

**chopin**

## études

opus 10

opus 25

**murray perahia**







## Frédéric CHOPIN (1810-1849)

### 12 Études, Op. 10

1	Étude No. 1 in C Major	2.01
2	Étude No. 2 in A Minor	1.24
3	Étude No. 3 in E Major	3.51
4	Étude No. 4 in C-sharp Minor	2.01
5	Étude No. 5 in G-flat Major "Black Keys"	1.41
6	Étude No. 6 in E-flat Minor	2.25
7	Étude No. 7 in C Major	1.29
8	Étude No. 8 in F Major	2.21
9	Étude No. 9 in F Minor	2.09
10	Étude No. 10 in A-flat Major	2.12
11	Étude No. 11 in E-flat Major	2.15
12	Étude No. 12 in C Minor "Revolutionary"	2.32

### 12 Études, Op. 25

13	Étude No. 1 in A-flat Major	2.24
14	Étude No. 2 in F Minor	1.35
15	Étude No. 3 in F Major	1.40
16	Étude No. 4 in A Minor	1.42
17	Étude No. 5 in E Minor	2.53
18	Étude No. 6 in G-sharp Minor "Thirds"	1.54
19	Étude No. 7 in C-sharp Minor	5.08
20	Étude No. 8 in D-flat Major "Sixths"	1.08
21	Étude No. 9 in G-flat Major	1.00
22	Étude No. 10 in B Minor "Octaves"	3.52
23	Étude No. 11 in A Minor	3.29
24	Étude No. 12 in C Minor	2.38

## Bonus Tracks:

25	Impromptu in A-flat Major, Op. 29	3.30
26	Impromptu in F-sharp Major, Op. 36	5.39
27	Impromptu in G-flat Major, Op. 51	6.25
28	Fantasie Impromptu in C-sharp Minor, Op. 66	5.08

Murray Perahia, *Piano*

Total time: 76.26

Consists of previously released material.

Tracks 1-24:

Producer & Engineer: Andreas Neubronner / Assistant Engineers: Andrew Granger, Jake Jackson / Editor: Matthew Cocker / Piano technicians: Ulrich Gerhartz, Nigel Polmear / Recorded at Lyndhurst Hall, Air Studios, London, Great Britain, June 28-July 4, 2001

Tracks 25-28:

Producer: Andrew Kazdin / Recorded at Vanguard Studios, New York City, November 23, 1983

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## Chopin Études

Chopin's two books of *Études* present unparalleled challenges to anybody who dares take them on. It has been said that the pianist who can play all of the *Études* can play anything, for the composer set out specifically to explore the furthest extremes of keyboard virtuosity while maintaining his customary, uniquely poetic sensibility.

The word "étude" means "study" – and every one of these "studies" addresses a specific technical concern, the mastery of which can only benefit a pianist in any other works he or she plays. And yet the *Études* are much more than mere exercises, for their Herculean physical demands are nothing compared to their musical ones. Even Artur Rubinstein, who played Chopin all over the world for three-quarters of a century, was daunted by the *Études*, admitting frankly that he was "scared to death" of them. "To do them justice is a most difficult task, which I haven't yet had the courage to attempt," he wrote to an admirer in 1962.

Rubinstein's fears were well-founded, for the *Études* are rightly considered Himalayas of the piano literature, magnificent and treacherous. As the musicologist Sir Donald Francis Tovey observed: "No other composer has so nobly overcome the immense difficulty of writing works that systematize and exhibit one by one the extreme resources of the modern pianoforte while at the same time remaining spontaneous music of a high order."



Chopin was barely 23 years old when his first set of “Douze Grandes Études (Opus 10)” was published in Leipzig in June 1833 and proclaimed, in no uncertain terms, the sudden maturity of an extraordinary young composer.

The Études were dedicated to Franz Liszt, who was already recognized as the greatest pianist of his time, and who played them with a brilliance that the frail Chopin could not approximate. We can only imagine the effect that the opening Étude in C Major must have made on pianists and audiences alike. Never before had there been piano music of such expansive sweep and muscular energy; it is as if Chopin had somehow managed to yoke a simple chorale melody to the rushing fury of a waterfall. The second Étude couldn't be more different – a soft study in sixteenth-notes that creeps up and down the keyboard like a spider on a web. Of such contrasts, heroic and intimate by turn, are these Études made.

Far and away the best known of the set is the tender and introspective Étude in E Major, No. 3; Chopin himself confessed that he had never written another melody like it. This is the Étude that most young pianists attempt first. Still, as Herbert Weinstock observed in his classic biography of the composer, if it is relatively easy to play, it is maddeningly difficult to play *well*. “Played by a master, it can be one of music's warmest-hued jewels,” Weinstock observed. “No lesser pianist should play it except to himself.”

Opus 10, No. 5 is sometimes called the “Black Key” Étude – and, indeed, the right hand plays nothing else through its brief duration.

Opus 10, No. 8 is a proudly exuberant work that gives its noble melody to the left hand while demanding the utmost in showy filigree from the right. The last of the Opus 10 Études has been dubbed the “Revolutionary” Étude. Legend has it that the composer wrote it in a fury in 1831 after learning that Warsaw had been captured by Russia. Whether or not this is true (and it seems to have more basis in fact than most Romantic legends) it remains a fiercely passionate work, complete with an ending in an unexpected key that still seems both radical and brusque.

By the time Chopin's second book of Études (Opus 25) was published in 1837, he was a celebrated figure, with a number of masterpieces behind him. And so the arrival of his new Études did not – *could* not – have the same seismic impact of the original collection. Yet the music is at least as inspired and the demands are no less challenging.

Chopin's friend and colleague Robert Schumann likened the opening Étude in Opus 25 to an “Aeolian harp.” “Throughout all the harmonies one always heard in great tones a wondrous melody,” he wrote. “After the Étude a feeling came over one as of having seen in a dream a beatific picture which when half awake one would gladly recall.” He went on to describe the second Étude, in F Major, as “charming, dreamy and soft as the song of a child singing in its slumber.” (It should be remembered that Schumann himself, in the *Kinderszenen* – “Scenes From Childhood” – provided his own memorable musical depiction of a little one drifting off to sleep.)

Hans von Bülow, the late 19th-century conductor and pianist,

endorsed the Étude in D-flat (Op. 25, No. 8) as a remedy for stiff fingers before performing in public. "Playing it through six times is recommended even to the most expert pianists," von Bülow suggested. (One suspects that any pianist who actually took his advice would then be too tired to go on!) The so-called "Butterfly" Étude in G-flat Major, which follows immediately, is a dizzyingly tricky study in the alternation of legato and staccato.

The three last Études – in B Minor, A Minor and C Minor – represent Chopin at his most affecting and ambitious. The A Minor Étude has long been known as the "Winter Wind," and there is indeed an elemental ferocity in its pages that lends itself to such an image. The four opening measures – the only moments of repose in the whole piece – were added to the score as an afterthought, at the suggestion of a friend. It was a stroke of genius: the element of contrast they add endows the Étude with an entirely new dimension.

The final Étude (Op. 25, No. 12) seems to hearken back to the very first in the series (Op. 10, No. 1). Both are studies in racing arpeggios, both demand titanic power and huge (or infinitely flexible) hands from the pianist, both are possessed of monumental grandeur. Still, there is a world of difference between the two pieces. The opening Étude was in the brightest C Major, while this final utterance is in stormiest C Minor, imbued throughout with a sense of tumultuous cataclysm.

– Tim Page

*Tim Page won the Pulitzer Prize for Criticism  
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