuses on repeated notes. Unlike the first, “E-Machines,” this étude is comprised of slow repeated notes and a smooth, singing melody. The tempo marking is *Lento*, and this lyric étude is legato with clear phrasing. The dynamic stays mostly in *piano*, with the exception of *forte* at the final climax.

The repeated F-sharp in the right hand opens the piece, provides a syncopated quarter note ostinato for twelve measures. The repeated F-sharp recalls the étude “E-Machines”, but lies in the middle range of the keyboard in a slow tempo. Constructed mostly in triplets and sustained tied notes, the melody starts in the left hand with a marking of “*Legato sempre*” (example 2.15). At measure 8, on top of the repeated F-sharp, Rakowski adds recurring notes D and C-sharp, which sets up the next repeated note, D, at measure 13. Beginning at measure 14, the repeated note D is played by the left hand in descending motion to the low E. When the repeated notes change from D to F, the syncopation stops, and all the subsequent repeated notes fall on downbeats in quarter notes. On top of the continuing repeated notes in F and A, there are notes E-flat and D-flat (D-sharp and C-sharp) are also repeated in a dotted-syncopated rhythm. As the repeated notes go lower and lower, the texture of the music becomes thicker and more complex. The register widens with four voices, moving to the first climax in *mezzo forte* at measure 28.

Étude #3

## NOCTURNAL

Étude on slow repeated notes

for Lyn Reyna

David Rakowski  
1991

Lento ♩ = 48-66, flessibile

pp  
legato sempre

*Ed. molto, ad lib.*

Measures 1-3: The score begins in 3/4 time, then changes to 4/4, 5/4, and 3/4. The right hand features a melodic line of repeated notes with slurs and triplets. The left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with triplets and slurs.

Measures 4-6: The time signature changes to 2/4, 3/4, and 5/4. The melodic line continues with slurs and triplets. The left hand accompaniment includes triplets and slurs.

Measures 7-9: The time signature changes to 4/4, 3/4, and 2/4. The instruction *poco a poco crescendo* is present. The melodic line continues with slurs and triplets. The left hand accompaniment includes triplets and slurs.

Measures 10-12: The time signature changes to 2/4, 5/4, and 4/4. The melodic line continues with slurs and triplets. The left hand accompaniment includes triplets and slurs.

Example 2.15 Rakowski: Étude, "Nocturnal," mm. 1-12.

The second section of the piece begins at measure 29. Marked *Poco meno mosso*, the section begins with syncopated triplets in the right hand, and running sixteenth-note triplets in the left hand in groups of six (example 2.16). The repeated notes B, G, and A are hidden in the groups of six notes in the left hand, set against the right hand melody (example 2.17). At measure 34, the melody from the first section is restated in the right hand an octave higher. The repeated notes in the left hand running notes move from A to E-flat to A-flat (G-sharp) to C, with a few notes occasionally appeared in the low register. “Nocturnal” reaches its climax at measure 39 when both hands ascend and the repeated notes move back to F-sharp in *forte*. The piece ends with an F-sharp repeated note which occurs *pianissimo* right after the climax (example 2.18).

“Nocturnal” is technically easier than Rakowski’s first two études, which is apparent when they are played as a set. The étude is difficult rhythmically – the performer needs to maintain syncopated repeated notes while keeping the melodic line flowing. It is more important to bring out the lyric melody than to emphasize the repeated notes. Compared to Rakowski’s first two études, “Nocturnal” requires more artistic expression and a singing quality for the melody while “E-Machines” and “BAM!” are more virtuosic with their fast-paced running notes. “E-Machines” and “Nocturnal” are harmonically related in that both start with an F-sharp repeated note and follow the same pitch sequences as “E-Machines.” The chord at the ending of “E-Machines” becomes the initial “BAM” chord in the étude “BAM!”, and the repeated F-sharp also appears in the middle of the piece as a recollection of the “E-Machines.” The performer can easily program “E-Machines” with “BAM!,” or “BAM!” with “Nocturnal,” or “E-Machines” with “Nocturnal.” Martin Schreiner of Harvard University states that “Nocturnal” is a piece that “continues with a wide separation of registers between quiet articulations in the lowest range of the piano and the other voices in higher registers, sounding vaguely like a quiet echo of BAM!”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Martin Schreiner, *Notes*, 56, no. 2, (December 1999): 506-7.

“Nocturnal” is an piece that has expressive musical content which is similar to the most of the nineteenth century études. The composer writes that this étude “was meant to evoke the sort of sadness one feels in New England in fall after the leaves have all fallen, the days are getting shorter, and winter is just around the corner”.<sup>7</sup> These three early études by Rakowski display the kinds of technical challenges and expressive lines seen in nineteenth-century concert études. However, these études also present several twentieth-century technical aspects. These études have become the most played by Rakowski. Pianists Teresa McCollough, Amy Dissanayake and Marilyn Nonken have all recorded these études in different sets, published by New World Records, Bridge Records, and CRI.

Example 2.16 Rakowski, “Nocturnal” “*Poco meno mosso*” section, mm. 28-30.

<sup>7</sup> Theresa McCollough, “New American Piano Music,” <<http://www.innova.mu/notes/552.htm>> (Accessed on April 2008).

*poco a poco cresc. al* 39

31

32

33

Red. (B) Red. Red. Red.

Red. Red. Red. Red.

Red. Red. Red.

Example 2.17 Rakowski: Étude, "Nocturnal," mm. 31-33.

41

ppp

Red.

Example 2.18 Rakowski: Étude, "Nocturnal," mm. 41-42.

## CHAPTER 3

### SPECIFIC FINGERS, ALTERNATING HANDS OR ONE-HAND ÉTUDES

The goal of the specific finger, alternating hands and one-hand études is to produce the independence of a finger or single hand with the aim of enhancing finger technique by developing the strength in each hand or finger. These études provide good preparation for a particular technical skill. Many composers have written piano études focusing only on one hand, and most of those études are for the left hand. Composers seek to exercise the weaker left hand because most performers are right handed. Aside from the training purposes, composers also write one-hand compositions for pianists who have lost a hand or are injured. Pianist Paul Wittgenstein, who lost his right arm during World War I, commissioned Ravel and many others to write the piano compositions for the left hand for just this purpose (for example, Ravel-Piano Concerto in D for the left hand).<sup>1</sup> In this category, Rakowski has composed several études that address a multitude of single hand and individual finger techniques. Included in the “Specific Fingers Études” are no. 9, “Pollici e Mignoli, or the Virus That Ate New York,” which is an étude for thumbs and pinkies; no. 11, “Touch Typing,” an étude for index finger only; and no. 23, “You Dirty Rag,” for left thumb melody. The alternating hands étude is no. 6, “Mano á Mano,” and no. 14, “Martler,” is a hand crossing étude. “Martler” was written for pianist Martin

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<sup>1</sup>Christopher Fifield, “Paul Wittgenstein,” *The Oxford Companion to Music* (Accessed May 2009). <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>. > Benjamin Britten, Paul Hindemith, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Franz Schmidt, and Richard Strauss all produced pieces for him, and Prokofiev also dedicated his fourth piano concerto to him.

Butler, the title being a combination of his first and last names.<sup>2</sup> For one-hand études, Rakowski has composed two right-hand études: no.12, “Northpaw,” and no. 61, “Ménage a Droit.” He has only composed one left-hand étude: no. 67, “Ain’t Got No Right.”

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<sup>2</sup> “David Rakowski, Hyperblue,” <<http://www.dramonline.org/albums/david-rakowski-hyperblue/notes>> (Accessed May 2008).

### **Étude no. 11, “Touch Typing”**

Rakowski composed his étude “Touch Typing” in June, 1996 in Rome, Italy. This is an étude for the index finger only. He even noted that it is not appropriate to use other fingers to play this piece.<sup>3</sup> This is unusual because most études or piano pieces that seek to train the index finger usually combine the use of the fourth finger for interval practice. For example, in the Transcendental Étude no. 4 by Franz Liszt, the thirds are played by the first and third fingers and shifted to the index and fourth fingers. However, no portion of Liszt’s étude addresses the index finger only. In this regard, “Touch Typing” displays Rakowski’s unique view in creating music. The title, “Touch Typing,” refers to a typing technique in which the typist does not look at the keyboard to find the location of the keys, enabling one to type faster. Rakowski’s title is clearly a joke since the piece focuses entirely on the index finger. It is the opposite of true “touch typing”: perhaps a more accurate title might be “Hunt and Peck” since this is the name given to those who attempt to type using only their index fingers. However, since the technique used in the étude and the technique employed in touch typing create the identical result of muscle strength memory and are needed for performing in rapid tempo, Rakowski’s “joke” takes on an element of truth.

“Touch Typing” uses the right index finger and the left index finger alternately. The meter changes frequently (a hallmark in Rakowski’s études), but the pace is steady as two fingers on each hand drop sequentially one after another in groups of four sixteenth notes. The only section that does not follow this pattern is in the middle, from measures 35 to 51. In this section, the right hand has longer lines and the pace is slowed by using eighth notes and quarter notes. Rakowski uses the triplets at measure 49 to move back toward the original speed of four

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<sup>3</sup> Rakowski, David “*David Rakowski Piano Étude Book II*” (New York: C.F. Peters, 2001), performance notes.

sixteenth notes at the end of this section. The main motive (which is A, A-flat, D, F, G, and B) is taken from the first six notes [a s d f g h] (see measure 1 on the score, example 3.1), and this is another typing reference. The patterns [a s d f g h] is the pattern on the left side of computer/typewriter keyboard. This motive later returns as a refrain, and Rakowski brackets them every time the motive appears. The form is similar to other études, in which the main theme or motive is restated at the end.

The tempo is  $\text{♩}=144$  and is “*Come una toccata, poco esplosivo*,” which means “like a toccata, a little explosive.” This étude requires manual dexterity, especially when using only one finger per hand. At the beginning, the two index fingers closely alternate in the high register starting with the left hand. The motive [a s d f g h] appears three times in the same manner from measures 1 to 9, following couple of repeating notes play alternately (example 3.1).



Starting at measure 10, the top line of the right hand has a long melody line against the four sixteenth notes. It is difficult to hold the longer notes while jumping back and forth for the sixteenth notes; as such the pedal plays a very important role in bringing out the melody. In measures 17 to 21, the motive [a s d f g h] appears on the top voice again in long note values (which is almost one note per measure). The music accelerates after presenting the motive, leading to the next section with the same repetitive structure from the beginning, but in a faster tempo.

In the “*Poco più mosso, agitato*” section (measures 24 to 31), instead of playing one note alternately with both index fingers, the right index finger occasionally plays double notes with accents (example 3.2). Tempo I returns at measure 32, but the melodic line has a bigger arch, and both index fingers stop playing alternately. This leads nicely into the slow section (measures 39 to 51), which consists of multiple syncopations and rhythm of two against three (example 3.3) in treble clef. It is typical of Rakowski’s writing for the music to encompass all the ranges of the piano. The melody starts in the bass clef in the low register and stretches to the high register. The opening motive and material returns at measure 52, starting with the right hand index finger, and featuring some variation in registers with hands crossing and exchanges (example 3.4). Both index fingers again play alternately on all the recurring sixteenth notes in *forte*. The repeating notes in various registers bring the music to an *accelerando* and sets the stage for a violent and intensive coda. The *fortississimo* ending builds to a climactic, percussive finale.

“Touch Typing” displays the challenge of muscle memory on keyboard spacing. Loose, relaxed wrist muscles and control of the fingers and arm weight will help provide a good performance throughout the piece. The rapid tempo is another challenge for the pianist. Not only are the distances between notes widely spread, the narrow spaces between two index fingers in

the same register are quite difficult to navigate, especially when the dynamic is *piano* and the two fingers are playing alternately. To play the juggling motion exclusively with index fingers gives the performer the challenge of resisting the temptation of playing with other fingers.

This is a humorous étude that is enjoyable to play and addresses a very specific technique.

**Poco più mosso, agitato** ♩ = c. 156

23 *accelerando...* *poco secco*

The image shows a musical score for a piano étude. It consists of two systems of music. The first system starts at measure 23 and ends at measure 26. The second system starts at measure 25 and ends at measure 26. The music is written for piano in 6/4 time, which changes to 4/4 time at measure 25. The tempo is marked 'Poco più mosso, agitato' with a quarter note equal to approximately 156 beats per minute. The first system is marked 'accelerando...' and the second system is marked 'poco secco'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'f' and 'poco secco'. There are also some performance instructions like 'ped.' and 'acc.'.

*f* *ped.* \* *ped.* \* *ped.* \* *ped.* \*

25

Example 3.2 Rakowski: Étude, “Touch Typing,” “*Poco più mosso, agitato*,” mm.24-26.

Meno mosso, flessibile ♩ = 96-104

39

red. \* red. \* red. \* red. \* red. \* red. \* red.

43

h]

[a s d f g

red. \* red. \* red. \* red. \* red. \*

47

8va----- Poco accel.

loco

poco a poco cresc.

red. \* red. \* red. \* red. \* red.

Example 3.3 Rakowski, "Touch Typing," the slow section, mm. 39-49.

Tempo I° ♩ = c. 144

[ a s d f g h ]

52

*f* *molto dim.* *mp* *sub. f*

Red. \* Red. \*

54

*loco*

*molto dim.* *mp* *p*

Red. \* Red. \*

Example 3.4 Rakowski, "Touch Typing," opening returns with hand reversed, mm. 52-55.

### Étude no. 5, “Mano á Mano”

“Mano á Mano,” meaning “hand to hand,” is an étude for alternating hands. Composed in New Hampshire in April, 1995, it is dedicated to the pianist Lisa Moore and is based on a motive, “LISAMOORE” (B, G-sharp, F-sharp, C, C, D, D, F and E). Again, this is formed from a chromatic scale read against the alphabet, starting with the note C representing the letter A. The tempo marking is *Allegro estremo*, which is reinforced by the composer’s note: “to play as fast as possible, with slight variations in tempo.”

“Mano á Mano” begins with two hands alternating note repetitions, creating the sense of an ostinato in the opening. The dynamics are extreme, and change immediately from *forte* to *pianissimo*, but the pace is steady. The étude starts with a single repeated note, and expands to double notes with an occasional accented low D (example 3.5). The étude develops a thicker texture when the notes are expanded to double notes against double notes in each hand, especially when both hands move to the high register and the pace increases, aided by a triplet rhythm (measure 12). This brings in the melody in the top line (measure 13) while both hands continue to alternate (example 3.6). At measure 24, the complete “LISAMOORE” motive is introduced for the first time with the first nine notes in the lower registers in *piano*. In addition, the motive is emphasized again note by note in *sff* from measure 24 through measure 27 (example 3.7).

Étude #6

# MANO À MANO

for Lisa Moore



Étude on alternating hands

David Rakowski

1995

Allegro estremo — fast as possible, with slight variations in tempo

♩ = 152 - ∞

*Mano destra*

*Mano sinistra*

*pp*

*senza ped.*

*f pp sub.*

*f*

3

*pp*

*f > pp*

*f*

*pp*

*sf*

5

(non cresc.)

*f*

7

*pp sub.*

Example 3.5 Rakowski: Étude, "Mano á Mano," mm. 1-8.

11 *f* *p* *f* *ff*

*red.* *red.* \* *senza red.*

13 *p sub.* [L I S M R E]

15 *f* *p* *sf*

Example 3.6 Rakowski: Étude, “Mano á Mano,” incomplete motive “LISMRE,” mm. 11-16.

Example 3.7 shows the musical score for the motive "LISAMOORE" in both hands, measures 24-27. The score is in 4/4 time and features a bass clef. The melody in the right hand is marked with dynamics such as *sf*, *p*, and *sf*. The left hand accompaniment also features *sf* and *p* dynamics. The letters L, I, S, A, M, O, O, R, E are written above the notes in the right hand, and [L I S A M O O R E] is written below the notes in the left hand. The score includes a (8vb) marking and a loco marking.

Example 3.7 "Mano á Mano," the motive "LISAMOORE" in both hands, m. 24-27.

From measures 28-30, several low bass notes (D-flat, E-flat, C, F) are presented in *sf*, which come from the "MOORE" (0135) motive. The texture changes when steady sixteenth notes turn into a group of sextuplets at measure 41. The music goes an octave higher and thicker chords are used, but the dynamic surprisingly drops gradually from *fortissimo* to *pianissimo* at measure 49 (example 3.8). At measure 54, a recurrence of the opening material returns with different note setting. The repetition continues with both hands playing alternately, but the dynamic changes from *pianissimo* to *forte*. Rakowski marks the speed change as "*Poco più mosso*," with a note: "Going for the glory." The motive "LISAMOORE" again appears in the left hand as the register shifts back and forth from treble clef to bass clef. The same motive appears in the right hand at measure 64, with chords that lead into the ending with a tremolo effect. The

“LISA” motive is introduced one last time as a grace note in *pianissimo* right before the ending.

“Mano á Mano” is composed to address the technique of alternating hands. The entire piece is designed in this style except for a few places when the right hand has to play two successive notes. The primary challenge in this étude consists of wide leaps in shifting clefs, especially when the left hand has a giant leap from the very low bass register up to treble register. The other difficulty lies in the constant change of dynamics and repeated rapid passages at a very soft volume. A careful study of details, relaxed hands and a familiarity with the distances from key to key are essential when performing this étude.

The image displays a musical score for Rakowski's Étude "Mano á Mano", measures 46-49. The score is written for piano in 4/4 time. It features a thick texture with sextuplets in both hands. Measures 46-47 show a transition from *(mf)* to *(mp)* dynamics. Measures 48-49 are marked *loco* and feature dynamics *(p)* and *pp*. The score includes various fingering and articulation markings such as slurs, accents, and "acc.".

Example 3.8 Rakowski: Étude, “Mano á Mano,” thick texture with sextuplets, mm. 46-49.

**Poco più mosso (going for the glory)**

54

*f* *f*

*fff*  
senza Ped.

I I

56

S A M O R E J

Example 3.9 Rakowski: Étude, “Mano á Mano,” “Going for the glory,” mm. 54-57.

69

*f*

*f*

*pp*

*ppp*

*pp*

LISA

Example 3.10 Rakowski, ending of the étude with “LISA” in grace notes, m. 70.

### Étude No. 12, “Northpaw”

This is the first single-hand étude composed by Rakowski. Surprisingly, it is a right-hand étude. Composed in October, 1996, the title was inspired by a pitcher for the Boston Red Sox. It is a pun on “Southpaw,” which is a baseball term for a left-handed pitcher, hence making it the opposite. With the subtitle, “As easy as falling off a ladder,” this étude was dedicated to Lyn Reyna and her friend Barbara Barclay, who injured her left hand by falling off of a ladder. The étude was intended as a gift for her to play a simple piano piece using her right hand only.<sup>4</sup> Unlike most of his études, this one is slow and lyrical. The tempo is ♩ = 52-60, and it is marked “*Assai flessibile, espressivo*” with frequent legato passages throughout the piece.

The entire piece is written on two staves for right hand only, and the opening section is in the middle register with an F#5 (measures 1-12). The second staff notates the melody, while the first staff only shows the F#5 pedal point (example 3.11). The F#5 pedal point stops at measure 13 where the music changes the texture: the music in both staves play against each other in different rhythms. Although the bottom staff keeps the same texture in syncopated rhythm, the top staff has a different melody in a longer line. The rhythm shifts between quarter notes, two eighth-notes and triplets, and is constantly syncopated. The challenge for the performer is not the complex rhythm; rather, it is hard to maintain the melody on the top line when the right hand has to jump back and forth to play the notes on the bottom stave.

Starting at measure 23, the C#5 pedal point is shown on the top register and triplets are seen on the bottom staff. The repetition of interval seconds also plays an important part in the top register, against the syncopated triplets on the bottom staff (example 3.13). Unlike his other

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<sup>4</sup> From a private conversation with Rakowski

études, the final section does not exactly reprise the opening material. Rather, it begins with an A pedal point in a different register at measure 35, which introduces the final section. Although the opening material does not reprise, but the F#5 pedal point in the top staff does return at measure 36, combining with the A4 pedal point on the bottom staff. The A pedal point appears in different registers from A0, A3 to A4, and the lowest A0 in the piano appears in almost every measure which makes a registral span of four octaves. The piece ends with the combination of F#5 and the lowest A0, which recalls the beginning.

The techniques in this étude are not very difficult compared with other virtuosic études. The only physical challenge is that the right hand needs to stretch more than four octaves to reach the lowest A0 on the piano. However, maintaining a constant legato in the melody line expressively becomes significant issue when performing this étude.

Étude #12

## NORTHPAW

Right-hand étude

For Lyn Reyna and Barbara Barclay  
 "As easy as falling off a ladder"

David Rakowski

1996

Assai flessibile, espressivo ♩ = 52-60

M.D.

*p*  
 M.D. *legato sempre*

Red. \* Red.

5

*poco*

\* Red. \*

8

*poco*

Red. \* Red. \* Red. \* Red.

Example 3.11 Rakowski: Étude, "Northpaw," mm. 1-10.

Musical score for measures 11-13. The piece is in 4/4 time. Measure 11 starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is a half note F#4, followed by a quarter note G4, and a half note A4, all under a slur. The bass line features a triplet of eighth notes: B3, A3, G3. Measure 12 has a 6/4 time signature. The melody is a half note B4, followed by a quarter note C5, and a half note D5, all under a slur. The bass line features a triplet of eighth notes: F#3, E3, D3. Measure 13 has a 4/4 time signature. The melody is a half note E5, followed by a quarter note F#5, and a half note G5, all under a slur. The bass line features a triplet of eighth notes: C4, B3, A3. The dynamic marking *mp* is present in measure 13.

\* *red.*\* *red.*\* *red.*

Musical score for measures 14-16. The piece is in 4/4 time. Measure 14 has a 2/4 time signature. The melody is a quarter note F#4, followed by a quarter note G4, and a half note A4, all under a slur. The bass line features a triplet of eighth notes: B3, A3, G3. Measure 15 has a 4/4 time signature. The melody is a half note B4, followed by a quarter note C5, and a half note D5, all under a slur. The bass line features a triplet of eighth notes: F#3, E3, D3. Measure 16 has a 3/4 time signature. The melody is a quarter note E5, followed by a quarter note F#5, and a half note G5, all under a slur. The bass line features a triplet of eighth notes: C4, B3, A3. The dynamic marking *poco* is present in measure 15, and *p* is present in measure 16.

\* *red.*\* *red.*\* *red.*

Musical score for measures 17-19. The piece is in 4/4 time. Measure 17 has a 3/4 time signature. The melody is a quarter note B4, followed by a quarter note C5, and a half note D5, all under a slur. The bass line features a triplet of eighth notes: F#3, E3, D3. Measure 18 has a 4/4 time signature. The melody is a half note E5, followed by a quarter note F#5, and a half note G5, all under a slur. The bass line features a triplet of eighth notes: C4, B3, A3. Measure 19 has a 3/4 time signature. The melody is a quarter note B4, followed by a quarter note C5, and a half note D5, all under a slur. The bass line features a triplet of eighth notes: F#3, E3, D3.

\* *red.*\* *red.*

\*

Example 3.12 Rakowski: Étude, "Northpaw," mm. 11-19.

23

*mp*

26

*mf* *mp* *cresc. poco a poco*

Red. \* Red. \* Red. \* Red. \*

Red. \* Red. \* Red. \* Red. \*

Example 3.13 Rakowski: Étude, "Northpaw," mm. 23-28.

35 *Poco meno mosso* *p*

39

Red. \* Red. \*

Red. \* Red. \*

Example 3.14 Rakowski: Étude, "Northpaw," mm. 35-42.

### **Étude no. 61, “Ménage a Droit”**

This is the first étude from Rakowski's Book Seven, and it is another right-hand etude. Composed in Massachusetts in May, 2004, it is a gift to pianist Amy Dissanayake after she suffered tendinitis in her left hand. The title of this étude is a pun on the phrase “Ménage a Droit,” the “Droit” means “right” instead trios of “three.”<sup>5</sup> The title was given by Rick Moody, an American author. Moody is famous for writing novels and short stories, and he is also an amateur musician with his own group called The Wingdale Community Singers. Rakowski has dedicated several études to him: no. 52, “Moody’s Blues;” no. 54, “Pedal to the Metal;” no. 65, “Rick’s Mood;” no. 66, “Less Is;” and no. 68, “Absofunkinlutely.”

The ABA form of this étude is similar to others by Rakowski. It starts with a melody sustained in three long notes in *forte* combined with delicate fast running notes in groups of six in *piano*. The motive G, B-flat, B (014) shown on the three long notes, is the essential set class for the whole piece. In the beginning section, the bottom staff has the melody, based on the set class (014), from measure 1 to measure 10 (example 3.14); and from measure 11 to measure 15, the melody shifts to the top staff (example 3.15). The middle section begins at measure 16 and lasts until measure 34, where the texture changes. A D4 pedal point is in the top staff, while the bottom staff has the melody rhythmically divided into groups of three (example 3.16). The D pedal point is syncopated at measure 19, and shifts to C at measure 29, the set class (014) is once again heard in measures 30 and 31 before moving to a C-sharp pedal point at measure 32.

The last section of “Ménage a Droit” begins with the first motive restated an octave higher at measure 35 (example 3.17). Rakowski combines the techniques used in the opening and middle sections. At measure 37, the texture of the middle section reappears, again followed by

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<sup>5</sup> From a private conversation with Rakowski

the restatement of the first motive in measure 38 [G, E, E-flat (014)]. In the last measure, the lowest C-sharp of the piano appears again and recalls the C-sharp pedal point of the middle section. The accented high G5 restates the first note of the piece, and the piece ends with a B-flat, leaving an incomplete motive (014).

Dynamics and pedaling are the important elements in the first section for bringing out the motive (014). This is reinforced by the composer's marking "*nuance the dynamics*" on the piano part of the running notes in the high register. The performer has to catch each sustained note carefully with the pedal, while playing lightly and delicately on the running notes. In the middle section, the performer has to catch the first D by using the sostenuto pedal, and hold it until the note changes. In measure 20, Rakowski put an alternative (octave higher) note in parentheses to give an optional choice if the performer finds it too hard to reach from the high E to the low B-flat—more than three octave jump. This technique is utilized by the performer in the later sections of the étude at measures 21-28.

Étude #61

# MÉNAGE A DROIT

Right hand étude

thanks to Rick Moody  
for the title.

David Rakowski  
2004

Smooth and flexible ♩ = 88-96

*nuance the dynamics*

*f* *f* *f* *sim.*

*f* *f* *f* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.*

*Red. simile*

Example 3.15 Rakowski: Étude, “Ménage a Droit,” mm. 1-6.

Poco meno o poco più mosso a piacere  
catch 'D' with sostenuto pedal

16  
*mp*  
*secco*  
*p*  
Sost. →

17  
*mf*  
*p*

18  
*mf*  
*p*

19  
*mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf*

Example 3.16 Rakowski: Étude, "Ménage a Droit," mm. 16-20.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a piano piece. The first system, starting at measure 35, features a treble clef with a 15/8 time signature. The right hand plays a complex melodic line with slurs and dynamic markings of *f*, *p*, *f*, *p*, and *sim.*. The left hand provides a bass line with notes marked *ped.*. A dashed line labeled *8va* is positioned above the staff. The second system, starting at measure 36, continues the melodic and bass lines. It includes a *16* measure rest in the right hand and a *16* measure rest in the left hand. The system concludes with a double bar line and a *16* measure rest in both hands, followed by an asterisk (\*).

Example 3.17 Rakowski: Étude, "Ménage a Droit," mm. 35-36.

## CHAPTER 4

### SCALE, CHORD OR ARPEGGIO EXERCISE ÉTUDES

Fourteen out of Rakowski's eighty études are written as scale, chord, or arpeggio exercises. This category of étude includes: no. 7, "Les Arbres Embues" (étude on thick sonorities and embedded lines); no. 21, "Twelve-Step Program" (on chromatic scales and wedges); no. 28, "You've Got Scale" (on scales and arpeggios); no. 29, "Roll Your Own" (on rolled chords); no. 33, "Sliding Scales" (gonzo étude on scales); no. 36, "Purple" (étude on a chord); no. 44, "Triaddled" (étude on triads); no. 48, "What Half-Diminshes One" (chorale-étude on half-diminished seventh chords); no. 53, "Cell Division" (treble étude on arpeggios); no. 57, "Chord Shark" (slow étude on thick chords); no. 58, "Wound Tight" (fast étude on all chords); no. 65, "Rick's Mood" (chorale-étude on major triads); no. 66, "Less Is" (impatient minimalist étude on chord-building); and no. 80, "Fireworks" (an arpeggio étude).<sup>1</sup> These fourteen études comprise the composer's exploration of scale, chord, and arpeggio exercises.

Étude no. 7, "Les Arbres Embues," was commissioned by the MacDowell Colony, and dedicated to Martin Butler, with a motive "MARTIN BUTLER"(C, C, F, G, A-flat, D-flat, D, A-

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<sup>1</sup>Pianist Amy Dissanayake recorded several études from this category: no. 21, "Twelve-Step Program," no. 28, "You've Got Scale," no. 29, "Roll Your Own," and no. 36, "Purple." They were released by Bridge Records in December 2002, titled "Rakowski Études from book II, III & IV." She also recorded some other études in "Rakowski: Piano Études, Vol. 2 from Book I, IV and V": no. 7, "Les Arbres Embues," no. 33, "Sliding Scales," and no. 48, "What Half-Diminshes One," which were released by Bridge Records in October 2004. Pianist Marilyn Nonken also recorded some of the études from this category: no. 21, "Twelve-Step Program," no. 29, "Roll Your Own," and no. 33, "Sliding Scales." Those pieces were released by Albany Records, titled "David Rakowski: Martian Counterpoint" in August 2004. She also recorded étude No. 7, "Les Arbres Embues" in June, 1999 and it was released on Composer Recordings Inc. (CRI, now New World Records) titled "Hyperblue."

flat, G, B, E, F). This motive comes from a chromatic scale, in alphabetical order starting with C, where only the letter B does not fit into the pattern.<sup>2</sup> This étude is written in contrapuntal style with a beautiful linear melody in the beginning, and two octave chords in the later section. A study of repositioning in the arrangement of the hands is required before playing the piece.

Étude no. 21, “Twelve-Step Program,” was written in 1999 and is dedicated to pianist Marilyn Nonken, in memory of composer Earl Kim. This is an étude focused on chromatic scales and wedges. The opening chromatic wedge figure is reminiscent of the writing from the vocal cadenza of Earl Kim’s “Exercises en Route.”<sup>3</sup> There are two voices in each hand, which have a dialogue with one another in a structured chromatic scale moving in contrary motion.

Étude no. 36, “Purple,” was dedicated to Amy Dissanayake, and uses Amy’s favorite Chord, (016). The title “Purple” refers to Jimi Hendrix’s memorable vision in his song “Purple Haze.”<sup>4</sup> Also influenced by a dedication and a different type of vision is étude no. 65, “Rick’s Mood.” It was composed when Rakowski and Rick Moody challenged each other: Rakowski bet he could write a piece using all the major triads.<sup>5</sup> It is named after Moody in a nod to Rakowski’s having bested Moody in the challenge.

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<sup>2</sup>According the chromatic scale in alphabetic order starting with C, the letter B (From Butler) supposed to be the note C-sharp(or D-flat). Here, Rakowski uses the note D instead

<sup>3</sup>From the note of Rakowski Piano Étude Book III, étude no. 21.

<sup>4</sup> David Hurwitz, “*David Rakowski Étude for piano*” < <http://classicstoday.com/review.asp?ReviewNum=6441>> (Accessed on March 2008).

<sup>5</sup> From Rakowski’s email to the author, April 2, 2008.

### Étude no. 33, “Sliding Scales”

"Sliding Scales was the first piece I wrote after a hernia operation, as if you cared. Again, I wrote it for Marilyn Nonken, and endeavored to write the craziest, most ridiculous scale étude ever, with as many ways of playing scales as was feasible at this fast tempo -- diatonic, octatonic, in as many as four voices at different speeds, in arpeggiated octaves, syncopated, and as middle voices inside repeated octaves. This one is totally crazy, and that's what I intended."<sup>6</sup>

Written in 2001, “Sliding Scales” is a “Gonzo” étude on scales. The word “Gonzo” is first used and popularized by Hunter S Thompson, it often used to describe a style written subjectively with quotations, sarcasm, humor and exaggeration.<sup>7</sup> Marked “*Presto possibile*,” the étude was written without time signature or key signature. The introduction presents a series of scales starting in E, with a group of six notes in ascending order played rapidly only by the left hand, switching from E Phrygian mode (C-scale on E) to E Aeolian (A-scale on E) to various E scales. The right hand enters at measure 4 with an E-flat pedal while the scales in the left hand descend. The melody in the right hand enters at measure 6, with octatonic scales in long notes against both ascending and descending scales played by the left hand (example 4.1). A third voice starts in the left hand at measure 17, with syncopated groups of three notes that use the whole tone scale. A fourth voice enters at measure 20 against three other voices in a part of an octatonic scale.

At measure 25, the first voice returns an octave lower with an E pedal point in the left hand. The right hand plays the octatonic scale beginning at E flat against the left hand, and the E pedal point gradually becomes part of another octatonic scale in the bass. The piece moves to

<sup>6</sup> <<http://artofthestates.org/cgi-bin/piece.pl?pid=252>> (Accessed March, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Gonzo. (2009). In *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. Retrieved April 30, 2009, from <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gonzo>>

high registers in both hands at measure 35, where two scale passages are played against each other starting in augmented fourths (example 4.2). The texture is changed at measure 45 when there are no more scale passages, and the notes are placed an octave apart, jumping back and forth in broken octaves (example 4.3). This leads into the climax at measure 57 when the left hand is playing a long E-scale in four octaves in forte against a double-notes scale in the right hand.

In addition to the left hand, which has a C-sharp octatonic scale in octaves, the repetitions from measure 6 and measure 45 (the first two sections) are combined and return two octaves higher at measure 59. This leads to another big scale from G to C over more than four octaves, which leads into the biggest moment of the piece at measure 64 in *fortisissimo*: the climax emerges when both hands are playing scale passages in octaves (example 4.4). The right hand has repeated chord passages against a simple octave scale in contrary motion. The introduction returns at measure 74 with an E pedal point. A scale passage in groups of four in the right hand enters at measure 75, against the left hand scale in groups of six (passages in 4:3) (example 4.5). The composer's note "*Ossia: white-note glissando*"<sup>8</sup> provides an alternative way to play the right hand passage (by using a white note glissando). The E-scale in the left hand shifts to the right hand at measure 77, and the left hand enters with dotted rhythms and syncopations in contrary motion, which leads to the end of "Sliding Scales."

This is an étude with virtuosic technical display, prompting music critic Jerry Kuderna to say:

"'Sliding Scales' is a wickedly funny parody of regimented piano practice, a manic Gradus ad Parnassum, beginning with scale patterns and gradually expanding intervals leading to some rather dangerous leaps which were executed with spectacular abandon."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Rakowski, David "*David Rakowski Piano Étude Book IV*" (New York: C.F. Peters, 2002), 22.

<sup>9</sup> Jerry Kuderna, *San Francisco Classical Voice*, October 8, 2002.

Practicing scales develops better hand flexibility for all pieces. This étude requires many more techniques than playing plain diatonic scales; it requires the pianist to be familiar with all kinds of scales and modes. It is challenging for a pianist to become secure with each different scale in such a fast tempo. The syncopated and varied rhythms are also worthy of further study as they are a signature of Rakowski's compositions. The four voices should be practiced separately and put back together in a slow tempo first, otherwise it is difficult for the performer to play the rhythm precisely. Since the piece does not have a time signature, keeping all the passages connected to each other and smooth becomes an issue for the performer; one that will strengthen his or her understanding of the necessity to maintain a consistent rhythm.

Étude #33

## SLIDING SCALES

Gonzo étude on scales

David Rakowski  
2001

Presto possibile ♩ = 126+

*p*

*Poco  $\text{♩}$ . ad lib.*

4

6

*crescendo*

9

*mp*

Example 4.1 Rakowski: Étude, "Sliding Scales," mm. 1-10.

*più secco*

35 *mf*

37 *mp*

39 *p*

18

Example 4.2 Rakowski: Étude, “Sliding Scales,” mm. 35-41.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for piano, numbered 45, 48, and 50. Each system consists of a treble and bass clef staff. The first system (mm. 45-47) features a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a rhythmic accompaniment. Dynamics include *mp*, *f*, *p*, and *f*. The second system (mm. 48-49) shows a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a rhythmic accompaniment. Dynamics include *mp* and *f*. The third system (mm. 50-51) shows a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a rhythmic accompaniment. Dynamics include *f*. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor).

Example 4.3 Rakowski, "Sliding Scales," broken octaves at mm. 45-51.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for a piano piece, specifically measures 63 through 68. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The first system begins at measure 63, marked with a dynamic of *ff* (fortissimo). The second system starts at measure 65, with an *8va* marking above the treble staff indicating an octave transposition. The third system starts at measure 67, also with an *8va* marking. The music features rapid, ascending and descending scalar passages in octaves, with various articulations such as accents and slurs. A 3:4 time signature is visible at the bottom of the third system.

Example 4.4 “Sliding Scales,” climactic moment with scalar passages in octaves, mm. 63-68.

73

(*mp*) (*p*) *pp*

----- ossia: white-note glissando -----

75

4:3 4:3 4:3 4:3 4:3 4:3 4:3 4:3

The image shows a musical score for piano, measures 73-76. Measure 73 is divided into two parts. The first part, marked *(mp)*, features a complex texture with multiple voices in both staves. The second part, marked *(p)* and *pp*, shows a more active bass line with a glissando effect. A dashed line with the text "ossia: white-note glissando" spans across measures 74 and 75. Measure 75 begins with a 4:3 time signature and contains a series of white-note glissandos in the right hand, with a corresponding bass line in the left hand. The notation includes various accidentals and dynamic markings.

Example 4.5 “Sliding Scales,” four against three rhythms in recapitulation section, mm. 74-76.

### **Étude no. 28, “You’ve Got Scale”**

Written in the year 2000 and dedicated to pianist Teresa McCollough, “You’ve Got Scale” is an étude containing combinations of scales and arpeggios. This piece is energetic with a continuous and relentless character. The étude is in ABA’ form with the opening materials returning at the end of the piece. “You’ve Got Scale” utilizes small motivic fragments with constant musical interplay between the two hands. Marked “*Pochissimo pedal ad lib., ma sempre poco secco*” (play with as little pedal as you choose but always keep it a little dry), the piece starts with a sixteenth-note arpeggio in the left hand alone, playing in a very low register in *pianissimo*. The recurrence of the motivic set class (0148) can be seen mostly at the arpeggios. While the left hand is playing the combinations of arpeggios and scales, the right hand enters at measure 10 with a slow descending scale starting on D (see example 4.6), which recurs in the same motivic set class (0124578T) at measures 15, 23 and 25.

The two hands begin to interact at measure 30: the right hand plays the singing melody while playing part of the running sixteenth notes that are also being played by the left hand (this is where the B section starts, example 4.7). A low E-flat pedal point occurs continuously like a bell from measure 30 to measure 46. The dynamics stay quiet throughout the section, creating a mysterious feeling, with an exception at measure 36, when there is an abrupt change with two strong chords after the ending of the phrase. The texture changes again at measure 47, when the right hand plays descending scales while the left hand plays broken octaves (example 4.8). There is continuous interaction between the hands, but the pattern of the scalar materials still can be heard, especially when there are double notes. In measures 56, 65, 67, 70, and further into the piece, the pianist can clearly find that both ascending and descending scales have emerged

during the accumulation and expansion of the chords. “You’ve Got Scale” reaches its climax in measure 69-81, when the right hand is playing chords and scales against the left hand playing octaves in a low register.

The reprise occurs at measure 82 with the two hands in parallel motion an octave apart (example 4.9). Simple arpeggios are being played and the dynamic returns to piano. The chord accumulates and expands again note by note at measure 85 in a conversational style (example 4.10): The right hand plays in descending motion, following the left hand playing in ascending motion; this interaction is like a question-and-answer in contrary motion. This continues until measure 90 when both hands are playing at the same time in contrary motion. The dynamic remains pianissimo to the end, and the first motive (0148), in two different forms of both scale and arpeggio, reprises in the opposite direction to close the piece.

When the title suggests an *étude* on scales, it is understood that the composer created a piece for the purpose of training the fingers to play fast, clear and smooth scales in preparation for substantial and technically complex pieces. Unlike other *études* for scales, “You’ve Got Scale” does not emphasize training for fast running scales. Rather, Rakowski’s approach in this piece presents scales that are usually in the melody part with a slow singing descending motion, and dynamics that remain quiet for most of the time, except in the climax of the piece. Rakowski’s fast running sixteenth-notes are mostly in the form of arpeggios with some combinations of arpeggios and scales. The character of the scales on the chords gives the performer a new perspective on scales: one must hold the notes he or she has been playing and add on another note of the scale. This is very different from the traditional notion that all the notes have to be clearly played in a scalar passage. Rakowski’s *étude* provides an alternative approach to creating a new sound by holding all the notes together.

Étude #28

## YOU'VE GOT SCALE

Étude on scales and arpeggios

for Teresa McCollough

David Rakowski

2000

Vivo ♩ = 160-184

*pp*

*Pochissimo  $\text{♩}$  ad lib., ma sempre poco secco*

5

8

*(loco)*

*p*

(8<sup>va</sup>)

Example 4.6 Rakowski: Étude, "You've Got Scale," mm. 1-10.

30 *poco secco*

*p*

32

35

38

Example 4.7 Rakowski: Étude, "You've Got Scale," mm. 30-39.

47

*mf*

45

51

*mp*

54

*p*

48

42

8

Example 4.8 “You’ve Got Scale,” series of descending scales, mm. 47-56.

81

(*mp*)

20

48

16

16

83

*p*

15

16

Example 4.9 “You’ve Got Scale,” recapitulation in an octave apart, mm. 82-84.

The image displays a musical score for piano, consisting of four systems of music. Each system is written for two staves (treble and bass clef) and features arpeggiated chords. The first system (mm. 85-86) shows a sequence of chords in the right hand, with the left hand providing a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system (mm. 87-88) continues the sequence, with the right hand playing a more complex arpeggiated pattern. The third system (mm. 89-90) includes a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic marking and shows the right hand playing a series of chords. The fourth system (mm. 91-92) concludes the piece with a final chord in the right hand and a melodic line in the left hand. The score is characterized by its use of sustained and note accumulation styles, where notes are held across measures and new notes are added to the existing ones.

Example 4.10 “You’ve Got Scale,” arpeggios in sustained and note accumulation style, mm. 85-92.

### Étude no. 57, “Chord Shark”

Written in 2003, with a title that is a pun on the familiar term “card shark,” “Chord Shark” is a slow étude with thick chords. This étude was dedicated to the pianist Corey Hamm, who is an assistant professor at the University of British Columbia. Hamm performed the world premiere of “Chord Shark” in 2005, along with two other Rakowski études that were also dedicated to him: no. 58, “Wound Out” (fast chord étude), and no. 67, “Ain’t Got No Right” (left hand étude).<sup>10</sup> “Chord Shark” is an étude based on Brahms op. 116, no. 6 “Intermezzo.” “Chord Shark” opens with a six chord melody derived from the Brahms, and Rakowski utilizes the same approach as Brahms: he took the top melody from the first two measures of the Intermezzo, the double eighth-note rhythm from the inner voice on the right hand, with the same octaves texture in the left hand. (see example 4.11). The difference is the metric accent: Rakowski’s étude starts on the down beat in 4/4 meter, while the Brahms Op. 116 begins at the upbeat in 3/4 meter (example 4.12).

“Chord Shark” uses a simple form where the texture stays the same throughout the piece. The right hand begins with the six note motive from Brahms Op. 116, but Rakowski’s motive uses different tetrachords. The left hand mostly plays octaves throughout the piece, an homage to the beginning of the Brahms. However, the dynamics are different in the two pieces: Brahms starts in piano while Rakowski starts in forte, creating a thicker texture and giving a “heaviness” to the étude. Following the first phrase, there is an answering phrase, lighter and softer with single notes in the left hand in treble clef register in measures 4-5. The same pattern recurs in measures 6-9 with some variations. “Chord Shark” continues in the same chordal texture without

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<sup>10</sup> From The University of British Columbia *newsletter*, winter 2005-06:14 (Accessed on May 8 2008).  
< [http://www.music.ubc.ca/fileadmin/user\\_upload/music/high\\_notes/hnotes\\_05\\_06.pdf](http://www.music.ubc.ca/fileadmin/user_upload/music/high_notes/hnotes_05_06.pdf) >

many changes in dynamics. The beginning material is restated at the end with very little variation.

For the performer, it is hard to give an overall shape to this étude, as the chordal texture does not change throughout the piece. It is important to bring out the melody on the top of each of the chords. Rakowski noted that “the performer is invited to ignore the dynamics notated and substitute his or her own.”<sup>11</sup> Unlike other Rakowski études, “Chord Shark” has fewer rhythmic features and instead uses a steady meter mostly in 4/4 without sudden dynamic changes. The pace remains in simple quarter notes, only the dynamic changes from forte to piano. “Chord Shark” is a study in bringing out the melody from each of the thick and heavy chords in every phrase, with a touch of legato to create a beautiful line throughout each phrase.

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<sup>11</sup> Rakowski, David “*David Rakowski Piano Étude Book VI*” (New York: C.F. Peters, 2004), 46.

Étude #57

# CHORD SHARK

Slow étude on thick chords

after Brahms Op. 116 No. 6

for Corey Hamm

David Rakowski

2003

The performer is invited to ignore the dynamics  
notated and substitute his or her own.

Adagio ♩ = c. 40-48, flessibile

The first system of the musical score consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with a grand staff bracket. The music is in 4/4 time and features thick chords. The first measure is marked with a forte *f* dynamic. The melody in the treble clef moves through various chordal textures, while the bass clef provides a steady accompaniment of chords.

*And. ad lib., molto*

The second system continues the piece with two staves. It features a dynamic contrast, with a piano *p* marking in the first measure and a forte *f* marking in the second measure. The treble clef has a more active melodic line with some grace notes, while the bass clef continues with thick chords.

The third system of the score also consists of two staves. It begins with a piano *p* dynamic. The treble clef features a complex melodic line with many grace notes and slurs, creating a sense of fluidity. The bass clef continues with the thick chordal accompaniment.

Example 4.11 Rakowski: Étude, "Chord Shark," mm. 1-9.

## 6.

## INTERMEZZO

Andantino teneramente

*p dolce e ben legato*

*sost.*

*p*

*espr.*

*cresc.*

Example 4.12 Brahms, Intermezzo, op. 116, no. 6, mm. 1-11.

### Étude no. 58, “Wound Tight”

Also written in 2003 in Saratoga Springs, New York, “Wound Tight” is another of the études dedicated to Corey Hamm. Unlike “Chord Shark,” “Wound Tight” is a fast chord étude with the tempo marked *Presto possibile*. This étude is in simple form with constant meter changes. The motivic repetitions are based on the first few eighth-note trichords in the beginning: (016), (026) and (048). The étude then breaks into different groupings of two, three, four, or six notes. The opening thematic materials also feature a series of rising and falling intervals with minor seconds, minor thirds and diminished fifths between notes (example 4.13). The texture changes to a contrapuntal style at measures 16-25, when four clear voices are present. The pace becomes slower and the dynamic is *pianissimo*. As the music continues, the two-note half step motive from the very beginning (D-C-sharp) can be heard throughout the piece. This half step motive appears as the top notes of the contrapuntal section several times (F-E at measures 17-8, A-G-sharp at measure 19, and G-F-sharp at measure 25), becoming an important motive in the first half of “Wound Tight.”

The opening motive is restated at measure 26, and changes back to a contrapuntal texture at measure 38. This follows a series of pentachords with a descending chromatic scale on the top notes from measures 41-47, leading back to the opening statement again at measure 48 in a slower tempo “*Poco meno mosso a piacere*” (example 4.14). Starting at this point, the texture does not change much, but the register gets lower as both hands are in the bass clef. The dynamic becomes louder when tetrachords are being played with the bass note doubled in octaves. The register shifts back and forth between treble clef and bass clef; the notes in the left hand are more arpeggiated in ascending motion. The set class (0123469) is used in most of the arpeggiated

passages in the left hand during this final section, which is against the right hand eighth note motive adopted from the beginning. The chords become thicker and thicker as the piece moves toward the end with tetrachords and pentachords being heavily used.

“Wound Tight” is a fast and energetic piece using an innovative study of chords. The étude is also a study in intervals, in which fourths and thirds are often used when forming the chords. The coordination between the two hands is the primary study throughout the piece, since both hands have the same rhythm. Practicing the intervals and chords separately is helpful before one tries the hands together. Also, slow practice helps make the two hands better coordinated before graduating to the tempo *Presto*.

Étude #58

# WOUND TIGHT

Fast chords étude

for Corey Hamm

David Rakowski

2003

Presto possibile  $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 112\text{-}132$ 

The musical score for "Wound Tight" is presented in four systems, each with a piano (right) and bass (left) staff. The piece is in 7/8 time and marked "Presto possibile" with a tempo of approximately 112-132 beats per minute. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or F minor). The first system (measures 1-3) features piano (*p*) and mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamics. The second system (measures 4-6) includes mezzo-forte (*mf*) and piano (*p*). The third system (measures 7-9) also features mezzo-forte (*mf*) and piano (*p*). The fourth system (measures 10-12) includes mezzo-forte (*mf*) and mezzo-piano (*mp*). The score is characterized by complex chordal textures and rhythmic patterns.

Example 4.13 Rakowski: Étude, "Wound Tight," mm. 1-12.

Poco meno mosso a piacere  $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 108-126$

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The time signature is 6/8.

- System 1 (Measures 47-50):** The right hand features a melodic line with slurs and ties, marked with dynamics *p*, *mf*, and *p*. The left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment with slurs.
- System 2 (Measures 51-52):** The right hand continues with slurs and ties, marked with dynamics *mf* and *p*. The left hand accompaniment continues with slurs.
- System 3 (Measures 53-56):** The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and ties, marked with dynamics *mf*, *p*, and *mp*. The left hand accompaniment includes slurs and ties.
- System 4 (Measures 57-60):** The right hand features a melodic line with slurs and ties, marked with dynamics *mf*, *f*, and *mp*. The left hand accompaniment includes slurs and ties.

Example 4.14 Rakowski, "Wound Tight," "Poco meno mosso a piacere," mm. 47-60.

### Étude no. 29, “Roll Your Own”

"I wrote '**Roll Your Own**' because [composer] Jay Eckardt, Marilyn Nonken's husband, suggested the étude and the title--the title alone made the piece worth writing. It's a very simple and slow piece in which a middle-register melody is accompanied by slow rolled chords that expand, eventually, to cover the entire range of the piano."<sup>12</sup>

Premiered by the pianist Marilyn Nonken and dedicated to her husband Jay Eckardt, “Roll Your Own” is an étude on rolled chords written in 2000. The title “Roll Your Own” is a pun that relates to rolling a cigarette. This étude consists of a homophonic texture with a slow beautiful melody line in the right hand. The rolling chords are the accompaniment throughout the piece, creating colorful harmonies by adding more and more notes. “Roll Your Own” starts with the left hand on a single note in *pianissimo* (see example 4.15). The tempo is steady in 3/2 with three rolling chords in each measure. The melody is lyrical with lots of triplets and syncopation. The chords spread wider and wider beginning at measure 10, when the notes are played from the bass clef to the treble clef. Almost every chord changes in “Roll Your Own,” usually by one note. When the position is expanded, the registers between the two hands can reach to four octaves (Eb2 to A6 from left hand to right hand) at measure 19.

The opening texture returns at measure 20, when the right hand has the melody with the rolled chord accompaniment in the left hand. The rolled chords spread widely up to four octaves in the left hand alone at measure 24. Beginning at measure 25, the chords again roll from bottom to top between bass and treble clef in the two hands. With the tempo marking “*Poco meno mosso*” at measure 27, the chords are reduced to just the note C covering seven octaves (example 4.16). By adding only one note on each rolled chord, the final section of the étude is peaceful,

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<sup>12</sup>< <http://artofthestates.org/cgi-bin/piece.pl?pid=252>,> (Accessed on Apr. 20, 2008).

with the melody staying in the middle register. The melody is taken from the first phrase of the étude's opening (measure 1 to measure 4), and is hidden between the rolling chords (example 4.17). The left hand opening material in the first two measures reoccurs in the last two measures, creating the penultimate impression in "Roll Your Own," until an unusual rolled chord (rolled in the opposite direction from top to bottom) brings this piece to an end.

This étude is simple in style, yet it creates various colors by changing the harmony little by little. Although there is little rhythmic complexity compared to many of Rakowski's other études, the rolled chords themselves become a challenge for the performer when more notes are stacked up in wider spacings. The cross-hand action applies every time when the rolled chords are many octaves apart and registers are expanded. In order to be able to bring out the melody in between the rolling chords, the performer needs to carefully press harder on the melodic notes while playing the spreading rolling chords with accuracy. The primary challenge of this étude is to produce a beautiful tone color in the melody, while concentrating on the distance of the rolled chords. Clear pedal changing for each harmony (without breaking the sound and melody line) is another area worthy of study in this étude. In the past, composers did not write an étude addressing only rolled chords, and a two-octave range was considered the standard maximum width for a rolled chord. This piece expands the rolled chords to an enormous range, reaching seven octaves, contributing an original perspective to this familiar textural device

Étude #29

# ROLL YOUR OWN

Étude on rolled chords

for Jason Eckardt

David Rakowski

2000

Adagio, cantabile, flessibile  $\text{♩} = 22-28$  legato sempre

*pp*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Example 4.15 Rakowski: Étude, "Roll Your Own," mm. 1-12.

**Poco meno mosso**

27

*p* *crescendo*

3

Rec. Rec. Rec.

Example 4.16 “*Poco meno mosso*” section with the recurrence of the beginning material in the middle register, mm. 27-28.

**Poco allargando**

**Ancora meno mosso** ♩ = 16-20

31

*pp*

3

3

3

3

Rec. Rec. Rec. Rec. Rec. \*

Example 4.17 “Roll Your Own,” ending with recall of the beginning, mm. 31-33.

## CHAPTER 5

### EXTENDED TECHNIQUE AND SPECIAL EFFECT ÉTUDES

#### Extended technique études

“Extended technique” is a term used to describe an unconventional way of playing a musical instrument. Contemporary composers commonly use extended techniques not only to push the expansion of sonorities and harmony, but also to explore the possibilities of an instrument. Composers in the twentieth century have experimented in several ways to produce new sounds and different colors on the piano. Some composers treat the piano as a percussion instrument and they employ new techniques through new notations in their compositions. This not only presents a great challenge for the performer, but also reflects the changing of musical concepts concerning traditional instruments. Using extended techniques for instruments serves to create diversity in tone colors and timbre, and has become common practice in many contemporary pieces. These techniques are not only found in the piano repertoire, but also in music for string, woodwind and brass instruments and voice.

There are several primary innovations that have been implemented for the piano. First, the performer plays directly on the strings of the piano. This innovation was first employed by Henry Cowell; it involves different techniques using direct manipulation of the strings, such as plucking the string (*pizzicato*), sweeping across the strings with the fingers, using the flat of the hands and the flesh of the fingers, and scraping strings with one’s fingernails. Second, the pianist

might employ a tone cluster, a technique also explored by Henry Cowell, which technique uses the fist, forearm, the flat of the hand, or external devices to create consecutive tones at the same time. Third is the glissando, in which the performer slides his or her thumb or fingers across the strings of the piano. Last is the prepared piano, used extensively by John Cage: the strings, hammers or dampers have external objects inserted in between them to alter the sound.<sup>1</sup> There are other techniques as well, such as using string microtones, tapping or rubbing the soundboard of stringed instruments, and exaggerated tremolo or sound amplification, but they are not used by Rakowski in his études.

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew Burtner, "*Making Noise: Extended Techniques after Experimentalism*," March, 2005.  
<http://www.newmusicbox.org/article.nmbx?id=4076>

### Étude no. 13, “Plucking A”

The first Rakowski piece using an extended technique is Étude no. 13, “Plucking A.” Composed in January 1997 for Marilyn Nonken, it is an inside-the-piano étude which works on a Steinway model “A” and “B” pianos. The recomposed piece, no. 13a (which works for Steinway model “D” only with most of the stopped notes move a whole note down), is dedicated to the pianist Amy Dissanayake (see example 5.1).

In “Plucking A,” there are some non-traditional notations for performing the notes. Notes with an “X” are “stopped notes”: the performer should depress the keys with one hand while stopping the strings with the other hand. Notes with the sign  $\oplus$  are plucked notes. The square, black rectangular symbol,  $\blacksquare$ , indicates slapping the bottom strings with the flesh of the fingers, while the arrow sign,  $\nearrow$ , denotes the swiping of the bottom strings upwards with the flesh of the fingers. The term “*ord.*” is an abbreviation for *ordinario*, which indicates the normal playing of the keys.

The tempo,  $J. = 60-69$ , is rather slow. The term “*Quasi blues, flessibile*” represents a flexible style with a flavor of the blues. The time signature is 6/8 in a slow two. The term “*Fumoso*” is indicated at the very beginning, and suggests the atmosphere of a blues joint or bar. “Plucking A” starts with a chord [C, D, E-flat, A, B] depressed silently with a fermata and sostenuto pedal to create the pedal point. Rakowski even suggests that the performer should hold the sostenuto pedal down through the entire piece, possibly with a brick.<sup>2</sup>

The next step is to slap the bottom strings with the flesh of the fingers in *fortissimo* followed by a few eighth notes that should be performed as stopped notes. These stopped notes turn into motives which are repeated in the next few measures. The following action is swiping

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<sup>2</sup> Rakowski, David “*David Rakowski Piano Étude Book II*” (New York: C.F. Peters, 2001), 18.

the bottom strings upward with the flesh of the fingers, with the motivic stopped notes played afterward. This pattern continues until measure 13 when the first “A” note is plucked (example 5.2).

At measure 14, the low “C” should be stopped on the strings 2 inches from the tuning peg, producing high harmonics. A series of plucking notes comes after, producing brittle and percussive sounds. At measure 18, the “B” note should be stopped at the 1/3 node point to create a harmonic for the F-sharp note. Starting at measure 20, Rakowski mixes all the techniques: first is the swiping of the bass strings (not as low as the bottom string), followed by another “plucking A,” then the slapping of the bottom string with the flesh of the fingers. A stopped note near a harmonic node is also played for a bell-like high tone (example 5.3). The action after measure 20 is continued with a few plucked notes, followed by the double-plucked notes from the very beginning, and double notes played normally with the indication “*ord.*” What follows is a series of plucked notes, making percussive sounds in this section. At measure 37, the music reaches its climax when both hands are plucking double notes in *forte*. At measure 39, the motive from the beginning comes back with more slapping of the strings and stopped notes with the plucked “A.” The music once again has a slap-swipe-stopped-pluck feature at measures 43-44, with four rapidly stopped “A” notes (example 5.4). The plucking “A” note appears for the last time at the ending with an accent (example 5.5).

In this étude, Rakowski combined a few types of extended techniques. First is the silently depressed note which produces a harmonic with string vibrations. Second is the plucking of strings, and last is the striking of the strings, both requiring the performer to work inside the piano in order to directly manipulate the strings. In Ishii’s treatise of extended techniques, he notes:

There are two common ways by which to produce the sound of sympathetic vibrations. In the first, the pianist strikes the notes with the damper pedal depressed, then plays certain keys silently and releases the pedal. In the second, the performer depresses the key silently and holds it with either the hand or sostenuto pedal while other keys are strung.<sup>3</sup>

Rakowki uses the second method described by Ishii at the beginning of “Plucking A,” which causes the strings to vibrate sympathetically, producing overtones. The challenge for the performer is to calculate the distance from the tuning peg needed to produce a certain harmonic. This practice is very common when performing on stringed instruments, but uncommon when playing the piano. Another challenge in performing this piece is the timing of actions for stopping and plucking the strings. In Ishii’s treatise, he instructs the performer:

“There are three methods to hold the dampers away from the strings to be plucked in order to set them into vibration: 1) the key which corresponds to the string is silently depressed and held; 2) the sostenuto pedal is used; 3) the damper pedal is depressed.”<sup>4</sup>

Performers need to experiment with these procedures for working on the strings in order to pluck the right strings. Where and when the pianist plucks the strings creates different timbres. For example, when plucking close to the tuning peg and pin, a high and bright sound is created, but when plucking the middle of the string, a deeper and more mellow sound is made.

When striking the strings, Rakowski calls for the swiping and slapping motions of the flesh of the fingers to create a massive sound. For the stopped notes, a muting process to stop the vibrations of the strings is needed. How much pressure the performer puts on the strings and various timing elements produce different tones as well. To precisely find the correct location for the written harmonic (such as 2 inches from the tuning peg or 1/3 of the string length), the

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<sup>3</sup> Reiko Ishii, “The Development of Extended Techniques in Twentieth Century American Music,” DMA diss., Florida State University, College of Music, 2005, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

performer may place a piece of tape to mark the location,<sup>5</sup> or use chalk and white out to identify the location. The *ordinario* happens only on the notes D, E-flat, G, B (once each on D-sharp and F-sharp), and the stopped notes are mostly in the treble clef with only a few on low C or C-sharp with a *sforzando*. Slapping, swiping, or plucking the strings treats the piano like a harp, while the stopped notes make the piano sound like a percussion instrument. “Plucking A” strays from the traditional functions for which the piano is commonly used, and in the process, a different but interesting performance practice on the instrument is created.

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<sup>5</sup> Burge, David “*Twentieth-Century Piano Music*” (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 216.

Étude #13a

# PLUCKING A

Inside-the-piano étude — for Steinway “D” pianos

for Amy Dissanayake

David Rakowski

1997

Quasi blues, flessibile ♩ = c. 40-69

(Fumoso) (stopped)

**sf** slap bottom strings with flesh of fingers

**f** **mp**

*Sost.* →  
Hold *sost. ped.* down through entire piece, possibly with a brick.

*Red.*  
(when only C is left ringing)

4

**f** swipe bottom strings upward with flesh of finger

**sf** **mp** **p**

\* *Red.*  
(lift *Red.* immediately after the swipe)

7

lift finger immediately

ord.

**sf** **f** **sf** **sf** **f** **mp**

(slap bottom strings, as before)

\* *Red.*

Example 5.1 Rakowski, recomposition of Étude “Plucking A”, mm. 1-10.

## Étude #13

## PLUCKING A

Inside-the-piano étude — for Steinway “A” and “B” pianos

for Marilyn Nonken

David Rakowski

1997

Quasi blues, flessibile ♩. = c. 60-69

(stopped)

(Fumoso)

*ff* slap bottom strings with flesh of fingers

*f* *mp*

*Sost.* →

*ped.*  
(when only C is left ringing)

Hold *sost. ped.* down through entire piece, possibly with a brick.

4

*f* swipe bottom strings upward with flesh of finger

*ff* *mp* *p*

\* *ped.*  
(lift *ped.* immediately after the swipe)

7

*ff* *f* *ff* *ff* *f* *mp*

lift finger immediately

ord.

(slap bottom strings, as before)

\* *ped.*

Example 5.2 Rakowski: Étude, “Plucking A,” mm. 1-10.

20

*sfz* *ff* *f* *mp* *f* *sfz*

ord.

stopped near a harmonic node (bell-like high tones)

23

*sfz* *f*

ord.

26

*mp*

*red.* \* *red.*

29

*f* *mp*

\* *red.* \* *red.*

Example 5.3 Rakowski, "Plucking A," series of plucked notes, mm. 20-31.

35 <sup>^</sup> ord. *sfz* *mf* *sff* *sfz* *f possibile* stopped at 1/3 node point

**Molto allegro, in tempo**

38 *sff* *sfz* *f* *sff* *f* *sff* *f* stopped near a harmonic node

41 *sfz* *p* *sff* *f possibile*

**A Tempo**

44 *sfz* *sff* *p* lift *Red. slowly*

Example 5.4 Rakowski, climax takes place at m. 37 and slap-swipe-stopped-pluck motion features at m. 43-44.

Musical score for Example 5.5, Rakowski, ending of étude with the last "Plucking A," m. 47-49. The score is written for piano and consists of three measures. The first measure (m. 47) begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and features a bass line with chords and a melodic line. The second measure (m. 48) is mostly silent in the treble clef, with a forte (*sfz*) dynamic marking in the bass line. The third measure (m. 49) features a piano (*p*) dynamic and a final chord. The score includes performance instructions: "ped." (pedal) under the first measure, "lift Sostenuto pedal" under the third measure, and a "\*" symbol at the end of the piece. A circled plus sign ( $\oplus$ ) is located above the treble clef staff in the second measure.

Example 5.5 Rakowski, ending of étude with the last "Plucking A," m. 47-49.

### Étude no. 69, “Palm de Terre”

Written in January 2006 in Sweet Briar, Virginia, “Palm de Terre,” an étude on clusters, is no. 69 of Rakowski’s piano études. The title of this étude is a pun on “pomme de terre,” the French term for potato. The definition of a cluster is described as follow: “(A) Cluster is a group of adjacent notes sounding simultaneously. Keyboard instruments are particularly suited to their performance, since they may readily be played with the fist, palm or forearm.”<sup>6</sup> The cluster technique was most likely first used by Henry Cowell, who developed these techniques calling for the use of the performers’ own fingers, hands or arms. Bartók and Charles Ives have also used clusters in their compositions. In Ives’ “Hawthorne,” the second movement of the Concord Sonata, there is an enormous tone cluster requiring a fourteen and 3/4-inch-long wooden bar in order to play it.<sup>7</sup> In the year 1912, Cowell composed a piano solo piece, “The Tides of Manaunaun,” which became famous for exploring tone clusters, and established this new piano technique in twentieth-century music. Stockhausen’s *Klavierstück X* and Ligeti’s *Volumina* for organ are other notable cluster studies.<sup>8</sup>

In “Palm de Terre,” Rakowski experiments with two kinds of clusters throughout the étude: the white-key cluster and the black-key cluster. In his notes, he states:

“Clusters are all white-key or all black-key. White-key clusters should be played by the palm of the hand and black-key clusters by the flattened fingers. Widths of clusters may be wider or narrower depending on the width of the performer’s hands.”<sup>9</sup>

The Étude begins in *piano* in the left hand in a slow tempo (example 5.6). The cluster chords are in the right hand, alternating between white-key and black-key clusters. The clusters

<sup>6</sup> “Cluster,” *Grove Music Online* (Accessed May 2008). <<http://oxfordmusiconline.com>>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.classicalarchives.com/work/292909.html#tvf=tracks&tv=about>. (Accessed March, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> “Cluster,” *Grove Music Online* (Accessed May 2008). <<http://oxfordmusiconline.com>>

<sup>9</sup> Rakowski, David “*David Rakowski Piano Étude Book VII*” (New York: C.F. Peters, 2006), 55.

include every note in a five-finger range, and produce sounds much different from those produced by the traditional use of the piano. The meter changes frequently, but the beats are stable. The étude is written as a through-composed form with reappearance of the melody from the opening repeated at the end. At measure 12, the clusters take place in the left hand, and the right hand joins in with syncopation. The rhythm becomes complicated with the syncopation: triplets against duplets and triplets against quadruplets. Even though the rhythm is complicated and the cluster chords are being played at the same time, the range of dynamics in this piece is limited: at the loudest point it only goes up to mezzo piano, while most of the piece stays quiet and slow throughout.

This is not an exciting and fast piece; clusters usually make a more massive and thick sound, but Rakowski instead presents clusters in a slow, legato and lyrical style. Performers and listeners can enjoy each of the harmonies created by the clusters. Performers can also feel secure in each cluster chord when playing in slow tempo. Performers find it easier to control the black keys using flattened fingers. The distance of the white-key cluster needs to be adjusted for each new chord with the palm of the hand. To create *legato* when shifting between clusters is challenging for performers. The pianist should be aware of the phrasing and the singing lines when adopting this technique.

Étude #69

## PALM DE TERRE

Étude on clusters

N.B. clusters are all white-key or all black-key.  
White-key clusters should be played by the  
palm of the hand and black-key clusters by the  
flattened fingers. Widths of clusters may be  
wider or narrower depending on the width of  
the performer's hands.

David Rakowski  
2006

Flexible and distant ♩ = 56-66

(white-key cluster) (black-key cluster)

*p*

*ad lib.*

Example 5.6 Rakowski: Étude, "Palm de Terre," mm. 1-8.

### Étude no. 25, “Fists of Fury”

Étude no. 25 “Fists of Fury,” or “Fisticuffs for piano,” is another extended-technique piano étude in Rakowski’s collection. Written in 1999 for the pianist Marilyn Nonken and premiered by Nonken herself, this piece uses the fists as an extended technique, which is both unconventional in playing a keyboard instrument. The title of the étude “Fists of Fury” was taken from a Chinese martial arts action film starring by Bruce Lee. The tempo marking is “*Furyoso; Veloce oltre possibilità*,” which asks the performer to play fast “beyond possibility,” to create the right mood. Rakowski also notes: “This piece may be performed without fists under the title “*Fra Diavolo*” (Brother Devil).<sup>10</sup>

In this étude, Rakowski calls for the fists to play on the black keys for major seconds and minor thirds. Both hands must pound in succession, turning the piano into a percussion instrument. Rakowski uses the fist signs for the minor third only when it is played on the black keys: (E-flat, G-flat), (B-flat, D-flat), (A-sharp, C-sharp), (D-sharp, F-sharp). He uses the fist signs on the major seconds on both white and black keys: ((D-flat, E-flat), (A-flat, B-flat), (F, G), (G-flat, A-flat). Rakowski uses the fist signs occasionally with sets of three notes: (E, F, G), (C, D, E), (B, C, D), (B-flat, D-flat, E-flat).

“Fists of Fury” starts with perfect fifth intervals in both hands (example 5.7). Rakowski normally sets these a semitone apart, with the right hand on the white keys and the left hand on the black keys. The étude begins using the fist at measure 4 in the right hand which plays the minor third interval; this is set against the major second in the left hand. At measure 7, the left

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<sup>10</sup> Fra Diavolo is a spicy Italian tomato sauce, and it means brother devil -- the sauce is named after a Neapolitan guerrilla leader: Fra Diavolo. The Fra Diavolo pizza was Rakowski’s favorite one at the San Calisto pizzeria in Rome.

hand comes in with the fist against the right hand. The tension builds when the register goes down and a *crescendo* occurs. Then, the étude reaches the first climax on the lowest B-flat and D-flat at measure 20, which is beginning of the B section (example 5.8).

At the opening of the B section, one can clearly hear the D pedal point, which continues throughout the whole section. The D resolves to C at measure 37 where the register starts to climb higher and higher, with occasional fist-pounding called for on the lowest major-second interval, (D-flat, E-flat). This brings out the melody at measure 46, and both hands descend with a *diminuendo* to B-flat, leading to the next section where a minor third interval (B-flat, D-flat) serves as a double pedal point as the right hand has swirling notes (example 5.9). The étude then ascends to its climax with the two hands pounding with fists at measure 68 (example 5.10). The right hand hits three notes: (C, D, E), while the left hand is playing the minor third interval (D-flat, B-flat). The restatement of the opening materials returns at measure 73, leading to the coda. Starting at measure 78, the melody is brought out on the longer notes (E-flat, E-flat, D, B-flat; C, C, B-flat, G; A-flat, A-flat, G, E-flat) in a downward scalar motion. At this point the theme from the Finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is quoted, leading to the end of the étude in *fortissimo* and both hands pounding with fists (example 5.11).

This piece again shows Rakowski's witty personality. After having a long, non-melodic structure to the piece, Rakowski incongruously introduces the famous tune from Beethoven's symphony while continuing the same chordal texture played by fists. The difficulty for the performer in playing this étude is the coordination between the two hands. Performers need to get used to the distances of the minor third and major second intervals when using the fists. This distance usually occurs when one hand is playing the white keys while the other is playing the black keys. The narrow spacing between the two hands is another challenge for pianists;

thankfully, Rakowski notes that it is not necessary to play every notated fist-note with the fist.<sup>11</sup>

The tempo is another issue in this étude: it is difficult to control both hands at such a fast speed with the fingers flying. Performers should practice with a slow tempo first to get used to the spacing and distance between the notes and hands in order to master this piece. “Fists of Fury” is a great piece for learning new techniques, is fun to perform, and is a great encore piece for a concert.

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<sup>11</sup> Rakowski, David “*David Rakowski Piano Étude Book III*” (New York: C.F. Peters, 2001), 2.



Étude #25

## FISTS OF FURY

or, *Fisticuffs for piano*

Étude for fists

*for Marilyn Nonken*

N.B. Notes marked with  or   
 should be played with the fist.  
 This piece may be performed  
 without fists under the title  
*Fra Diavolo*.

David Rakowski

1999

Furyoso; Veloce oltre possibilità  $\text{♩} = 144-208$ 

The first system of the musical score is in 4/4 time. It consists of two staves. The right hand plays a series of chords, while the left hand plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. A dynamic marking of *f* (forte) is placed at the beginning, and a *p* (piano) marking is placed at the end of the system.

The second system of the musical score is in 6/4 time. It consists of two staves. The right hand plays a series of chords, while the left hand plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. A dynamic marking of *f* (forte) is placed at the beginning, and a *p* (piano) marking is placed at the end of the system. There are also several fist icons above the right-hand staff.

The third system of the musical score is in 3/4 time. It consists of two staves. The right hand plays a series of chords, while the left hand plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. A dynamic marking of *f* (forte) is placed at the beginning, and a *p* (piano) marking is placed at the end of the system. There is a fist icon above the right-hand staff.

Example 5.7 Rakowski: Études, "Fists of Fury," mm. 1-6.

19

21/16

21/16

24/16

*ffz*

*p sub.*

21

17/16

24/16

*p*

21/8

17/16

24/16

*f*

Example 5.8 Rakowski, "Fists of Fury," B-section with D pedal point, mm. 20-22.

54 *poco oscuro, diventando poco a poco più secco*

*pp*

*8va*

*8va*

*8va*

56 *crescendo poco a poco*

*8va*

58 *(p)*

*8va*

60 *loco*

Example 5.9 “Fists of Fury,” fist pounding on low register with “Bb-Db,” mm. 54-61.

68

*f*

17 16 5 4

17 16 5 4

*poco a poco diminuendo*

(8<sup>th</sup>)

Detailed description: This musical system covers measures 68 to 71. The top staff is in treble clef with a 9/8 time signature. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a 9/8 time signature. Both staves feature a series of chords, with the right hand playing chords in the upper register and the left hand playing chords in the lower register. The dynamics start at *f* (forte) and gradually decrease, indicated by the instruction *poco a poco diminuendo*. Measure numbers 17, 16, 5, and 4 are marked at the end of each line. A dashed line with the notation (8<sup>th</sup>) is positioned below the first staff.

70

*(mf)*

*(mp)*

11 16

11 16

*loco*

Detailed description: This musical system covers measures 70 and 71. The top staff is in treble clef with a 5/4 time signature. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a 5/4 time signature. The right hand plays chords in the upper register, and the left hand plays chords in the lower register. The dynamics are marked as *(mf)* (mezzo-forte) and *(mp)* (mezzo-piano). Measure numbers 11 and 16 are marked at the end of each line. The instruction *loco* is written below the first staff.

Example 5.10 “Fists of Fury,” climactical with two hands pounding, mm. 68-71.

78 *mf p* *mf p*

80 *mf p* *mf p*

82 *mf p* *mf p*

84 *mf p* *f mp* *mf* *f*

86 *f* *mf* *f p*

88 *ff*

Example 5.11 “Fists of Fury,” quotation from Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, mm. 78-88.

### **Special Effect Études**

The special effect études composed by Rakowski use unusual techniques for performing on the piano. These are not typical solo piano études. The special effect études are distinguished from extended technique études because extended technique études explore newly invented techniques used in modern music that have become standard. The special effect études generally are a humorous comment on Rakowski's part on the phenomenon of extended technique études. The special effect études are fun to perform, as Rakowski adds another voice in addition to the use of the two hands. There are three études in this category: no. 22, "Schnozzage" (Étude for nose), no. 71, "Chase" (Étude with celesta), and no. 74, "Not" (Talking pianist Étude). All three études are hard to perform: they display Rakowski's unique humor and ideas, while requiring special physical conditioning for the pianist to be able to perform them.

### **Étude no. 22, “Schnozzage”**

“Schnozzage” (étude for nose) is a good example of a special effect étude. Performers need to play with their nose in the middle register while the two hands are playing widely apart in high and low registers. Rakowski indicates this as an “étude for nose” or a “three-hand etude.” Whether using the nose or the three-hand technique, performance of the étude is difficult to accomplish. The success of “Schnozzage” as an “étude for nose” depends on the nose itself: a tall and “hard” nose is better suited for holding the notes. The performance becomes even more entertaining when a prosthetic device is put on the nose if the nose is not long enough to strike the keys properly. The performer needs to practice with the nose (not with the hands) to master the proper location of the notes. The nose solo part is repeated three times with a variation and extension the third time around, and it is possible to play despite being a difficult and unique technique to master.

The melody (A) uses set classes (0135) and (01356) in the first four measures of the nose section (example 5.12). The left hand then comes in with a different melody (B) in the same set classes (0135) and (01356) at measure 5. The first melody returns in the nose section at measure 9, and at measure 13, both melodies are combined in the right hand section. At measure 17 the nose melody (A) returns with variations and an extension; it ends on the first two notes of the melody as a recollection of the opening. The entire étude expresses a rather slow and peaceful timbre. The dynamics are soft and triplets and syncopation are used. When playing with the nose, the rhythm is less complicated and all three parts are in octave chords, creating a subtle and steady feeling.

Memorizing the score is another key aspect when seeking to play the piece successfully. Since the nose is playing in the middle of the register, it is difficult to look at the score. Similar

to the extended technique of adding wooden materials to play the piano, Rakowski uses the nose as an added element. “Schnozzage” is an amusing, fun and very original piano étude to both perform and watch, and is well worth the attempt at mastery.

Étude #22

## SCHNOZZAGE

Étude for nose  
(or a three-hand étude)"Give me a pianist, and make it lean" — *Anonymous*David Rakowski  
1999

Poco adagio e liberamente ♩ = ca. 56-60

8<sup>va</sup>-----

La mano destra

Il naso  
(oppure una terza mano)

La mano sinistra

*p*

*p*

*p*

Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. Red.

(8<sup>va</sup>)-----

M.D.

N.

M.S.

*pp*

*mp*

*(mp)*

\* Red. ad lib. (molto)

Example 5.12 Rakowski: Études, "Schnozzage," mm. 1-6.

### **Étude no. 74, “Not”**

Written for the pianist Adam Marks in 2006, this étude includes text from novelist Rick Moody, and calls for the use of the human voice. The creative idea behind “Not,” requiring the pianist to speak the lyrics while playing the piano at the same time, achieves the effect of a piano-voice duo. The rhythms in the text and the music are very different, which raises difficult issues for the performer. Hence, the question of whether it is possible to perform the piece precisely as written is raised.

“Not” is a long étude exhibiting various repetitions in music and wording. It is possible to divide the étude into several sections, so that each of them exhibits different variations on both the piano and the text parts. Each of the variations begins when there is a piano solo for a few measures or a complete bar that links the music to the next variation. Rakowski does not classify this étude as “variations,” but the texture and rhythm do change significantly when the different sections arrive. The meter also changes frequently -- in almost every measure. Rests, dotted rhythms, triplets and syncopation are the main rhythmic factors for this piece.

The first section of “Not” is from measure 1 to measure 38. This section, which includes three short sub-sections, functions itself like a small ABA’ form. At the beginning of the etude, the piano has dotted-rhythm syncopated in tetrachords, while the text is independently notated in simple quarter notes for the word “Not,” followed by two quick sixteenth notes for the word “Happy” (example 5.13). All the accents are placed on the offbeat on the syllables “not” or “un” for longer beats. Rick Moody's text for the first sub-section (A) reads:

“Not, not, not, not happy. Not, not, not, not happy. Not happy. Not happy.  
Unhappy. Not happy. Not happy. Unhappy.”

The B sub-section starts at measure 9 with the text “Unhappy,” which is spoken in triplets tied over another triplet. The text for the word “Not” is notated in eighth notes, while “happy” is notated in the last two beats of a triplet. The piano part is in a chordal style which mimics the vocal gestures. This section contains fewer contrasts in rhythm than at the beginning of the étude. The A’ sub-section returns at measure 23 when the opening materials are reprised. The spoken part and piano part coordinate here in rests and syncopations, and the text “Not, not, not, not happy” is repeated twice for emphasis. The word “Not” is repeated various times in *diminuendo*, but this section ends with *crescendo* on the word “Happy”(part of “Unhappy”).

The second section is from measure 39 to measure 63; it starts with the words “Happy with” in a triplet (example 5.14). The piano part consists of both hands playing the same notes, four octaves apart. The interval of a third is prominent. The rhythm in the text is mostly triplets and syncopations. The text in this entire section switches among three sentences: “Happy with,” “Unhappy with” and “Not, not, not, not happy with.” This section ends with the words “Not happy with” and a return to the opening piano part at measure 39. The section is extended by a solo piano interlude, which leads into the third section.

The third section of “Not” begins at measure 64 where the piano part starts in simple quarter notes with the text “Not it” in a tied dotted rhythm (example 5.15). The whole section deals with a “note add-on” feature in the piano part: where notes are piled into big triads by adding them one by one while holding the previous notes. This is parallel to the text of the section, which is based on “Not it,” “Not with it” and “Not happy with it.” This section can be divided into two small sections where the first one says “Not it” and “Not with it” in measures 64-75, and the second one says “Not happy with it” with a two-measure interlude from measure 76 to measure 88.

The fourth section begins with contrasting dynamics in both the music and words. Tetrachords and pentachords are presented in *forte* then *piano* in short-long rhythm in an eighth note followed by a dotted quarter note according to Moody's written text (example 5.16). The triplets represent the word "Unhappy" in *forte*, followed by "Happy" in a dotted rhythm in *piano*. The texture in the piano part changes when a repeated note, A, is presented in sixteenth notes in a different rhythm. This becomes yet another significant feature in the next section. After a short interlude using the repeated note A from measure 104, the fifth section begins at measure 108 with the repeated A in different octaves (example 5.17). The text is based on "Not lying down for it," and the pedal point A is presented in different registers. The chordal texture comes after another piano solo interlude and begins at measure 150. The text mixes "Not happy with it" and "Not lying down for it." The piano texture is also a mixture of fragmentations of previous sections, including the slow contrapuntal texture at measure 188, the hand unisons at measure 198 which are followed by the repeated note and add-on structure from measure 205, and the register shifts. The piece ends with unison pitches in the highest and lowest notes, A and B-flat, with the words "No" and "Not."

This étude moves beyond the solo piano piece as it contains the special effect of the piano and human voice as an ensemble. This is an extraordinary piano étude in which the technique focuses on the coordination between text and the piano as opposed to the piano technique itself. The text and piano parts are played against each other throughout "Not," and the rhythm is complicated to follow if played quickly. The offbeat and dotted rhythm creates a jazzy style, and the rests not only bring drama to the piece, but also offer a place to break for breath. The text "Not" keeps repeating, which puts a limitation on the presentation. Hence, the piano plays an important role in bringing the piece to life with the contrasting dynamics and various textures.

Étude #74

**NOT**

Talking pianist étude

for Adam Marks

Rick Moody

David Rakowski  
2006

Fast but flexible ♩ = 126-140

*f*

Not not not not hap-py. Not not not not

*ad lib. sempre*

*p*

hap-py. Not hap-py. Not hap-py.

Example 5.13 Rakowski: Étude, "Not," mm. 1-7.



63 *mp*

Not — not not not — it. Not

(8<sup>va</sup>)

63 *mf mp*

(8<sup>vb</sup>)

66 *mf p*

it. Not it. Not not it. Not with it. Not

(6, 146)

69 *mp mf*

it. Not with it. Not with it. With it. Not with it. Not

(0157)

72 *f*

with it. With it, with it, with it. Not with it, not not with it.

(0-58)

Example 5.15 Rakowski, Étude, "Not," the third section, mm. 63-73.

89 *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*  
 Un-hap-py, hap-py. Un-hap-py, hap-py. Un-hap-py, hap-py. Un-hap-py, hap-py.

93 *f* *p* *f* *mp*  
 Un-hap-py with it. Not hap-py with it.

95 *f* *mp* *f* *mp* *p*  
 Un-hap-py with it. Not hap-py with it. Not with it.

98 *mf* *f* *mp*  
 Not with it. Not it. Not hap-py with it.

Example 5.16 Rakowski, the fourth section, mm. 89-100.

101 *f* *f*

Un - hap-py with it. Not it, not it, un - hap-py with it.

104 *p*

106 *p*

Not ly - ing

109

down for it. Not ly - ing down for it.

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "Not," repeated A exhibits in the fifth section, measures 101-111. The score is written for voice and piano. It consists of four systems of music. The first system (measures 101-103) shows a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The second system (measures 104-105) shows a piano accompaniment. The third system (measures 106-108) shows a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The fourth system (measures 109-111) shows a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The score features complex rhythmic patterns and multiple time signatures (8/8, 4/4, 6/4, 2/4, 5/4). The piano part is characterized by dense, rhythmic textures, often using sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The vocal part is more melodic and expressive, with dynamic markings like *f* and *p*.

Example 5.17 Rakowski, Étude, "Not," repeated A exhibits in the fifth section, mm. 101-111.

## CHAPTER 6

### ÉTUDES ON ORNAMENTS

David Rakowski has composed études that exhibit different kinds of ornaments. Writing pieces in which ornaments are the main focus is unique to modern composers; in past centuries, composers did not compose studies that only addressed ornament technique. In the Baroque period, the ornament was used to decorate the main melodic note by adding fast notes around it. When Debussy composed his last étude “Pour Les Agreements” (Études for Ornaments), he combined several embellishments. In addition to Chopin, Debussy dedicates “Pour Les Agreements” to François Couperin with an additional dedication to “our admirable French harpsichordists,” allowing the composer to refer to the tradition of using embellishments in French keyboard music of the Baroque period.<sup>1</sup> John Corigliano’s (b. 1938) Étude no. 4 (from his set “Étude Fantasy”) also combines trills, grace notes, tremolos, glissandos and roulade ornaments.

Rakowski has a different approach to his ornament études: addressing only one technical aspect, there is only one ornament to be concentrated on in each of the études. Rakowski’s ornament études include: no. 4, “Trillage” (trill étude), no. 26, “Once Bitten” (on mordents), no. 30, “A Gliss is Just a Gliss” (on glissandi), no.31, “Usurpation” (on a slow trill), no. 51, “Zipper Tango” (tango-étude on grace notes), and no. 62, “Name That Turn” (étude on turns).

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<sup>1</sup> Roland Krüger, “*On Claude Debussy's Douze Études*,”  
<[http://www.rolandkrueger.com/start\\_frames/start\\_debussy\\_engl.htm](http://www.rolandkrueger.com/start_frames/start_debussy_engl.htm)> (Accessed March, 2008).

There are a few famous tunes memorialized in Rakowski's ornament études: the lower mordent (AGA) in the beginning of Étude no. 26 is quoted from Bach's organ piece "Toccatina and Fugue in D minor," BWV 565 (example 6.1); the middle section of "A Gliss is Just a Gliss" borrows a tune from Frank Sinatra's "New York, New York," and the first three measures of "Usurpation" were adopted from Martin Boykan's Piano Sonata no. 2 in recognition of his seventieth birthday (example 6.2). Rakowski uses the familiar tunes mostly as sources for motivic material, a device that is no less surprising especially when the well-known strains of "New York, New York" are heard.

Étude #26

## ONCE BITTEN

Étude on mordents

David Rakowski

2000

Vivo  $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 144\text{-}160$ 

The first system of the musical score is in 5/4 time. The treble clef staff begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic, followed by a piano (*p*) dynamic. The bass clef staff starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with a 7-measure rest in the treble staff and a 7-measure rest in the bass staff. The system concludes with a forte (*f*) dynamic in the treble staff.

*Poco And. ad lib.*

The second system of the musical score is in 6/4 time. The treble clef staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes a triplet of eighth notes. The bass clef staff also features a triplet of eighth notes. The system concludes with a piano (*p*) dynamic in the treble staff and a piano (*p*) dynamic in the bass staff.

The third system of the musical score is in 4/4 time. The treble clef staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes a triplet of eighth notes. The bass clef staff also features a triplet of eighth notes. The system concludes with a piano (*p*) dynamic in the treble staff and a piano (*p*) dynamic in the bass staff.

Example 6.1: Rakowski: Étude, "Once Bitten," mm. 1-6.

Étude #31

# USURPATION

Étude on a persistent slow trill

to Martin Boykan at 70  
and, usurping his Piano Sonata No. 2

David Rakowski  
2000

usurped from Piano Sonata No. 2

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 104\text{-}116, \text{ poco flessibile}$

The musical score is presented in two staves. The right staff (treble clef) begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and features a persistent slow trill. It includes a triplet of eighth notes and a trill. The left staff (bass clef) starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic and contains a triplet of eighth notes. The piece concludes with a piano (*p*) dynamic in the right hand and a forte (*f*) dynamic in the left hand. A box above the score indicates the tempo and performance style:  $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 104\text{-}116, \text{ poco flessibile}$ . A note above the score states "usurped from Piano Sonata No. 2".

Example 6.2 Rakowski: Étude, "Usurpation," mm.1-3.

### Étude no. 4, “Trillage”

A trill study from his ornament collection, “Trillage” is an étude composed for the pianist Alan Feinberg in 1993. Pianist Steven Weigt gave the first performance at Brandeis University in 1998. Based on a theme and six variations with a coda, Rakowski admits this étude references two compositions by other composers:

“Étude No. 4, *Trillage*, is a theme and variations based on a passage from the cadenza of the *Piano Concerto* by George Edwards; a quote from the cadenza begins the sixth variation.....Also in *Trillage* is a brief quote from the *Concertino* of Ross Bauer.....<sup>2</sup>

The texture of this étude changes in each of the themes and variations. The theme of “Trillage” is in a contrapuntal texture. The trill becomes an important motive hiding in each of the voices. “Trillage” starts with the top voice in a high register with long, sustained notes, gradually moving in a different rhythm to the trill in G at measure 5, where Ross Bauer’s *Concertino* is quoted. The first two notes (B, C-sharp) represent the motivic idea blending with the second voice into a trill on B (example 6.3). The second voice is introduced with arpeggiation from the low register, climbing up to the treble clef in sixteenth notes. It reaches the first trill on B at measure 3 in the same way as the first voice: the trill is introduced a measure before in a longer value, slowly and gradually picking up speed into a really fast trill. The third voice enters at the half-point of the second measure in the same way as the second voice without being completed with a trill at the end, and it is reintroduced again at measure 3. Using this technique, “Trillage” is able to manifest the contrasts in theme: using multiple voices as well as ending most of the phrases with a long trill. The trills were introduced from slow to fast on the

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<sup>2</sup> Rakowski, David “*David Rakowski Piano Étude Book I*” (New York: C.F. Peters, 2001), performance notes.

notes B, G, E, D-flat, and B in different voices, and end with a double-note trill of G and B.

The first variation changes the texture from linear lyrical lines to fast swirling sixteenth notes with occasional accents. The tempo changes to *Subito Presto*, and here the hands interact (example 6.4). Each phrase is divided every two measures; there is a long trill at the end of each phrase. Some of the trills start with accented notes in different rhythms and speeds and finally evolve into the real trill at the conclusion. Some of the trills in “Trillage” begin at the end of a phrase in sixteenth notes and then connect to the fast trill. This is a very energetic movement in which all the notes are blended with trills, sometimes creating a double trill in different speeds.

The second variation of “Trillage” starts in a very low register in *fortissimo*. The right hand plays most of the trills against the sixteenth notes in the left hand (example 6.5). The rests are an important factor in creating syncopations and lend a jazzy feeling to the first section of the second variation. The double trills start in the last part of measure 38 when the contrasting notes and rhythms are simultaneous. The right hand introduces the trill in the form of a triplet on E, which is against another trill starting on C-sharp in sixteenth notes at measure 39.

Flowing from the second variation, the third variation features fast thirty-second notes in both hands. There are two voices in this variation. When a regular trill is being performed in one voice (usually the top voice), the other trill is obscured between the fast notes of the other voice, popping out at different times (example 6.6). Sometimes the trill is not clearly heard, and sometimes the pattern is lost at the end of the phrase. At measure 49, a third voice is added in longer, sustained notes, bringing back the motive from the theme (A-flat, F, B-flat, D, G, C-sharp), and merging into a double trill at the end.

The fourth variation continues in *pianissimo*, the dynamic from the previous variation, and features three voices in three different rhythms set against each other (example 6.7). The top

two voices are in a very high register, and the top voice has metric shifts with four repeated notes. The trill is displayed in the last note of each of the four-note groups in the form of a triplet against the longer singing second voice. The third voice is reminiscent of the beginning texture in that it is performing arpeggiated passages from low to high register. There are, however, a few short trills in the passages which are not easily distinguished. The first double trill featured in one hand appears at measure 58, which leads to another texture in the fifth variation.

The fifth variation of “Trillage” is in a vibrant rhythmic and chordal style with syncopations. The written out trills are displayed in the top line of the right hand, continuously from B-flat, F, B, A, to F-sharp. The F-sharp trill emerges into alternating two-hand chords at measure 67, leading to fast paced trills in both hands in opposite directions at measure 68 (example 6.8). Variation six emerges from the last part of variation five, extending with four voices in both hands in a very high register in *fortissimo* (example 6.9). The trills are presented in the middle voices in opposite directions, as accompaniment. The melody itself is presented in long notes held in the outer voices like bells. A restless feeling is created when the trills are constantly played. The coda returns to the first tempo and the beginning texture, with the restatement of the theme starting on B-flat instead of B at measure 81. Double trills and triple trills are presented in the last section of the piece, leading to the ending in *pianississimo* (example 6.10).

As indicated by the title, “Trillage” exhibits numerous ways to perform trills. The étude is very challenging as it calls for the pianist to play trills in a fast tempo. Most of the time, the trill continues when other voices come in, connecting the piece without any pause between all the variations. The trill itself is the motive that connects all the sections in this piece as there is not much harmonic relation between the theme and each variation. The performer will find

“Trillage” an interesting piece to learn as it presents the trills in different figurations, including triple trills on one hand. This étude is a great piece to learn to demonstrate various kinds of settings of an ornament.

Étude # 4  
**TRILLAGE**

Trill étude  
 for Alan Feinberg

David Rakowski  
 1993

Tentative, flexible  
 ♩ = 88-100

*pp* *cresc.* *p* *cresc.*

*ad lib.*

*tr* *mp* *p*

*R* *tr* *mp* *cresc.*

*tr* *mp* *M.D.*

Example 6.3 Rakowski: Étude "Trillage," Theme, mm.1-9.

Variation I Subito presto  
 $\text{♩} = 126-138$

12

*cresc. molto*

*tr*

*sfz p*

*p*

*non rtd.*

*rtd.*

\*

14

*f*

*tr*

*sfz p*

*p*

*non rtd.*

*rtd.*

\*

16

*f*

\*

30

Example 6.4 Rakowski, "Trillage," Variation I, mm. 12-16.

Variation II  
30  $\text{♩} = 96-108$

*ff non legato*

8<sup>th</sup>

32

*tr*

*tr*

*loco*

34

*tr*

36

*tr*

Example 6.5 Rakowski, "Trillage," Variation II, mm. 30-36.

Variation III

$\frac{3}{4}$  = ♩ → (♩ = 72-80)

44 *tr*

*molto* *And.*, *ad lib.*

45

46 *tr*

47 *tr*

Example 6.6 Rakowski, "Trillage," Variation III, mm. 44-47.

## Variation IV

(8<sup>va</sup>)  
 J = 66-72

55 *pp*

56 *locp*

57

58 *poco a poco meno legato* *poco più secco* *molto meno ped.*

Detailed description of the musical score: The score consists of four systems of piano music. Each system has a treble and bass clef staff. The first system (mm. 55-56) is in 5/4 time, marked 'pp'. It features a complex triplet pattern in the right hand and a more rhythmic bass line. The second system (mm. 56-57) is marked 'locp' and continues the triplet patterns. The third system (mm. 57-58) continues the piece. The fourth system (mm. 58-59) includes performance instructions: 'poco a poco meno legato' in the left hand, 'poco più secco' in the right hand, and 'molto meno ped.' at the end. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Example 6.7 Rakowski, "Trillage," Variation IV, mm. 55-59.

Variation V

60  $\frac{3}{4}$  =  $\frac{3}{4}$   
J = 96-108

62 *sfz mp* *marcato*

64 *mf* *sfz*

66 *mf*

Example 6.8 Rakowski, "Trillage," Variation V, mm. 61-66.

67

*f*

68

Variation VI

8<sup>va</sup>

69

*ff*

70

8<sup>va</sup>


The image displays a musical score for Variation VI of Rakowski's "Trillage", spanning measures 67 to 70. The score is written for piano in 4/4 time. It features two systems of music, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The first system (measures 67-68) begins with a dynamic marking of *f* and includes several triplet markings. The second system (measures 69-70) is marked *ff* and contains a section labeled "8<sup>va</sup>" (octave up) indicated by a dashed line. This section consists of continuous eighth-note patterns with triplet markings. The score concludes with a double bar line and an asterisk (\*) at the end of each system.

Example 6.9 Rakowski, "Trillage," Variation VI, mm. 67-70.



### Étude no. 30, “A Gliss is Just a Gliss”

Written in 2000, this is an étude for glissandi. The title is clever as it combines the call for glissandi with a nod to the famous song from the film “Casablanca.” The song title is “As Time Goes By;” “A kiss is just a kiss” is a line in the song. When playing a glissando, one must slide rapidly on consecutive notes in scalar passages. The technique can be executed on both white keys or black keys. Playing a glissando allows the pianist to “show-off,” especially when double glissandi are being performed. This is not an easy technique and sometimes can cause injury to the fingers. An early well-known example that utilizes this technique is the finale of Beethoven’s Waldstein Sonata, where the octave glissando is presented at measures 465-74. Beethoven didn’t indicate this action with by marking “glissando,” (one can also play the section with both hands), but it is possible that the performer can play these passages with a glissando. There are numerous composers using this technique in their compositions, but few were written as études. Virgil Thompson and David Rakowski are the most notable composers who have included the glissando technique in an étude.<sup>3</sup> John Corigliano composed “Étude Fantasy” for piano (Étude no. 4), which involved not only glissandi, but also tremolos, ornaments, and other techniques.

In Rakowski’s étude, all the glissandi are white-note single glissandi and are mostly for the right hand. “A Gliss is Just a Gliss” starts with an octave with a fifth interval in *fortissimo*, followed by a series of triplets grouped into a rhythm of  in *piano* (example 6.11). This grouping of the notes becomes an essential motive, creating a swinging, jazzy style throughout the piece. Most of these two- notes rhythms are either in simple or compound intervals of minor

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<sup>3</sup> Virgil Thompson “Double Glissando Étude”

seconds, major seconds or half steps (diminished unison). The chromatic scales are displayed between the notes in the first few phrases, showing the relationship between the two-note groupings. The glissando appears at measure 5 starting on G in the bass clef for three octaves, followed by A-flat triplet motives (again in minor seconds), which emerges as the main character of this étude. Seconds can be found everywhere in the piece, whether the notes are connected to the glissando or connected from the last note of the glissando to the next phrase. The interval becomes the connecting point of every phrase. Contrasting dynamics are exhibited everywhere in this étude. Most of the glissandi start from *piano* and *crescendo* to *forte*, followed by immediate *piano* in the next section. Both hands are playing contrasting dynamics throughout most of the étude, especially when there are two glissandi being played one right after the other in contrary motion.

The texture becomes thicker starting at measure 24, when the bass is being performed in octaves. The glissandi in the right hand are mostly started a half step apart from octaves in the left hand. The tune from Frank Sinatra's "New York, New York" is quoted at measures 37-38 in the right hand, followed by a glissando. Rakowski marked "*Ossia single gliss.*" at measure 40 for the execution of a double note glissando where the glissando played with double notes ends with a single note (example 6.12). After several passages calling for many glissandi in *forte*, the piece ends with a single glissando starting with double notes, and sliding down over six octaves in *pianissimo*.

This étude invokes the magnificent characters of dance, swing, and Be-bop jazz styles. The free structures with asymmetrical phrasing, long-short rhythm of the triplets and swing eighth notes are all influences seen here. The glissandi function as embellishing ornaments after the triplet melodic passages, similar to improvisational techniques used in jazz. Used here, they

create the climax of the piece. The main challenge in performing this étude is playing glissandi smoothly. There are two issues that the performer should concentrate on: one is dynamics and the other is the connection between glissandi phrases. Performers need to practice until all the notes are executed correctly to the end of the glissando. For *crescendo* in glissandi passages, they must practice controlling the touch for lightness at the beginning, then gradually putting down weight while sliding up or down. It is difficult to perform a *crescendo* when sliding up to the high registers and most of the glissandi are of this type. Contrasting dynamics are another characteristic of Rakowski's music. The performer should carefully control each phrase when there is a sudden change in dynamics, especially when each hand is dealing with a different dynamic at the same time, and trying to connect one after another. It is most important to relax in both hands and one's mind, and enjoy the sense of swing and fun in the music. The glissandi are much easier to manage once the rhythmic feel of the piece is internalized in this way.

Étude #30  
**A GLISS IS JUST A GLISS**  
 Étude on glissandi

N.B. All glissandi are white-note glissandi.

David Rakowski  
2000

Deranged ♩ = 120-132

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a grand staff (bass and treble clefs).  
 System 1: Starts in 2/4 time, changes to 4/4, and ends in 5/4. It features dynamic markings *ff*, *p*, and *ff*. It includes triplet markings (3) and glissandi.  
 System 2: Starts in 5/4 time, changes to 9/8, and ends in 3/4. It features dynamic markings *p* and *ff*. It includes triplet markings (3) and glissandi.  
 System 3: Starts in 3/4 time, changes to 4/4, and ends in 5/4. It features dynamic markings *p*, *ff*, *f*, and *p*. It includes triplet markings (3) and glissandi. There are also markings for *Red.* and *\** at the bottom of the system.

Example 6.11 Rakowski: Étude, “A Gliss is Just a Gliss,” mm. 1-6.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system, starting at measure 36, is in 2/4 time and features a melody in the right hand with triplets and glissandos, and a bass line in the left hand. Dynamics include *mp*, *f*, and *mf*. The second system, starting at measure 38, is in 2/4 time and continues the piece with similar triplet and glissando patterns. A dynamic of *f* is present. The system concludes with the instruction *(ossia single gliss.)*.

Example 6.12 “A Gliss is Just a Gliss,” quotation of “New York, New York,” mm. 37

### **Étude no. 62, “Name That Turn”**

Written in 2004, the idea for this étude on turns came during a recital given by Rebecca Incledon and Charlotte Howell. The étude’s title, “Name That Turn,” was suggested by Hillary Zipper,<sup>4</sup> and is a takeoff of the name of an old television game show, “Name That Tune.” The turn is an ornamentation that usually consists of four notes: the note above the main note, the main note itself, the note below the main note and the return to the main note. The turn is usually marked as a lying S sign above the staves. Depending on where the sign is, the execution of the turn is played as a five- note group in a quintuplet after the main note, or a four-note group on the downbeat of the main note. Here, without using S signs, Rakowski has all the notes in the turns written out (example 6.13). The music is in a contrapuntal texture, starting with three voices in the beginning. Most of the phrases start with a turn; a sustained long note is in the top voice, leading the other two voices in a chordal texture in step-wise parallel motion. Most of the time, the second and third voices are playing similar rhythms in syncopation and moving in the same direction. These two voices feature double notes in thirds in one voice and a single line of notes in the other voice. The turn on A (B, A, G-sharp, A) appears first, followed by a turn on G-sharp (A-flat) using the notes B, G-sharp, F-double sharp, G-sharp, followed by an incomplete turn on B (D, B, A-sharp, B). Starting at measure 3, there is a turn on D (E, D, C-sharp, D) that appears several times, and a few incomplete turns show up in other voices. The opening materials come back at measure 7, and the turn becomes an important motive throughout the étude. The stretto happens at measure 9 when the turn appears in different voices one after another, leading to turns on D in the left hand that is played several times, followed by a series of turns on G-flat. Syncopations on the thirds and seconds are displayed in other voices, and

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Po1CJ9fK8AE>, January, 2008.

become another motive after the turns end.

The tempo becomes slower at measure 18, with the tempo marked “*Pochissimo meno mosso a piacere.*” Starting at this section, all the voices move to the low registers, climbing up step by step. The turns are presented one after another in different voices. Here, imitation is taking place between the voices (example 6.14). First introduced at measure 20 in the top voice (F, E-flat, F, E-flat, D, E-flat), there are some turns in a combination of trill-turn style. This kind of trill-turn combination can be seen mostly after measure 25, and becomes an important motive in measures 25-28. In addition to the turn motive, there is a C pedal point created in the right hand at measure 29 (example 6. 15). The C notes continue either in broken octaves back and forth or in the form of a repeated C in octaves. The turns are filled in between the repeated C-octaves after the broken C-octaves are presented. The étude reaches its climax at measure 33 when the turns hide in the repeated C-octaves in the right hand with the inverted turn on the left hand. The inverted turn (in which the turn starts in reverse order) is relatively rare in other compositions. In measure 33, the inverted turn on F (F, G, A, G) displayed at the top of the chords in the left hand. The texture changes to two voices at the beginning of measure 37, when both hands play the turns in various ways. Turns are presented in various rhythms on A in the right hand and the turns on E-flat in the left hand (which enter simultaneously with the second half of the right hand turn) play against each other in the form of a stretto. “Name That Turn” reaches another strong point when the combination of trills and turns are presented at measure 41, leading back to the reprise of the beginning at measure 42 (example 6.16). This étude of turns finishes with an E-flat pedal point in broken octaves after a turn on A in the right hand, playing against the chords in a descending chromatic scale, with a recollection of the beginning turn on A appearing at the end.

“Name That Turn” displays the characteristics of Baroque music by using contrapuntal writing. The turn itself was considered an ornament to decorate the melody line. In his étude of turns, Rakowski uses the turn as a motive throughout the piece, creating variations on this device at the beginning of each melodic line. Given this format, the performer will face difficulties when turns are in the form of a stretto. The turns in each voice have to be brought forth when the voices are exchanged, especially when the turns are presented one after another. Another challenge for the performer is to bring out the turns from the series of chords, where the turns are sometimes hidden in the middle of the octaves or on the tops of the chords. This étude transforms the turn from a decorative ornament into an important element in leading the melodic line.

Étude #62

## NAME THAT TURN

Étude on turns

David Rakowski

2004

Light ♩ = ca. 76 - 84

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The piece is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first system (measures 1-2) begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second system (measures 3-4) includes a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The third system (measures 5-6) also features a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The fourth system (measures 7-8) includes a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The score is characterized by complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth-note runs, and frequent use of turns (trills) in the right hand. The bass line provides a steady accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes.

Example 6.13 Rakowski: Étude, "Name That Turn," mm. 1-8.

Pochissimo meno mosso a piacere  $J = 72-84$

The musical score consists of four systems of piano music, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked 'Pochissimo meno mosso a piacere' with a quarter note equal to 72-84 beats per minute. The time signature is 3/4. The score includes various dynamic markings: *f* (forte) at measure 18, *mp* (mezzo-piano) at measures 18 and 23, and *p* (piano) at measure 19. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with frequent rests and slurs, characteristic of a 'pochissimo meno mosso' tempo.

17

19

21

23

*f*

*mp*

*p*

*mp*

*mf*

*mp*

10

Example 6.14 Rakowski, "Pochissimo meno mosso a piacere" section, mm. 18-24.

29 *f*

31

33 *ff*

35 *ff*

12

Example 6.15 Rakowski, the C pedal point and climax with the inverted turn, mm. 29-36.

37 *p sub.*

39

41 *f*

43 *mf sub.*

44 *p*

May-June, 2004  
Maynard, Massachusetts

13

Example 6.16 Rakowski, the trill-turns in stretto and the reprise of the beginning, mm. 37-44.

## CHAPTER 7

### INTERVALLIC ÉTUDES

Most étude composers have been devoted to intervallic études; in the past, étude collections have included at least one dedicated to intervals. Compositions classified as intervallic études often use perpetual motion as the main technical challenge. This gives performers training in high-speed playing with different interval combinations. In the famous Chopin études, op. 25, there are three études addressing the study of intervals: no. 6 is written for thirds; no. 8 is for parallel sixths in the right hand; and no. 10 is for parallel octaves in chromatic progression. Debussy's late masterpiece (*Douze études pour piano*) also includes intervallic exercises: no. 2 (thirds), no. 3 (fourths), no. 4 (sixths), and no. 5 (octaves). In Ligeti's étude, "Cordes à vide," he constructs a lyrical study in fifths, and in his *Étude* no. 15, "White on White," he features seconds and various other dissonant intervals.

Rakowski is different from other composers who only composed a few studies for intervals; he composed études for every interval, targeting the different difficulties produced by each interval; Book Two alone includes six of these études. In all, there are eighteen études by Rakowski classified as intervallic, with the majority of them appearing in books two, three, and four: no. 5, "Figure Eight" (octaves), no. 15, "The Third, Man" (on thirds), no. 16, "Ice Boogie" (octave leaps), no. 17, "Keine Kaskadenjagd Mehr" (falling thirds and fourths), no. 18, "Pitching from the Stretch" (tenths), no. 19, "Secondary Dominance" (seconds), no. 20, "Fourth of Habit" (fourths), no. 24, "Horned in" (horn fifths), no. 32, "Boogie Ninths" (ninthths),

no. 35, “Luceole” (ascending seconds and thirds), no. 37, “Taking the Fifths” (perfect fifths), no. 39, “Sixth Appeal” (sixths), no. 46, “Durchrauscht die Luft” (sevenths), no. 47, “Fra Diabolis” (tritones), no. 55, “Eight Misbehavin” (slow octave étude), no. 56, “Crazy Eights” (fast octave/black-white key étude), no. 64, “A Third in the Hand” (arpeggiated thirds), and no. 75, “Twilight” (melodic thirds).

### **For Seconds, Fourths, Fifths, and Sixths:**

No. 19, “Secondary Dominance,” and no. 35, “Luceole,” are études on seconds. “Secondary Dominance” starts with repeated melodic major seconds at the beginning in both hands and expands to compound seconds in leaping motion (example 7.1). “Luceole” is the étude for the combination of seconds and thirds in ascending motion (example 7.2). These melodic intervals alternate throughout the piece, and begin with the right hand followed by the left hand in an overlapped similar ascending motion. In the last section, the piece changes to the right hand playing the melodic seconds against the melodic thirds played by the left hand. No. 17, “Keine Kaskadenjagd Mehr,” and no. 20, “Fourth of Habit,” are études for fourths (see example 7.3). The jazzy, swinging melodic fourths are the dominant character in “Fourth of Habit.” These fourths can be found in either harmonic intervals or melodic intervals linked from the previous interval, or in the chords that are built by two harmonic fourths.

The études on fifths are no. 24, “Horned in,” and no. 37, “Taking the Fifths.” Rakowski composed “Taking the Fifths” by calling for only perfect fifths, with the combination of both harmonic and melodic intervals against each other in different hands (example 7.4). The étude on sixths is no. 39, “Sixth Appeal,” where the melodic sixths are presented as the melody in the right hand against the harmonic interval sixths in the left hand (example 7.5).

*Étude #19*

# SECONDARY DOMINANCE

A curiously strong étude on seconds

David Rakowski  
1998**Molto intenso** ♩ = c. 126-132*Articolato, assai noio*

The first system of the musical score is in 5/4 time. The right hand (treble clef) plays a continuous eighth-note pattern of ascending and descending seconds, starting on G4. The left hand (bass clef) is mostly silent, with a few notes appearing in the second measure, including a sharp sign indicating a key signature change.

The second system continues the eighth-note pattern in the right hand. The left hand has more activity, with notes and slurs in the bass clef. A measure rest is present in the first measure of the second system.

The third system shows the right hand continuing its eighth-note pattern. The left hand features a long, sweeping slur over several measures, with notes in the bass clef. A measure rest is present in the first measure of the third system.

Example 7.1 Rakowski: *Étude*, “Secondary Dominance,” mm. 1-6.

*Étude #35*

# LUCEOLE

Étude on rising seconds and thirds

*For Amy Dissanayake*

David Rakowski

2001

*Presto possibile* ♩ = 116-132

*mf* *pp* *pp*

*mf* *mf* *mf* *mf*

*mf* *p* *f* *mf*

Example 7.2 Rakowski: Étude “Luceole,” mm. 1-9.

Étude #20

# FOURTH OF HABIT

Étude on fourths

for Geoffrey Burleson

N.B. The rhythm  $\text{♩}$  may be performed as "swing eighths", or not.

David Rakowski  
1998

Hard bop  $\text{♩} = 172 - 240$

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a piano (right hand) and bass clef (left hand) staff. The time signature is 9/16. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

- System 1 (mm. 1-3):** The right hand plays a melodic line with slurs and ties, marked *p*. The left hand provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines, marked *mp*.
- System 2 (mm. 4-6):** The right hand continues the melodic development, featuring a *f* dynamic in m. 5 and a *p* dynamic in m. 6. The left hand maintains the harmonic accompaniment, marked *mp*.
- System 3 (mm. 7-11):** The right hand concludes the phrase with a *f* dynamic in m. 10. The left hand continues with *mp*. The system includes markings for *2<sup>a</sup> volta* and *1<sup>a</sup> volta non diminuendo*.

Example 7.3 Rakowski: Étude, "Fourth of Habit," mm. 1-11.

Étude #37

## TAKING THE FIFTHS

Étude on perfect fifths

David Rakowski

2002

Quick and light  $\text{♩} = 116-132$ 

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The piece is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat major). The first system (mm. 1-2) begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The second system (mm. 3-4) continues with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The third system (mm. 5-6) features a piano (*p*) dynamic. The fourth system (mm. 7-8) concludes the excerpt. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Example 7.4 Rakowski: Étude, "Taking the Fifths," mm. 1-8.

Étude #39

# SIXTH APPEAL

Étude on sixths

David Rakowski  
2002

Smooth, flowing, flexible ♩ = 144-150 (♩ = 72-75)

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system (measures 1-3) includes the performance instruction *sempre legato* and the dynamic marking *p*. The second system (measures 4-6) begins with a measure rest for the first measure. The third system (measures 7-9) begins with a measure rest for the first measure. The music features a consistent eighth-note accompaniment in the bass clef and a melodic line in the treble clef, primarily consisting of sixths and dyads.

Example 7.5 Rakowski: Étude, “Sixth Appeal,” mm. 1-9.

### **For thirds:**

Rakowski has written five études on thirds. Written for harmonic thirds, “The Third, Man” is his first étude on thirds. no. 17, “Keine Kaskadenjagd Mehr,” is written for descending, alternating arpeggiated melodic thirds and fourths. No. 35, “Luceole,” combines the use of ascending seconds and thirds. The fourth étude on thirds is no. 64, “A Third in the Hand,” and is for arpeggiated thirds only, while the last étude on thirds is no. 74, “Twilight,” for the study of melodic thirds. Rakowski’s first étude on thirds, “The Third, Man,” bears the technique most closely related to the traditional études on thirds written by Chopin and Debussy, and warrants closer inspection. In the footsteps of Chopin and Debussy, Rakowski’s “The Third, Man” pursues the finger independence needed to play double notes on successive harmonic thirds.

### **Étude no. 15, “The Third, Man”**

"**THE THIRD, MAN** is an étude that uses only thirds to evoke a little of the odor of Debussy--even going so far as to quote, distorted, **Clair de Lune** (1905) in the final bar. It's a simple piece that starts with one voice in parallel thirds, adds a second and third voice, also in thirds, and a bass line that descends in thirds until it reaches the lowest C on the piano, over which alternating C major and minor triads form the backdrop of the ending.<sup>1</sup>

Compared to Rakowski’s other intervallic études, “The Third, Man” is a simple étude on thirds. Using Debussy as a model, this étude evokes impressionism, but with a very different approach to technique. Unlike Debussy’s or Chopin’s études on thirds, Rakowski’s étude is in a slower tempo, reducing the level of difficulty. When playing Chopin and Debussy études, performers seek fluidity and evenness, and hope to train the flexibility of their fingers so they can play the fast moving thirds. Unlike Chopin and Debussy, Rakowski concentrates on legato

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<sup>1</sup> Rakowski note at <http://artofthestates.org/cgi-bin/piece.pl?pid=252>.

phrasings in each voice, therefore the difficulty focuses on the expressive issues rather than on the technique itself.

The music is in 6/8, and marked “*Grazioso, sempre rubato e liberamente.*” “The Third, Man” is constructed in three voices: the first and second voices are strictly in thirds, and the third voice appears occasionally either in sustained thirds or as a single note melody in the bass line. The first two voices are mainly in the treble clef, but when the third voice comes in, the bass clef is used. Both major and minor thirds are used in the whole piece; the music alternates between major and minor thirds.

The piece starts with the right hand in *pianissimo*, and the second voice comes in on a unison on the upbeat to measure 3. The two voices flow independently in different phrasings until measure 16 when both voices play the thirds in contrary motion. The third voice appears with two sustained thirds in the bass at measure 23, and this is the measure where the tension starts to build and the thirds are performed in step or leap motion. The third voice appears again at measures 29-31, where the three voices are against each other. The pace starts to move faster at measure 31, where Rakowski indicates “*Con moto, Crescendo in intensità.*” The thirds mostly move in eighth notes in every beat and the registers expand widely to the bass clef. The third voice comes in as a single melodic line starting at measure 33 in mostly descending thirds, and a four-voice structure appears for a moment at measure 34. The third voice remains in the very low register until the end, while the second voice is more active: leaping back and forth between the treble and bass clefs (example 7.7). The reprise of the beginning materials occurs at measure 41. With the marking “*Tempo Primo*” at measure 44, the left hand melody from the beginning (measure 4) appears one octave lower and blends with the right hand melody (measure 6) an octave lower (example 7.8). In addition, there is a third voice playing the pedal point on C-sharp

in the bass. With the term “*Molto Liberamente, lontano lascia vibrare tutti i suoni,*” the texture of the étude changes and the dynamic becomes *pianissimo*, bringing with it a peaceful sound. The first and third voices have long bell-like chords on C minor and C major, while the second voice moves in wide leaps. The modification of the beginning of Debussy’s “Clair de Lune” is represented at the end of “The Third, Man,” evoking the writing of this great master (example 7.9).

Using Debussy as his model, Rakowski captures the sound and harmony of impressionism, but differs in his technical demands, especially when compared with Debussy’s own étude on thirds. Without seeking fast-moving flexibility, this étude concentrates on creating tone color, while keeping individual voices alive. The different phrasings in each voice are the major difficulty in playing this étude. Making a legato line in leaping thirds is another big challenge for the performer. Careful study of hand alternations and shifting for the second voice is a high priority, establishing this étude as not just a study for physical techniques, but also a subtle exercise in musical continuity.

Étude #15

# THE THIRD, MAN

Étude on thirds

David Rakowski

1997

Grazioso, sempre rubato e liberamente ♩ = c. 52-60

The first system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The music is in 6/8 time. The upper staff begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic and features a series of chords and intervals, many of which are connected by long, sweeping slurs. The lower staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with similar chordal structures.

*Molto  $\text{♩}$ , ad lib.*

The second system of the musical score continues from the first. It begins with a measure number '6' above the treble staff. The musical notation continues with complex chordal textures and intervals, maintaining the rubato and liberando character.

*Poco stringendo*

The third system of the musical score begins with a measure number '10' above the treble staff. The tempo is marked as *Poco stringendo*. The dynamics are indicated as *p* (piano) in the first measure and *mp* (mezzo-piano) in the final measure. The musical texture remains dense with complex intervals and chords.

Example 7.6 Rakowski: Étude, "The Third, Man," mm. 1-13.

*Con moto*  
*Crescendo in intensità*

28

*p*

32

*mp*

*Cima d'intensità*

35

*mf*

Example 7.7 Rakowski, middle section of the “The Third, Man,” mm. 28-37.

**Tempo Primo**

*molto liberamente, lontano  
lascia vibrare tutti i suoni*

red.      red.      red.

Example 7.8 Rakowski, "The Third, Man," the reprise of the beginning, mm. 44-48.

*Rallentando*

*Lento (chiaro della luna)*

red.      red.      red.      red.      \*

Example 7.9 Rakowski, "The Third, Man," quotation of "Clair de Lune," m. 51.

**For octaves:**

Rakowski has composed four études on octaves. The first octave étude is no. 5, “Figure Eight,” which is an exercise for parallel octaves between the two hands. Both hands play the same melody one octave apart in similar motion with some parallel octave passages in each hand in the middle section. The second one is no. 16, “Ice Boogie,” a study on octave leaps in a jazzy, boogie-woogie style. Both hands interact alternately with broken octaves throughout the piece; technically, it is difficult to keep the rhythm and jump octaves at the same time. The third octave étude is no. 55, “Eight Misbehavin’.” This slow octave étude is written after Brahms Clarinet Sonata, Op. 120, No.1, in F minor. The first two measures are based on the second movement of the sonata. (The inscription is mistakenly marked “after Brahms Op. 120, no. 2”). The texture of “Eight Misbehavin’” is reminiscent of the passionate lyricism utilized by Brahms (example 7.10). Although no melody is directly quoted here, the leaping octaves and harmonic language recall the accompaniment part of Brahms’ sonata. The last octave étude is no. 56, “Crazy Eights,” which is a challenging étude on fast octaves moving between black and white keys. Given its unusual nature in regard to studying octaves, “Crazy Eights” warrants a deeper investigation.

Étude #55

## EIGHT MISBEHAVIN'

Slow octave étude

after Brahms Op. 120 No. 2

for Amy Osborn

David Rakowski

2003

Slow, flexible, legato ♩ = ca. 44-52

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs).  
 System 1 (mm. 1-3): Treble clef starts with a quarter note G4, followed by a half note G4-A4. Bass clef starts with a quarter note G2, followed by a half note G2-A2. Dynamics include *pp* and *lib. ad lib.*.  
 System 2 (mm. 4-6): Treble clef features a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) and a half note G4. Bass clef features a triplet of eighth notes (G2, A2, B2) and a half note G2. Dynamics include *p*.  
 System 3 (mm. 7-9): Treble clef features a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) and a half note G4. Bass clef features a triplet of eighth notes (G2, A2, B2) and a half note G2. Dynamics include *mp*.

Example 7.10 Rakowski: Étude, "Eight Misbehavin'," mm. 1-9.

### Étude no. 56, “Crazy Eights”

This étude combines two techniques: it is written for fast octave practice, and also addresses black and white key alternations. It is unusual in Rakowski’s études to have two techniques highlighted in a single étude. The piece starts with white keys in the right hand (with no key signature), and black keys in the left hand (with a key signature in five flats). Since the left hand only plays black keys, the five black notes – D-flat, E-flat, G-flat, A-flat, and B-flat are the only notes used in the left hand and keep repeating in octaves in each phrase. The tempo marking is  $\text{♩} = 116-132$ , with irregular meter changes almost every measure, using either eighth notes or sixteenth notes as a beat, which creates irregular grouping of pulses.

The first three phrases are each three measures long, with a different variation each time. The two hands play in close position with some repeated octaves in steps. Both hands suddenly jump down to the bass clef at the end of the first phrase, moving in contrary motion in *pianissimo*, and the right hand jumps back right away to the treble clef for the next measure. The tune “A, B, C” in the right hand and “G-flat, E-flat, D-flat” in the left hand becomes the essential motives in ending these phrases. The huge leaping between bass and treble clefs creates another technical demand in addition to the difficulties of octaves and black and white key alternations. The crossing of the left hand over the right hand at measure 11 also adds another level of difficulty to “Crazy Eights.” Another hand-crossing happens after the fourth phrase at measure 16, when both hands move to treble clef. The left hand crosses back and forth over the right hand in a very tight position. When the music reaches the fifth phrase at measure 21, the left hand is almost an octave above the right hand and must suddenly hop back to bass clef, spanning a distance of four octaves (example 7.12).

The climax occurs at measure 45, when the key signature of both hands switches with a

series of repetitive octave passages between two hands. The loudest passage (*fortissimo*) in the étude takes place at measure 47 and measure 51, where the octaves D-flat and B-flat keep repeating in the right hand against the repeated octaves B and D in the left hand with syncopations (example 7.13). The opening is then recapitulated with hands reversed at measure 52; the motives at the ends of phrases revert back to the beginning with a similar ending: “A-flat, B-flat, D-flat” and “G, F, D,” instead of “A, B, C” and “G-flat, E-flat, D-flat” (example 7.14). The étude concludes with a little variation on the motives in *pianissimo*, recalling the opening atmosphere.

As the title suggests, “Crazy Eights” makes the performer “crazy” by moving octaves in huge leaps with some occasional cross-overs, requiring the performer to deal with spacing between the white keys and black keys at the same time, and also demanding the mastery of complicated syncopated rhythms with constantly changing irregular meters. This challenging piece helps performers become familiar with the distances between octaves by playing repeated octaves several times. “Crazy Eights” also gives the performer a chance to explore the close position when the hands are almost overlapping. Practicing the piece with each hand individually is a necessity, and counting in sixteenth notes in a slow tempo is another must when attempting to master this étude. “Crazy Eights” produces a tremendous effect when the combinations of the techniques are accomplished.

Rakowski’s interval études focus on each interval, pinpointing the demands of all intervals from seconds to tenths. These études are not only about harmonic intervals (practicing the spacing of notes and distances), but also encourage the mastery of melodic intervals and compound intervals, requiring legato and phrasing practice. Rakowski carefully constructs each intervallic étude to place each interval in a wide variety of contexts, creating a great opportunity

for the performer to practice these basic techniques, yet discover new approaches.

Étude #56

# CRAZY EIGHTS

Fast octave and black/white key étude

David Rakowski

2003

Pazzamente, scemo ♩ = c. 116-132

*p*

*Red. ad lib.*

*pp* *p* *mp*

*pp* *p*

Example 7.11 Rakowski: Étude, “Crazy Eights,” mm. 1-9.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a piano piece. The first system covers measures 19 to 20. The right-hand staff (treble clef) begins with a dynamic marking of *f* and features a melodic line with slurs and ties. The left-hand staff (bass clef) starts with a dynamic marking of *pp* and contains a bass line with slurs. The second system covers measures 21 to 23. The right-hand staff begins with a dynamic marking of *p* and contains a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The left-hand staff starts with a dynamic marking of *pp* and features a bass line with slurs. Measure numbers 19, 21, 17, and 19 are indicated at the beginning and end of the systems.

Example 7.12 “Crazy Eights,” the left hand exhibits cross-over and plays octave higher than the right hand, mm. 19-23.

43 *mp* 17/16

45 *f* 17/16

47 *ff* *mf* 7/16

Example 7.13 “Crazy Eights,” the black/white keys switch between two hands, mm. 43-48.

52

*mp* *pp*

55

*p* *pp* *mp*

58

*mf* *p* *pp*

Example 7.14 “Crazy Eights,” the opening reprises with hand reversed, mm. 52-60.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

Rakowski's exploration of piano études began in 1988. Composing études is an ongoing project for him, with the total number of his études now exceeding one hundred. As he has mentioned, his études are "brief, virtuoso pieces that develop a singular idea based on some technical problem of performance or an abstract musical idea."<sup>1</sup> In composing them, Rakowski "enjoys taking an idea, however simple or silly it may be, and drawing music from it that simply never would have occurred to me in any other context."<sup>2</sup> In general, the style of those ideas is consistent in Rakowski's music. Rakowski has mentioned that his music is influenced by four composers: Brahms, Berg, Bartok and Martino. In an interview with Frank J. Oteri, Rakowski states that "It's the rhythm for Bartók, the piano textures from Brahms, and the way all the layers relate from Berg, and the way instruments are used and how gestures interlock from Martino."<sup>3</sup>

Rakowski's compositional language is atonal, but not according to any system. In the études the opening material usually recurs at the very end of the piece, recalling the beginning atmosphere with some variation. Rakowski loves using low bass with accents, broken octaves to reach the high register, repeated notes for the pedal points and groups of fast notes in all registers. He also often employs longer sustained notes for the melody on top of groups of fast notes as an accompaniment. His études bear familiar characteristics which can be seen in almost

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<sup>1</sup> David Rakowski, "Hyperblue," New World Record, NWCR820.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Frank J. Oteri, <<http://www.newmusicbox.org/article.nmbx?id=5302>> (Accessed March, 2008).

every piece. First, perpetual motion: many of his études are in perpetual motion and most of them are played at a fast speed. There are many notes, and the motives keep evolving and expanding into other motives. The études in perpetual motion are mostly virtuosic with demanding techniques. Second, unsteady meters and complicated rhythms are typical; most of the études are fast with a lot of syncopations and dotted rhythms. The meters change often and in some passages they change every measure. Third, jazz is a frequent influence: many études utilize a jazz idiom, incorporating swing, Be-Bop, blues, funk, and free jazz elements. Fourth, the music encompasses all registers: most of the études have big leaps and the music often rapidly moves from the low to high registers or vice versa. Several have layers of notes starting from the lowest register that proceed to pile up. Fifth, Rakowski's études possess big moments: his pieces are very dramatic and usually reach a big climax, although a big climax does not always mean a big sonority. Sometimes these climactic moments come from musical references to famous tunes with different approaches in texture, drawing a big reaction from the audience. The last general characteristic is Rakowski's titles: all of his études have suitable yet funny titles, many containing puns or jokes. While the title reveals the technique to be used in the étude and provides a first impression for the piece, it also represents Rakowski's humorous personality and witty character.

Rakowski's études contain an amazing range of techniques, many of them demonstrating a unique or even outrageous approach. His creative ideas for uncommon piano techniques, especially his most hilarious, the étude for nose ("Schnozzage"), sets him apart as a composer of études. His ideas may sometimes be silly, but are nonetheless effective in performance.

There are a number of études not discussed in detail here, including entire categories: "Dynamic contrast, articulation and pedaling," "Jazz" and "Miscellaneous" études. The

techniques used in the “Dynamic contrast, articulation and pedaling” group include practicing different sonorities, accent, and legato-staccato studies. The pedal practices involve three pedals—the damper pedal, sustained pedal, and una corda at the same time. Most of his jazz études involve or are dedicated to Rick Moody, who has often challenged Rakowski to write new études within particular limitations. The “Miscellaneous” études are those that do not fit into any prior category. These études are special in their usage of uncommon techniques: Rakowski is the only composer I know to have composed a palindrome étude, an étude on clave rhythm, and an *accelerando-ritenuto* étude.

Most of Rakowski’s études have been performed and some of his famous études are widely played by both students and professional performers. There have even been a few workshops and seminars held for introducing his études. Some pianists are especially devoted to his piano études and have played almost all of them. Pianist Amy Dissanayake has recorded his études in three volumes, containing études from books I to VII. There are only a few études which have not been performed, including: no. 75, “Twilight,” no. 77, “Ecco Eco,” no. 78, “Upon Reflection,” no. 79, “Narcissitude,” and some others from the upcoming book IX.

Composing piano études began as a side job for Rakowski, used mostly to fill time between big projects or during brief vacations. Rakowski now has become a “piano études guy,” as Frank J. Oteri called him.<sup>4</sup> With his one hundred plus piano etudes, Oteri’s observation is apt. Rakowski expects to continue his etude project and welcomes any new ideas on techniques for writing a new étude.<sup>5</sup> Rakowski’s compositions may very well emerge as the most comprehensive body of piano études of their time, always exhibiting a new, adventurous and

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<sup>4</sup> Rakowski interview with Frank J. Oteri, <<http://www.newmusicbox.org/article.nmbx?id=5302>> (Accessed March, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

refreshing approach.

## APPENDIX

### List of David Rakowski Piano Études (Up to No. 80)

#### Repeated notes, swirls notes and imitation études

- No. 1 “E-Machines”- Repeated note étude
- No. 2 “BAM!”- étude on swirls of notes
- No. 3 “Nocturnal”- étude on slow repeated notes
- No. 43 “Wiggle Room”- étude on fast notes moving in parallel
- No. 52 “Moody’s Blues”- rock and roll étude on repeated chords
- No. 78 “Upon Reflection”- slow mirror étude
- No. 79 “Narcissitude”- fast mirror étude

#### Scales, chords or arpeggio exercises

- No. 7 “Les Arbres Embues”- étude on thick sonorities and embedded lines
- No. 21 “Twelve-Step Program”- étude on chromatic scales and wedges
- No. 28 “You’ve Got Scale”- étude on scales and arpeggios
- No. 29 “Roll Your Own”- étude on rolled chords
- No. 33 “Sliding Scales”- gonzo étude on scales
- No. 36 “Purple”- étude on a chord
- No. 44 “Triaddled”- étude on triads
- No. 48 “What Half-Diminishes One”- chorale-étude on half-diminished seventh chords
- No. 53 “Cell Division”- treble étude on arpeggios
- No. 57 “Chord Shark”- slow étude on thick chords
- No. 58 “Wound Tight”- fast étude on all chords
- No. 65 “Rick’s Mood”- chorale-étude on major triads
- No. 66 “Less Is”- impatient minimalist étude on chord-building
- No. 80 “Fireworks”- arpeggio étude

### **Specific fingers, Alternating hands or one-hand etude**

- No. 6 “Mano á Mano”- étude on alternating hands
- No. 9 “Pollici e Mignoli, or the Virus That Ate New York”- étude for thumbs and pinkies
- No. 10 “Corrente”- étude on left-hand running notes
- No. 11 “Touch Typing”- étude for index fingers only
- No. 12 “Northpaw”- right-hand étude
- No. 14 “Martler”- hand crossing étude
- No. 23 “You Dirty Rag”- étude for left thumb melody
- No. 27 “Halftone” - black vs. white keys
- No. 61 “Ménage a Droit”- right-hand étude
- No. 67 “Ain’t Got No Right”- left hand étude
- No. 72 “Dorian Blue”- étude on two-hand flourishes

### **Extended techniques**

- No. 13 “Plucking A”- inside-the-piano étude
- No. 25 “Fists of Fury”- étude for occasional fists
- No. 69 “Palm de Terre”- cluster étude

### **Special- effect**

- No. 22 “Schnozzage”- étude for nose
- No. 71 “Chase”- étude with celesta
- No. 74 “Not”- talking pianist étude

**Ornament étude**

- No. 4 “Trillage”- Trill étude
- No. 26 “Once Bitten”- étude on mordents
- No. 30 “A Gliss is Just a Gliss”- étude on glissandi
- No. 31 “Usurpation”- étude on a slow trill
- No. 51 “Zipper Tango”- tango-étude on grace notes
- No. 62 “Name That Turn”- étude on turns

**Intervallic etudes**

- No. 5 “Figure Eight”- octave étude
- No. 15 “The Third, Man”- étude on thirds
- No. 16 “Ice Boogie”- étude on octave leaps
- No. 17 “Keine Kaskadenjagd Mehr”- étude on falling thirds and fourths
- No. 18 “Pitching from the Stretch”- étude on tenths
- No. 19 “Secondary Dominance”- étude on seconds
- No. 20 “Fourth of Habit”- étude on fourths
- No. 24 “Horned in”- étude on horn fifths
- No. 32 “Boogie Ninths”- étude on ninths
- No. 35 “Luceole”- étude on ascending seconds and thirds
- No. 37 “Taking the Fifths”- étude on perfect fifths
- No. 39 “Sixth Appeal”- étude on sixths
- No. 46 “Durchrauscht die Luft”- étude on sevenths
- No. 47 “Fra Diabolis”- étude on tritones
- No. 55 “Eight Misbehavin”- slow octave étude
- No. 56 “Crazy Eights”- fast octave/black-white key étude
- No. 64 “A Third in the Hand”- étude on arpeggiated thirds
- No. 74 “Twilight”- étude on melodic thirds

### **Dynamic contrast, articulation and pedaling**

- No. 38 “Silent But Deadly”- pianissimo étude
- No. 49 “Saltimmano”-finger- pedaling étude
- No. 54 “Pedal to the Metal”- pedaling étude
- No. 59 “Zeccatella”- staccato-legato étude
- No. 60 “Accents of Malice”- accent étude
- No. 63 “Killer B's”- étude on a pedal
- No. 70 “Stutter Stab”-étude on stark dynamic contrasts
- No. 73 “Heavy Hitter”- fortissimo étude
- No. 77 “Ecco Eco”- echo étude

### **Jazz**

- No. 8 “Close Enough for Jazz”- ostinato étude
- No. 40 “Strident”- stride piano étude
- No. 41 “Bop it”- bop étude
- No. 68 “Absofunkinlutely”- funk étude

### **Miscellaneous**

- No. 34 “Chorale Fantasy”- slow étude on an embedded melody
- No. 42 “Madam I'm Adam”- little palindrome étude
- No. 45 “Pink Tab”- accelerando-ritenuto étude
- No. 50 “No Stranger to Our Planet”- étude on register shifts
- No. 76 “Clave”- étude on the clave rhythm

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