A FORGOTTEN ROMANTIC: ADOLF VON HENSELT'S PIANO ETUDES IN THE CONTEXT OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES

By

TSAI-WEI LI

(Under the Direction of Liza Stepanova)

ABSTRACT

The lecture recital and accompanying document aim to shed light on the underappreciated composer, Adolf von Henselt (1814-1889). Despite being highly admired by renowned composers such as Robert and Clara Schumann, Franz Liszt, and Sergei Rachmaninoff, Henselt remains relatively obscure today. As a romantic virtuoso, he exerted significant influence on the development of piano playing in the 19th century, particularly in Russia. He wrote two formidable sets of etudes, wide-ranging in pianistic difficulty and musical material. This lecture-recital will examine technical issues in his etudes with related works by Carl Czerny, Johann Baptist Cramer, Clara Schumann, Felix Mendelssohn, and Frédéric Chopin. The chosen repertoire comprises five pairings; each pairing features one of Henselt's etudes alongside a composition from another composer of his era. Through the recital, I aim to introduce audiences to this remarkable composer and his contribution to piano literature.

INDEX WORDS: Piano Music, Adolf von Henselt, Clara Schumann, Johann Baptist Cramer, Felix Mendelssohn, Carl Czerny, Frédéric Chopin, Pedagogical Suggestions

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TSAI-WEI LI

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Major Professor: Liza Stepanova
Committee: Adrian Childs
Peter Jutras

Electronic Version Approved:
Ron Walcott
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
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DEDICATION

In memory of my dearest dad, whose enduring love and the cherished gift of a piano ignited my passion for music. Though I had only eight years with you, I am forever grateful, and your love and upbringing continue to guide me every day. I will always miss you.

To my beloved mom, whose unconditional love has supported me throughout my life. You have demonstrated such strength and resilience as a woman. Thank you for always loving and believing in me.

To my husband, Sang, your wisdom and unwavering support have been the source of strength and love. Thank you for loving me and walking with me through ups and downs and being an exceptional teammate.

And to my one-year-old son, Nolan, you bring boundless joy into our life. I am endlessly grateful for your presence and the fulfillment you bring. I will forever love you.

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To my students and their parents, I am beyond grateful for the unwavering support, love, and trust in me. All the encouragement has been a constant source of motivation throughout my studies.

Each of you plays an important role in my life; I would not be who I am without any of you. I am truly blessed and filled with love.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

In the early 19th century, societal and technological changes in Europe gave rise to new models of music consumption and patronage. Increasingly, music was performed in public concerts for a broader audience rather than merely for the enjoyment of the aristocracy. With that, a different breed of flashy virtuoso instrumentalist emerged, of which the violinist Niccolo Paganini was perhaps the most prominent early example. Pianists soon followed in his footsteps culminating in an unprecedented flowering of piano virtuosos, particularly in Paris in the 1830s, but reaching as far east as the Russian Empire, where the Irish composer-pianist John Field (1782-1837), a student of Muzio Clementi, settled and performed starting in 1802. At the same time, the Industrial Revolution made the dissemination of music and instruments to private homes much easier, allowing for domestic music-making to expand to middle-class homes with the piano as the instrument of choice. This created a rising demand for music lessons and teaching material such as methods and technical exercises, both for amateur pianists and those aspiring to a performance career. Some of the composers who are still well-known today for their pedagogical works include Carl Czerny (1791-1857) and Johann Baptist Cramer (1771-1858), both of whom will appear in this research paper.

The nature of the music changed as well, with a focus on “individuality, originality, fantasy, expression of pure emotion, and transcending conventional limits in pursuit of deeper

truths,"[1] understood today under the broad umbrella of Romanticism. Pianistic and compositional advancements of early Romantics, such as Felix Mendelssohn and Carl Maria von Weber, paved the way for the two towering figures among virtuoso composers for the piano: Franz Liszt and Frédéric Chopin. Clara Schumann was regarded as one of the greatest pianists of the century. Her compositional output is relatively small, largely due to significant obstacles women faced in reconciling domestic expectations with their careers, but her completed works are of the highest quality and are increasingly recognized on concert stages as part of the core Romantic repertoire for the piano in the 19th century.

Adolf von Henselt (1814-1898) is less well-known today than some of the names mentioned above. We see this in the lack of public and recorded performances of his works and in their sparse use in pianistic training. He occupies a peculiar place among his contemporaries, and the reasons for that lie both in the biographical circumstances of his career spent largely in Eastern Europe (see Chapter 2) as well as the nature of his music, particularly its significant pianistic demands which are partially related to Henselt's physical ability to perform large hand stretches. Hans von Bülow, one of the great pianists of the 19th century, taught himself technique using, among others, Henselt's etudes and remarked that during their study "I crucify, like a good Christ, the flesh of my fingers, in order to make them obedient, submissive machines to the mind as a pianist must." [2] This lecture-recital aims to demonstrate that Henselt was influential among both his contemporaries and his successors, and his music should still be of great interest both for its artistic qualities as well as for pianistic and pedagogical reasons. Even though this thesis has been advanced in excellent literature, with Reginald Gerig, in F*amous Pianists & Their*

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[1] J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009), 595.
[2] Quoted in: Alan Walker, *Hans von Bülow: A Life and Times* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 57.

Technique, opining that Henselt's "Etudes, Opuses 2 and 5, have great musical as well as technical value,"[3] I believe that this document will advance worthwhile additional arguments in support of Henselt's music.

Just like today, the musical world of the 19th century was deeply interconnected. Henselt knew many of the important musicians of his time personally. He performed and arranged their works; they, in turn, used his works both in performance and for pedagogical purposes (see Bülow's comment above). Alan Walker provides an impressive account of Henselt's meeting with Liszt when the latter visited St. Petersburg, Russia in 1842-1843: "At Liszt's request, Henselt played Weber's Polacca in E major. Liszt was stunned by the polished performance, given in Henselt's inimitable fashion, sitting motionless at the keyboard, impervious to technical difficulties. 'I, too, could have had velvet paws if I had wished,' Liszt remarked. The friendship formed on this occasion, based on mutual respect for one another's musical gifts, survived until Liszt's death.[4]"

Henselt's connections to other musicians will be explored in more depth in Chapters 2 and 3. It is known that he met Chopin personally, and Henselt's familiarity with the music of other contemporaries is evident in his transcriptions and public performances of works by Chopin, Mendelssohn, and John Baptist Cramer. In turn, there are many records of other pianists performing and studying Henselt's works. Clara Schumann regularly included them in her recitals and concerto appearances (performing Henselt's Piano Concerto Op. 16), and Carl Czerny includes a discussion of Henselt as one of a handful prominent composers whose styles he dissects for students in Czerny's Grosse Pianoforte-Schule ["Large School of Pianoforte-Playing"], Op. 500. Robert Schumann warmly reviewed Henselt's works in his *Neue Zeitschrift*

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[3] Reginald Gerig, *Famous Pianists and Their Technique* (New York: Robert B. Luce, Inc., 1974), 290.
[4] Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years 1811-1847* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1987), 377.

fuer Musik and dedicated his Novelettes, Op. 21 to Henselt. In this lecture-recital with accompanying document, the research aims to provide context for the style and pianistic writing in Henselt's music by placing it next to his contemporaries with whose compositions we are generally more familiar. The goal is to contribute to a small but slowly growing body of literature dedicated to reintroducing this nearly forgotten Romantic composer. Despite relative obscurity today, Henselt occupied a prominent place in the musical landscape of the 19th century with deep connections to many other musicians. He exercised enormous influence on the development of a professional Russian school of piano-playing, a lineage that continues to this day. This project places a focus on his compositions and their significant artistic and pianistic merits. I hope to contribute to a rediscovery of this music which deserves a larger place in the performing and teaching repertoire.

Focal Works

From a choice of Henselt's approximately 60 piano works (including variations, character pieces, a piano concerto and transcriptions), I elected to focus on his etudes due to their pianistic and artistic interest, the symbolic status of the etude in the age of virtuosity and pedagogy, and the practical consideration that a collection of short etudes allows for the demonstration of a larger number of textures, moods, and styles with ample material for comparison with music by others.

Henselt's two main collections of etudes were published as his Op. 2 and Op. 5. There are several more etudes outside these collections: a study in A minor (Leipzig, 1876) and "La Gondola," Op. 13, No. 2, which is often referred to as an etude because it was composed for a compendium of technical pieces collected by Ignaz Moscheles in his Op. 98, as well as a section

in *Poëme d'amour,* Op. 3 (see below). This paper will focus on the two main collections, Opp. 2 and 5. Both were composed in Breslau in mid-1837.[5] Biographically, they are the main works he composed between meeting his future wife Rosalie Vogel, née Manger (1807 – 1893), in the fall of 1836 and their marriage in October 1837. Rosalie was in a difficult situation: divorced with four children from a previous marriage who were in her former husband's custody.[6] The romantic connection between her and Henselt must have been strong to overcome these circumstances. It is thus tempting to link Henselt's creative outpouring in the etudes to these events. Henselt's *Poëme d'amour,* Op. 3 (published in 1838) also dates from this time and is dedicated to his wife. The subtitle of this work ("Andante et etude concertante") and the virtuosic nature of the last section connect it to the etudes composed during the same time.

Both collections of etudes were published in 1838 by several European publishers simultaneously, likely for different markets. Musicologist and collector Richard Beattie Davis has compiled a catalogue of Henselt's compositions, which is available for download on the website of the German Henselt Society ("Henselt-Gesellschaft").[7] Beattie is also the author of an article about Henselt in *Grove Music Online* which includes a works list, but the former catalogue is more detailed with regard to henselt's publishers. The catalogue and Beattie's program notes[8] for a recording of the etudes by Piers Lane (Hyperion Records) help explain why some editions may have German titles for the etudes, some may have French, and some may have none at all.[9] The fact that titles, especially in Op. 2, are omitted from some editions makes it likely that

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[5] "Biographie," *Internationale Adolph-Henselt-Gesellschaft*, accessed April 4, 2024, https://henselt-gesellschaft.de/henselt/biographie/.
[6] Richard Beattie Davis, "Henselt, (George Martin) Adolf," *Grove Music Online,* January 20, 2021, accessed March 7, 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.12818.
[7] Richard Beattie Davis, "Definitive Henselt Catalogue," *The Henselt Society,* accessed March 4, 2024, https://henselt-gesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Henseltcompositions.pdf.
[8] Richard Beattie Davis, "Adolf von Henselt (1814-1889) Opp 2 & 5." Program notes for Piers Lane, *Hyperion* CDA67495. CD, accessed March 4, 2024, https://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dc.asp?dc=D_CDA67495.
[9] Davis, "Adolf von Henselt (1814-1889) Opp 2 & 5." Program notes for Piers Lane.

Henselt added them specifically for publication, to make the pieces more attractive to prospective buyers of the scores, and that they were not essential inspirations during his compositional process. Robert Schumann weighed in negatively on the choice of French titles (he preferred German) in his otherwise glowing review of the Op. 2 etudes in the *Neue Zeitschrift fuer Musik.*[10] Nonetheless, the evocative French titles in the Hofmeister and Wessel editions of Op. 2 continue to be used when performers release recordings of the etudes today, while most of the etudes in Op. 5 (with two exceptions), first published by Breitkopf & Hartel, a staple German publisher, have German titles. Beattie describes the etudes as "expressively beautiful and charged with passion, they show at times an apparent debt to Chopin's studies written a few years earlier, which many approach in quality of content. But the sentiment is essentially German, with thematic and rhythmic patterns related to folksong, offset by striking closes on degrees of the scale remote from the tonic."[11]

For this lecture-recital, I chose five Henselt etudes. The selection was made for multiple reasons but first and foremost, because I judged these particular pieces to be of especially high musical merit, able to hold their own next to music by Chopin and Liszt. Additionally, each of the etudes represents a different style, texture, technical issue, and musical idea. The other composers were chosen for their general musical significance, evidence of personal and musical connections between them and Henselt, and specific musical parallels between their works and select Henselt etudes.

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[10] Robert Schumann, *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker,* vol. 3 (Leipzig: Georg Wigand's Verlag, 1854), 3-20.
[11] Davis, "Henselt, (George Martin) Adolf." *Grove Music Online.*

Lecture-Recital Program

Etude, Op. 5, No. 2	Adolf von Henselt (1814-1898)
Etude, Op. 10, No. 1	Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)
Etude, Op. 5, No. 4 in E major "Ave Maria"	Henselt
Etude, Op. 30, No. 41	Johann Baptist Cramer (1771-1858)
Etude, Op. 5, No. 1	Henselt
Songs Without Words in C Minor, Op. 38, No. 2	Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
Etude, Op. 2, No. 1	Henselt
Grand Etude, Op. 692, No. 21	Carl Czerny (1791-1857)
Etude, Op. 2, No. 4	Henselt
Romance in G Minor, Op. 11, No. 2	Clara Schumann (1819-1896)

Literature Review

Scholarly literature in English is limited for Henselt. The only full-scale modern biography of the composer, by Natalia Keil-Zenzerova, is in German and has not been translated.[12] Most relevant scholarship can be found in a small number of dissertations. Additionally, several dedicated scholars maintain online databases connected to Henselt Societies. The main historical biographies are by Wilhelm von Lenz and La Mara. There are few, if any, modern scholarly editions of Henselt's music, and the etudes are still only available in original 19th-century publications which are out of copyright and freely accessible on IMSLP. The particular scores that I use for the research are not available elsewhere except from The Henselt Library (https://henseltlibrary.wordpress.com/) and on IMSLP.

There are only a few published albums surveying Henselt's music. Perhaps the most prominent recording of the last few decades was an album by acclaimed pianist Marc-Andre Hamelin performing the Concerto in F minor, Op. 16 (Hyperion Records, 1994). Hyperion also released an outstanding recording of the complete etudes Op. 2 and Op. 5, along with the *Poëme d'amour,* Op. 3, by Australian pianist Piers Lane with liner notes by Richard Beattie Davis (2005). Spotify, the leading streaming music service, hosts recordings of the complete etudes by two other pianists, Claudio Colombo and Esther Budiardo, and a recording of Op. 2 by Michael Ponti. A few other albums include individual etudes. The most recorded etude historically is Op.

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[12] Natalia Keil-Zenzerova, *Adolf von Henselt: Ein leben fur Ein Leben für die Klavierpädagogik in Rußland Europäische Hochschulschriften,* German ed. (Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2006).

2, No. 6, subtitled “Si oiseau j’etais, a toi je volerais!” (“If I were a bird, I would fly to you!”), which was recorded by Sergei Rachmaninoff, Eileen Joyce, Arthur Friedheim, and others.

The latest album by British pianist Daniel Grimwood, released in december 2022, features all of Henselt’s etudes and *24 Préambules dans tous les tons*. Grimwood has also recently published a book in German titled *Adolph von Henselts Etüden: Eine Einführung* (*Adolph von Henselt’s Etudes: An Introduction*), which will be translated into English in the future.[13]

The following is a brief overview of literature consulted for the present study:

- A *Grove Music Online* entry for Adolf Henselt was edited by Richard Beattie Davis and published in 2001. A British musicologist and collector, Davis (1922-2008) was an expert in the music of Henselt, Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Mily Balakirev, and Sergei Lyapunov. He wrote articles, organized exhibitions, and gave talks about these composers. Davis was also a collector of Henselt’s original letters. Some of his estate was held at Florida Atlantic University but has more recently been moved to the Oxford Bodleian Library. His catalogue of Henselt’s works is still considered the standard resource.[14]
- The Henselt Society was established in Schwabach, Germany in 2002. It is currently chaired by Sandra Hoffman–Rivero, who is also the head of the cultural office of the city of Schwabach where Henselt was born, and Dr. Lucian Schiwietz who is a musicologist and piano teacher. Richard Beattie Davis was an honorary president during his lifetime. During a biannual meeting, Henselt scholars and enthusiasts from all over the world exchange ideas

[13] Daniel Grimwood, “Daniel Grimwood,” *Personal Website,* accessed March 8, 2024, https://danielgrimwood.eu.
[14] Davis, “Definitive Henselt Catalogue,” *The Henselt Society.*

and discover original letters, portraits, and other materials. The Society maintains an extensive database of published works about Henselt and other scholarly documents.

- Allan Benedict Ho's dissertation "A Stylistic Analysis of the Piano Music of Adolph von Henselt (1814-1889)" provides information about Henselt and his musical style as well as composers who influenced him or were in turn impacted by him.
- Daniel Graham's DMA thesis "An Analytical Study of Twenty-Four Etudes by Adolph von Henselt" (1979) is among the earliest studies of the etudes. Graham's recordings of all of Henselt's etudes are found on Youtube, but it is unclear if he commercially published these recordings.
- Hyunsuk Kim's very recent DMA dissertation "12 Études Caracteristiques, Opus 2, by Adolf von Henselt: A Pedagogical Guide with Practical Exercises for Selected Etudes" (University of North Texas, 2023) picks up where earlier dissertations had left off with the aim of providing practical study suggestions for these technically difficult pieces.
- Wilhelm von Lenz's *The Great Piano Virtuosos of Our Time* (New York: Pro/Am Music Resources Inc., 1995) is a primary resource which is especially invaluable for Lenz's personal acquaintance with Henselt as well as Chopin, Liszt, and others. Lenz reports on his visits with Henselt and others, explains Henselt's reputation as a phenomenon during his time, and describes the style of Henselt as a composer. The book is also valuable for first-hand insight into Henselt's personality and playing style.
- Harold C. Schonberg's *The Great Pianists from Mozart to the Present* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963) and Reginald Gerig's *Famous Pianists & Their Technique* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007) are two resources that are similar in their focus on pianism and technique of great pianists in the course of music history. Schonberg

adds more of Henselt's biography and his relationship with his teacher Hummel. Both books offer comparisons between Henselt and other pianists, with Schonberg making an interesting choice of grouping Henselt with Charles Valentin Alkan, a very different musician.

- Ferdinand Hiller's *Mendelssohn Letters and Recollections* is another primary source that touches on Henselt's life. Between 1825-1827, Hiller studied with Johann Nepomuk Hummel who was also Henselt's piano teacher just a few years later, between 1831-1832.

CHAPTER 2

ADOLF VON HENSELT AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Adolf von Henselt, Biographical Information

The following biographical sketch is based largely on Richard Beattie Davis's *Grove Music Online* article and the information provided by the Henselt Society.[15] Adolf von Henselt was born in Schwabach, Bavaria in 1814 and moved to Munich with his family in 1817. Both of his parents died when Henselt was quite young: his mother passed when he was 8 and his father when he was 16. Henselt began studying the piano before the age of 10 and soon took lessons from Josepha von Flad, born Kanzler (1778-1843), a former student of Abbé Vogler (1749-1814), a prominent musician who had also taught Carl Maria von Weber. Richard Beattie Davis believes that Weber, an early Romantic whose piano writing in popular works like *Aufforderung zum Tanz* ("Invitation to the Dance"), Op. 65 (1819) ushered in a new era of piano virtuosity in Germany, was a strong influence on Henselt. Henselt gave his first public concert in Munich as a 14-year-old. Between 1831-1832, at the age of 17-18, a scholarship from Ludwig I, King of Bavaria, allowed Henselt to study with Johann Nepomuk Hummel, one of Mozart's best students. Henselt acknowledged this support a few years later when he dedicated his etudes Op. 2 to the king. In the mid-1830s, Henselt studied intensely, developed his pianistic approach, and gave public performances. This period strained his mental and physical health, and in 1836, he traveled to Carlsbad for recovery where he was said to have met Chopin. In 1838, at the age of 24 and shortly after his marriage, Henselt migrated permanently to St. Petersburg, Russia. From

[15] "Biographie," *Internationale Adolph-Henselt Gesellschaft*, accessed January 10, 2024, https://henselt-gesellschaft.de/henselt/biographie/.

then on, he spent the entirety of his adult life and career in Eastern Europe, which likely hampered the international reception history of his works compared to composers who were active in prominent and interconnected Western European musical centers. In Russia, however, he was greatly admired by influential figures including Vladimir Stasov (who took lessons with Henselt) and Mily Balakirev. He also had a profound influence on the Russian school of piano playing as the teacher of Nikolai Zverev who in turn, taught an impressive list of early 20th-century musicians: Sergey Rachmaninoff, Alexander Scriabin, Alexander Siloti, Konstantin Igumnov, and Alexander Goldenweiser. It appears that Henselt was particularly influential in the culture of discipline and professionalism that he instilled in his students with an emphasis on high standards.[16]

Compared to his relative obscurity today, during his lifetime Henselt was recognized as a figure equal in importance to many of his contemporaries whose fame ended up being more lasting such as Liszt, Thalberg, and Chopin. Prominent historical chroniclers of musical affairs such as Wilhelm von Lenz and La Mara (pseudonym of Ida Marie Lipsius) chose to dedicate chapters and books to Henselt. Lenz (1809-1883), a Russian-German musician and writer who was a student of Liszt and also knew Chopin, included a chapter on Henselt in his *The Great Piano Virtuosos of Our Time from Personal Acquaintance* (1872), as one of four focal composers alongside Liszt, Chopin, and Tausig. Lenz describes Henselt as "the missing link between Liszt and Chopin—in a way, the missing link between their contrasting nature."[17]

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[16] Larisa Sukhova, "Henselt's Activities in Russia," in *German Days in Tambov*, festival and conference proceedings, accessed November 6, 2022, https://web.archive.org/web/20140508024917/http://www.rachmaninov.ru/deut_2012/page/suho va.html.

[17] Wilhelm von Lenz, *The Great Piano Virtuosos of Our Time: A Classic Account of Studies with Liszt, Chopin, Tausig & Henselt*, English Edition, edited by Philip Reder (New York: Pro/Am Music Resources Inc.), 91.

Henselt's Connections to Other Composers

European musicians in the 19th century were very aware of each other's work. During this age of composer-performers, many musicians traveled for concert tours and were able to meet each other during such visits. Meetings between Liszt and Henselt and Chopin and Henselt have already been described. Additionally, Henselt was able to meet Johann Baptist Cramer in London in 1852. Beattie asserts that Henselt "venerated" Cramer and transcribed 50 of Cramer's etudes, adding second piano parts. Both Robert and Clara Schumann had several meetings with Henselt, both in Germany and when they visited Russia after Henselt moved there. Clara Schumann premiered Henselt's Piano Concerto in Leipzig in 1845 and dedicated her own *Variations de Concert*, Op. 8 to Henselt. Nancy Reich's biography of Wieck-Schumann shares that on a single Vienna tour in 1837, she played works by Henselt 38 times, more than any other composer.[18] Felix Mendelssohn's music was equally familiar to Henselt, who transcribed the elder composer's works including Concerto No. 1, Wedding March, and Rondo Capriccioso. Lenz feels that "Henselt's great Etudes are to be considered as poems, 'Songs without Words,' and he would surely have named them so had this title, brought into vogue by Mendelssohn, not already appeared."[19] At the same time, Mendelssohn particularly admired Henselt's technique, though there is a hint of condescension in his remark that Henselt specialized in "playing widespread chords, and all day stretching his fingers over arpeggios played prestissimo."[20]

Additionally, La Mara stated that with Henselt having short fingers and a small hand, he could play the chord C-E-G-C-F unarpeggiated with his left hand and mirror it with his right

[18] Nancy B. Reich, *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman*, Revised Edition (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987), 253.
[19] von Lenz, *The Great Piano Virtuosos of Our Time*, 101.
[20] Hiller*, Mendelssohn Letters and Recollections*, 112.

hand as B-E-A-C-E, which demonstrates spans of an 11th. (However, possibly this was on earlier 19th century pianos with narrower keys than modern pianos.) Less obvious but equally important connections between musicians arose through teachers. Henselt's most famous piano teacher, Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837), was not only a direct link to Mozart but was admired by many other musicians who sought to study with him and were aware of his style and musical priorities. Joel Sachs and Mark Kroll write:

> For many years Hummel was one of the most important, and expensive, teachers in Germany. His pupils included many of the notable musicians of the next generation: Hiller, Karl Eduard Hartknoch, Adolf Henselt, Karl Georg Mangold, Julius Benedict (later to be Sir Julius), Ludwig Rakemann, Eugénie Beer (of the Meyerbeer family, and to whom Hummel dedicated his op. 92 sonata for piano four hands), Giuseppe Unia, and even Mozart's son Franz Xaver. The young Schumann was almost desperate to study with Hummel, but never did. Liszt also almost became a Hummel pupil. His father Adam Liszt was eager for his ten-year-old Franz to study with Hummel, whom Adam had known from Eisenstadt, but this did not happen, not primarily because Hummel's fee was too high, but because Hummel was too busy and too far away in Weimar at this time.[21]

Hummel's influence can be seen in the works of his students, like Henselt, but also those of other contemporaries. Harold C. Schonberg, in *The Great Pianists*, writes "...the openings of the Hummel A minor and Chopin E minor concertos are too close to be coincidental."[22]

Given this shared influence, it is unsurprising to see parallels in the works of the next generation of musicians after Hummel, such as Henselt and Chopin, whether they were his direct students or not.

Lastly, it should be once again noted that all major composers of piano music during this time were performers themselves and many were piano teachers. In these roles, they sought out

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[21] Joel Sachs and Mark Kroll, "Hummel, Johann Nepomuk," *Grove Music Online*. 2001, accessed April 2, 2024, https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000013548.

[22] Harold C. Schonberg, *The Great Pianists: From Mozart to the Present*, 1st ed. (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1963), 110.

new scores both for themselves to play and to share with their students. Robert Schumann, in his writings about music and musicians, keeps returning to the newest published etudes in any given year. In one of his articles in 1836, [23]he sorts etudes he had discussed thus far according to their pianistic and technical goals ("Zweck"). While this particular article was unfortunately published before either of Henselt's collections had appeared (to which Schumann later gave two glowing reviews), it is indicative of the type of pedagogical thinking and interest that was prevalent around the time. In his review of Op. 2, Schumann notes that even before the review and publication, Henselt's etudes were circulating rapidly through word of mouth and being copied "like Homer's poems" and had generated widespread interest. Given this atmosphere, it is unsurprising to see similarities between textures, technical difficulties, and even musical characteristics of piano works written around the same time. These shared qualities between Henselt and his contemporaries will be discussed in the following chapter.

[23] Robert Schumann, "*Die Pianoforte-Etuden, ihren Zwecken nach geordnet* [Piano Etudes Categorized Based on Their Purpose]" in *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Georg Wigand's Verlag, 1854), 34-41.

CHAPTER 3

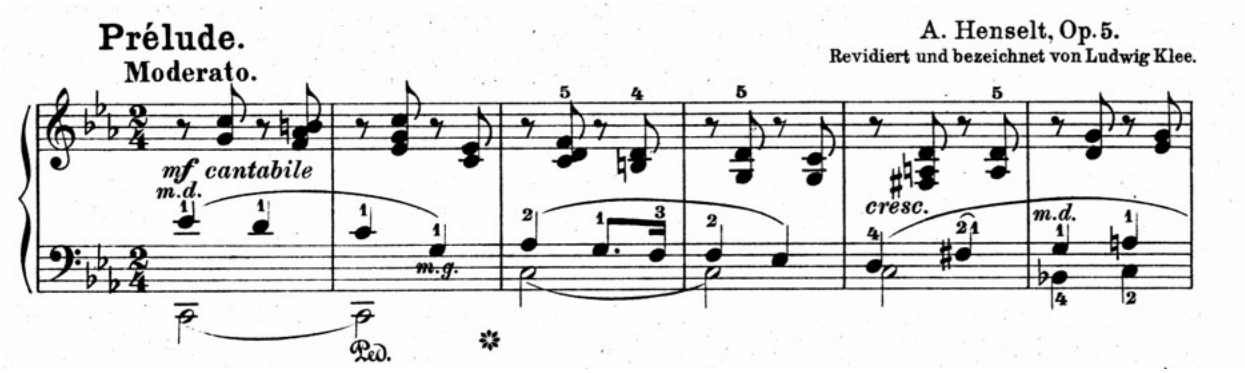
Comparative Analysis of Pianistic Issues in Etudes by Henselt and Works by His Contemporaries

"Songs without Words" and Three-hand Technique: Henselt and Mendelssohn

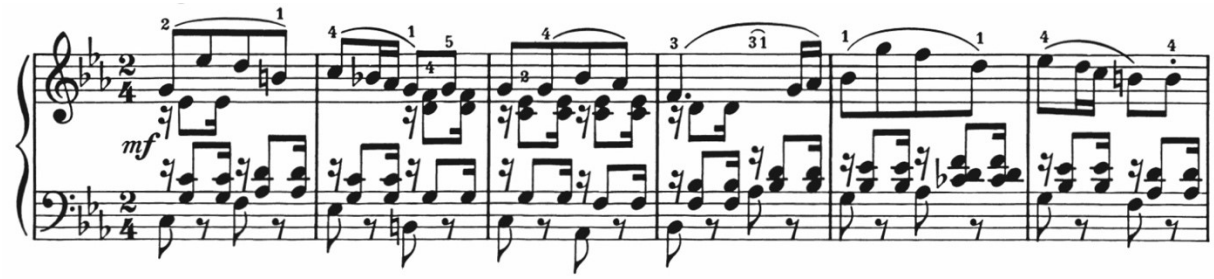
Focal works: Felix Mendelssohn: Songs without Words in C Minor, Op. 38, No. 2 and Adolph von Henselt: Etude, Op. 5, No. 1.

Songs without Words, also known as *Lieder ohne Worte*, are short instrumental compositions characterized by their lyrical nature. The German term was invented by Mendelssohn. While reminiscent of romantic short pieces in their expressive qualities, they are distinct in being confined solely to piano music. The term *Lieder ohne Worte* was originated and popularized by Felix Mendelssohn and is predominantly used to refer to the collection of 48 piano pieces he composed between 1829 and 1845.[24] These pieces exhibit a diverse range of moods, yet maintain a consistent stylistic approach, all bearing melodious themes. Additionally, a notable trait common to most of these pieces is their incorporation of introductory and concluding bars, akin to the prelude and postlude of a vocal song.

[24] Maurice J. E. Brown, "Songs without Words," *Grove Music Online,* ed. Kenneth L. Hamilton, accessed March 6, 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.26214.



Example 1. Adolf von Henselt: Etude, Op. 5, No. 1, mm. 1-6.



Example 2. Felix Mendelssohn: Songs without Words in C Minor Op. 38, No. 2, mm. 1-6.

Several of Henselt's etudes are composed in a style that could be described as songs without words, but the direct similarity between the two works by Henselt and Mendelssohn in this chapter is particularly uncanny. They share many prominent attributes including key, texture, initial harmonic progression (i-vii^{o}-i^{6}), and the prominence of the interval of a sixth between G and E-flat in the melodic line. It is very tempting to assume that one of the composers was directly inspired by the other. However, the two works were composed so close in time to one another that it appears impossible to establish a clear chronology. According to Larry Todd, [25]Felix Mendelssohn wrote the second of his Op. 38 "songs without words" in 1837, at exactly

[25] R. Larry Todd, "Mendelssohn(-Bartholdy), (Jacob Ludwig) Felix." *Grove Music Online*, accessed April 2, 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.51795.

the same time Henselt was working on his etudes. Both collections were published within a year of each other (the exact month is difficult to establish), and it is possible that handwritten copied manuscripts may have circulated earlier. By January 1838, Mendelssohn was definitely aware of Henselt's etudes as he wrote to Hiller in a letter that he heard Henselt play them in concert shortly before the New Year. According to Mendelssohn, Henselt "plays exquisitely... His Studies are charming, and form a great feature at his concerts."[26]

In the same letter, Mendelssohn opines that Henselt practices too much and stretches his fingers all day to the point of being exhausted and not being able to consistently perform at his best. Since this is broadly viewed in the literature as a defining quality of Henselt's pianism and large hand stretches are a consistent concern in performing Henselt's works, it is worth a short explanation here. According to Bettina Walker, Henselt could stretch his left hand to cover the chord C-E-G-C-F and his right hand B-E-A-C-E.[27] Even though keys were narrower on early 19th century pianos, it is still an astounding feat that was consistently noted by his contemporaries.[28] Mendelssohn was especially impressed that Henselt could play very extended arpeggios at a *prestissimo* tempo. [29]

While we have definitive proof that Henselt was familiar with Mendelssohn's music by way of his transcriptions of Mendelssohn's works, those transcriptions, such as the arrangement of the *Wedding March* (publ. 1884) were written in later decades, when Henselt was already in Russia. One can assume that Henselt would have met Mendelssohn at one of his own concerts as well as discussed Mendelssohn's music with the Schumanns, with whom he was more friendly.

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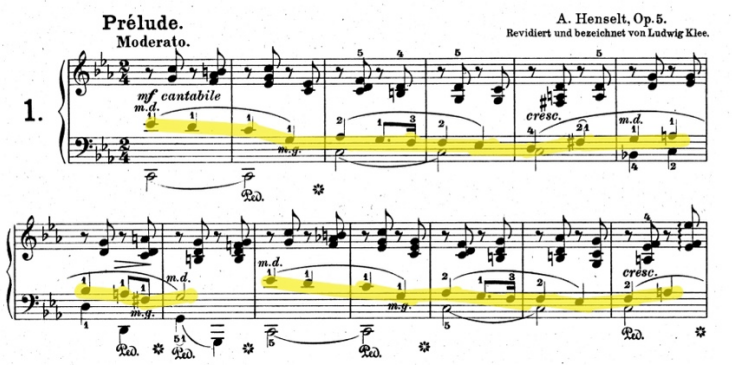
[26] Ferdinand Hiller*, Mendelssohn Letters and Recollections*, translated by M. E. von Glehm (New York: Vienna House, 1972), 112.
[27] Bettina Walker, *My Musical Experience* (London: Bentley and Son, 1892), 312-313.
[28] Davis, "Henselt, (George Martin) Adolf," *Grove Music Online*.
[29] Hiller, *Mendelssohn Letters and Recollections*, 112.

Regardless of the circumstances, the similarities between Henselt's Op. 5, No. 1 and Mendelssohn's Op. 38, No. 2 have been independently observed by several musicians, including Daniel Miller in his 1978 thesis.[30]It is worth discussing both in the context of difficulties presented by a "song without words" texture, requiring a pianist to play a lyrical line as well as a full-fledged accompaniment simultaneously, akin to a transcription of an art song.

Henselt's Etude, Op. 5, No. 1 presents pianists with several challenges, starting with how to play the *cantabile* melody with a legato touch while maintaining a seamless melodic line. This is particularly difficult because the melody is frequently placed in the middle register of the piano, which requires passing it between two hands with extensive use of both thumbs. As a result, it can be a struggle to make the melody sound as though it is being played by one hand. (See Example 3 with the main melody highlighted; notice that the first two notes are played with two different hands using the thumb.)



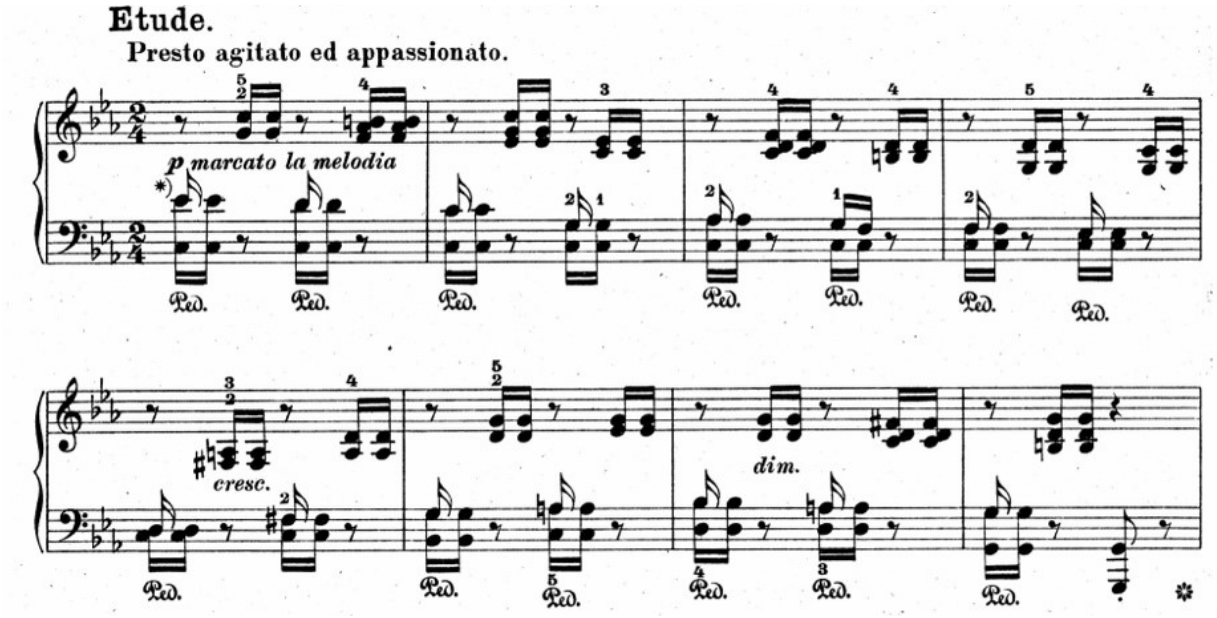
Example 3. Adolf von Henselt: Etude, Op. 5, No. 1, mm. 1-13 with highlighted middle voice.

[30] Daniel Richard Miller, "The Life and Works of Adolph Henselt," MA thesis, (California State University, Fullerton, 1978).

To address these difficulties, I suggest first practicing each of the three layers separately, ensuring that the melody, the bass, and the harmonic filler are well controlled. The melody should be singing, the bass line supportive but also connected, and the middle voice light enough as to not overpower the rest. Another practice strategy is to first play the highlighted melody in Example 3 with a single hand in the most comfortable way, working on the ideal tone and articulation. The goal is to train the ear to get used to this seamless sound, so that when the pianist eventually plays the line using both hands, the ear continues to strive for a seamless legato and a melodious quality that does not sound like separate hands are playing. Special attention needs to be paid to the natural weight of the thumbs, making sure that they remain graceful.

Another challenge arises later in the piece when the melody moves to the top voice and the bass line functions as a more active counterpoint. In this texture, the faster accompaniment in the middle layer is divided between the hands. This requires pianists to carefully coordinate and balance their hands to ensure that the middle voice provides a harmonic foundation without overpowering the melody. It is essential to keep the top voice as the primary focus while also playing the middle voice with enough clarity to maintain balance and harmony.

The second, *presto* section of the etude is a variation of the first with the same melody embedded in a different texture (see Example 4). Due to the repeated notes, the melody is no longer legato but needs to sound just as clear and connected, especially in a fast tempo. Adding to the challenge, the left hand occasionally needs to stretch to a tenth, one of many examples of Henselt's use of extended positions. This passage requires precise coordination and control between both hands to execute the challenging left-hand stretches while still bringing out the melody line with sufficient prominence.



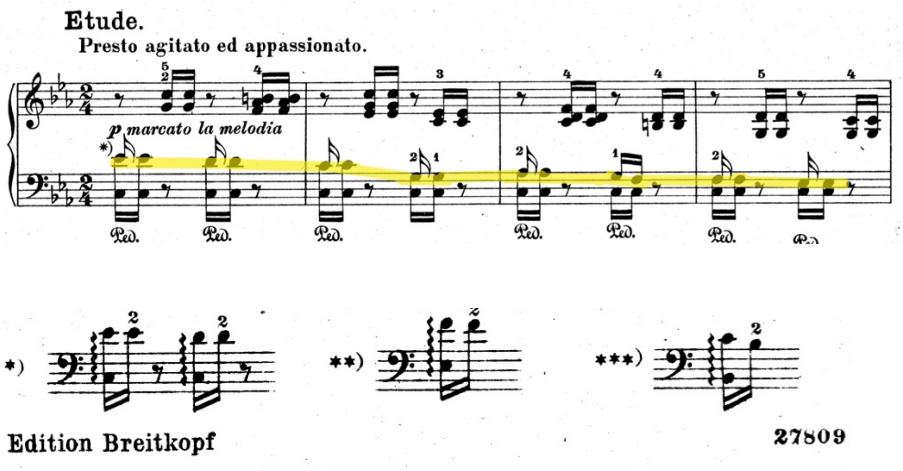
Example 4. Adolf von Henselt: Etude, Op. 5, No. 1, mm. 87-94, edited by Ludwig Klee.[31]

For performers trying to tackle these challenges, it is important to know that there are several helpful editions of Henselt's etudes. In particular, a 1917 Breitkopf & Hartel edition prepared by Ludwig Klee (1846-1920) provides helpful suggestions for rolls and distributions to facilitate performance for pianists with small hands.[32] In this instance, at the beginning of the *presto* section, Klee suggests that the first tenth can be rolled (see Example 5), and the second tenth can be reduced to a single top note. This change eliminates blocked tenths entirely, but another solution exists if one wishes to preserve the original sound: the top notes of the tenth can also be played by the right hand. Klee also provides pedal markings and additional dynamics which can be helpful as long as the performer is aware that they are editorial markings and not from Henselt himself. Another historical edition [33]of interest is by the Liszt student Emil von Sauer (1862–1942). It takes fewer liberties with the text than Klee but also includes some

[31] Ludwig Klee, *Henselt Zwolf Etüden für Pianoforte Op. 5* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1917), 4.
[32] Klee, *Henselt Zwolf Etüden für Pianoforte Op. 5.*
[33] Emil von Saucer, *Henselt Etüden Opus 5* (Leipzig: Edition Peters, 1922).

redistribution suggestions and pedal markings. There has not been a modern critical edition of Henselt's Etudes until 2023, when Daniel Grimwood prepared a two-volume score for Edition Peters,[34] which should now be considered the new standard for performers interested in these works.

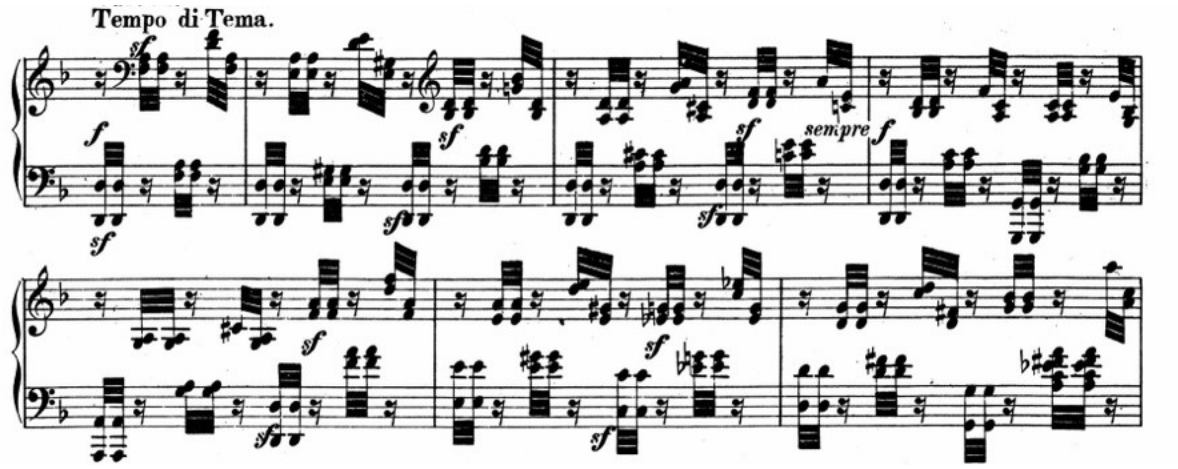
Whether one chooses to redistribute or not, the *presto* section of Henselt's Op. 5, No. 1 also illustrates that despite strong initial similarities, his work is substantially larger and much more difficult to play than Mendelssohn's Op. 38, No. 2. In addition to the stretches, the *presto* tempo of the contrasting sections and even the division of the opening melody between two hands make it a piece that is only accessible to a very advanced pianist. By contrast, many of Mendelssohn's Songs without Words are suitable for amateur performance, and he frequently copied them into musical albums of his acquaintances.



Example 5. Adolf von Henselt: Etude, Op. 5, No. 1, mm. 87-90, redistribution suggested by Ludwig Klee.[35]

[34] Daniel Grimwood, *Henselt Complete Etudes*, vol. 1-2 (New York: Edition Peters, 2023).
[35] Klee, *Henselt Zwolf Etüden für Pianoforte Op. 5*, 4.

In its overall difficulty and in the texture of the second section, Henselt's Etude is closer to another famous work by Felix Mendelssohn: *Variations sérieuses*, Op. 54, which was completed in 1841 (see Example 6).



Example 6. Felix Mendelssohn *Variations sérieuses* Op. 54, variation 12, mm. 194-200.

Mendelssohn's Op. 54 was included in an album published to raise funds for the Beethoven monument in Bonn. Mendelssohn's choice of the variation form and the title "serious" may be understood as paying homage to Beethoven's many ambitious efforts in the genre, including his 32 Variations in C minor, which feature many different textures and an overall dramatic atmosphere. We cannot be sure whether Mendelssohn was consciously inspired by Hummel when writing the twelfth variation, but it is a testament to the artistic quality of Henselt's etudes that such a similarity exists with one of Mendelssohn's most ambitious works for solo piano. Not coincidentally, Robert Schumann, in his review of Henselt's Op. 5, encouraged Henselt to continue his compositional work in larger forms such as sonatas and concertos, a leap which Henselt wouldn't make till 1847, when he composed his Piano Concerto, Op. 16, premiered by Clara Schumann.

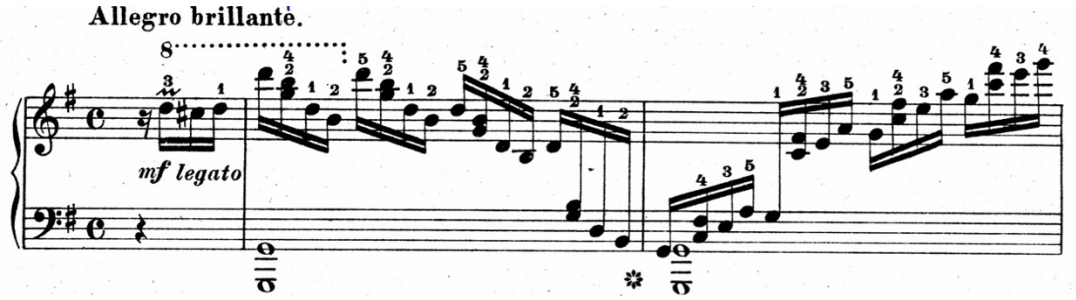
Extended Arpeggios and Fingering Choices: Henselt and Chopin

Focal works: Frédéric Chopin: Etude, Op. 10 No. 1 and Adolf von Henselt: Etude, Op. 5 No. 2.

In his review of Henselt's Op. 2, Robert Schumann writes that "viele der Henselt'schen Etuden würden ohne den Vorgang Chopin's gar nicht da sein" ["many of Henselt's compositions would not be possible without Chopin's prior model"]. Henselt had at least some of Chopin's etudes in his performing repertoire, which we know from Mendelssohn who attended a performance of Henselt's at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig on December 29, 1837 where Henselt played Chopin's Etude, Op. 10, No. 1.[36] Larry Todd speculates that Henselt chose to play this particular etude because he "was known for the uncommonly wide span of his hands" and "subject to nervous anxiety, Henselt [selected the etude for its] bristling with treacherously spaced arpeggiations that sometimes exceed a tenth." [37] It is very likely that Chopin's Etude, Op. 10, No. 1 was on Henselt's mind when he wrote his Op. 5, No. 2, which shows marked similarities to Op. 10, No. 1 in the jagged extended arpeggio cascades in the right hand accompanied by long-note octaves in the left hand (see Example 7). Chopin's etude is considered one of the most virtuosic of his Op. 10. However, in performing both pieces, I have experienced Henselt's Etude, Op. 5, No. 2 as perhaps even more challenging. There are added notes on each second sixteenth in Henselt's etude, which make all the arpeggios harder. Richard Beattie Davis describes this fuller texture as "a feature of Henselt's and of later Russian music."[38] On the other hand, this forward-looking pianistic texture contrasts with the relative regularity of phrase lengths and a less chromatic harmony in Henselt's work compared to Chopin. Davis writes that

[36] R. Larry Todd, *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 360.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Davis, "Études Opp 2 & 5," liner notes for pianist, Piers Lane.

"Henselt had developed a distinctive melodic idiom before he ever became acquainted with Chopin's studies,"[39] based on his piano studies with Hummel, composition studies with Simon Sechter in Vienna, and the influence of Weber. Thus, the influence of Chopin is primarily a pianistic one, which Henselt develops further in a direction which eventually will lead to the pianism of a Rachmaninoff, while in many other ways, Henselt's musical world is much more German.



Example 7. Adolf von Henselt: Etude, Op. 5, No. 2, mm. 1-2.

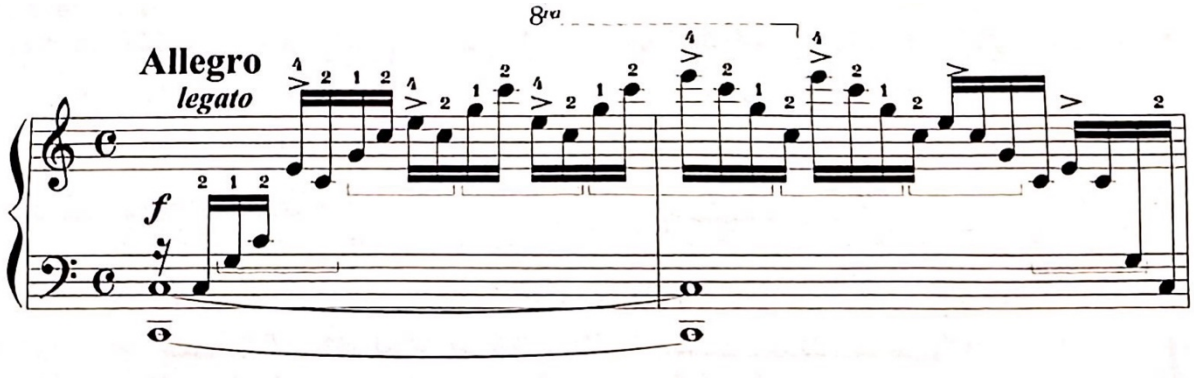
For a modern pianist who has grown up with Chopin's etudes, it is very important to keep this stylistic difference in mind because it greatly affects interpretation. Henselt's score markings are a helpful guide. It is particularly important to follow the written dynamics. Henselt's Etude, Op. 5, No. 2 features *p, pp, mf,* sempre *f, ff,* and others, whereas Chopin's Etude, Op. 10, No. 1 has fewer dynamic indications. In his own playing, Henselt had a strong preference for producing soft and gentle piano sounds, "his playing was specially characterized by a warm, emotional touch and a delicious legato, causing the tones to melt, which is reflected in his compositions."[40] One of the biggest practical decisions that pianists need to make in both etudes concerns fingering. Rami Bar-Niv, in his book "The Art of Piano Fingering," writes that

[39] Davis, "Études Opp 2 & 5," liner notes for pianist, Piers Lane,
[40] Schonberg, *The Great Pianists from Mozart to the Present*, 199.

"The principles of efficient fingering at the piano should be:

1. Serving the music, i.e., helping produce the desired sound, speed, effect, phrasing, style, etc.
2. Healthy and comfortable, i.e., free of unnecessary tension which can cause hand ailments and injuries."[41]

At times, these two principles can be at odds. In Chopin's Etude, Op. 10, No. 1, it is possible to change Chopin's suggested fingering in such a way that the hand positions span less than an octave instead of a tenth (Example 8).[42]

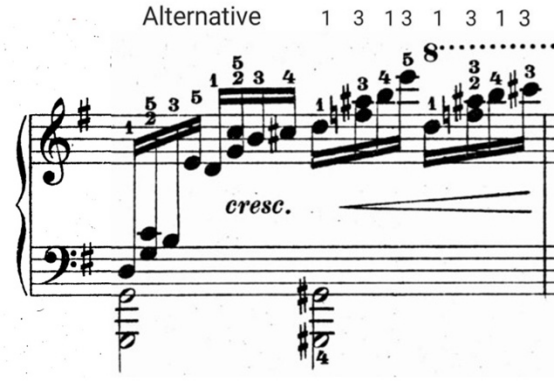


Example 8. Rami Bar-Niv's fingerings for Frédéric Chopin: Etude, Op. 10, No. 1, mm. 1-2.

The same type of fingering, which trades extended hand positions for more thumb crossings, can also be applied in the Henselt's Etude, Op. 5, No. 2 (see Example 9, with fingering alternative by my personal experience). However, Alfred Cortot, in his study edition of the Chopin etudes with practice suggestions, writes about this possibility: "The use of [such fingerings] is not admissible when performing; indeed by altering the position of the hand, we

[41] Rami Bar-Niv, *The Art of Piano Fingering: Traditional, Advanced, and Innovative*, 6th ed. (California: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2013), 9.
[42] Bar-Niv, *The Art of Piano Fingering,* 60.

necessarily alter the tone-value of the passage."[43] (Cortot allows for such fingering only as a temporary practice strategy that is "useful for practicing the passing under of the thumb and can profitably be applied to the whole study."[44])



Example 9. Adolf von Henselt: Etude, Op. 5, No. 2, m. 22.

I have practiced such alternative fingerings in both Chopin and Henselt and found them more productive and musically convincing in the Henselt. In the Chopin, such fingerings provide relief from stretching but the addition of more turns makes it nearly impossible to play the entire etude at a fast tempo. In the Henselt, some refingering may be unavoidable for pianists with small or average-sized hands. The addition of double-notes makes it harder in the Henselt to avoid stretching through fast closing of the hand and effective rotation, as is largely possible in the Chopin. As a result, an alternative fingering with more turns makes the arpeggios sound lighter and more fluid in the Henselt but heavier and clumsier in much of the Chopin etude.

The degree of such trade-offs and the ultimate decision about fingerings depends on each pianist's unique hand. Pianists with smaller hands may find it useful and accessible to use more

[43] Alfred Cortot, *Chopin: 12 Studies op. 10 for Piano*, translated by M. Parkinson (Paris: Editions Salabert, 1930), 10.
[44] Ibid.

turns than those with larger hands. However, using the same fingerings, if pianists with larger hands incorporate more turns, it leads to a clumsier hand gesture, making it harder for them. Different people have different criteria for defining small hands. For instance, David Steinbuhler, a developer of small pianos, considers a hand to be small if the distance between the thumb and fifth finger is 8 inches or less. Kalmosiri's definition of small hand is based on the inability to reach a tenth, while Rhonda Boyle believes that the span between the second and fifth fingers is a significant factor in determining small-handedness.[45]

As a pianist of average hand size, I have found that making a case-by-case decision about alternative fingerings depending on the shape of a particular arpeggio and other context may be the best solution. In addition to issues of stretching, alternative fingerings in these two etudes increase the percentage of stronger fingers used in a passage, which can be particularly desirable in certain contexts. For example, when transitioning into a *forte* section with a *crescendo*, utilizing stronger fingers 1 and 3 as opposed to 4 and 5 produces a more impactful dynamic effect that is musically compelling and physically relieving. At climactic moments, it may not be a bad thing if a fingering creates some tempo resistance. Taking time in such places makes sense and can elevate the artistic expression of a performance.

In addition to fingering, efficient and effective practice is also a key aspect of excelling in both etudes. While methods of practicing Chopin etudes have been widely discussed in performing editions and scholarly literature, I would like to provide a few strategies for practicing the Henselt's etude in particular. I utilize two main methods for practicing the right-hand passages. The first approach involves practicing only the bottom notes of the right-hand melody. The inclusion of double-notes significantly intensifies the complexity of playing the

[45] Lora Deahl and Brenda Wristen, *Adaptive Strategies for Small-Handed Pianists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 4.

right-hand melody. By reducing the notes to a single line, the stability of the hands is improved, thereby avoiding unnecessary movements such as shifting up and down or tilting the hand to execute the double stops. The second approach involves regrouping the melody for practice. This approach proves highly effective in facilitating hand adjustment throughout the movement, as opposed to dealing with an extensive passage without grouping. Additionally, this method develops an organized pattern in the mind, which makes it easier to memorize the music.

From a Song without Words to a Masterful Romantic Character Piece: Adolf von Henselt and Clara Schumann

Focal Works: Clara Schumann: Romance, Op. 11, No. 2 and Adolf von Henselt: Etude, Op. 2, No. 4.

As discussed earlier, Henselt's connection to the Schumann family was particularly strong. Both Schumanns, Robert and Clara, dedicated works to Henselt, while Clara premiered his Piano Concerto. They visited each other many times, including in Russia. Robert wrote enthusiastic reviews of Henselt's music, and early in her career, Clara included Henselt's music in her recitals, sometimes more than any other composer. Upon the publication of Henselt's Etudes Op. 2, Clara immediately began programming them in her recitals. Georg Kehler's book *The Piano in Concert* contains the following entries for Clara's recitals in 1837-1839:

- "Im Saale der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, Wien ["In the hall of the Society of Friends of Music, Vienna"], December 14, 1837: ... HENSELT: Etude mit dem Motto "Wenn ich ein Voeglein waer""... [Etude Op. 2 No. 6][same venue], February 11, 1838: ..... HENSELT: Allegro with the Motto: "Orage tu ne saurais m'abbatre"... [Etude Op. 2 No. 1]

- [same venue], February 18, 1838: ... HENSELT: Neue Etude (e-flat); "Exauce mes Voeux," andante ... [Etude Op. 2 No. 3]
- Im Saale des goldenen Adlers ["In the Hall of the Golden Eagle"], Nuernberg, January 15, 1839: ... HENSELT: Etude mit dem Motto "Wenn ich ein Voeglein waer', floeg ich zu dir"... [Etude Op. 2 No. 6]" [46]

Kehler's book is not intended to be a comprehensive collection of all recital programs by any artist, and it is safe to assume that Clara included these and other Henselt etudes in her programs many other times. The records of the four performances above are enough to prove that Henselt's Op. 2 pieces were on Clara's mind at least in the period between 1837-1839, precisely when she composed her Romances, Op. 11.

According to the preface to the Henle critical edition of Op. 11:

> Of the *Trois Romances* op. 11, no. 2 and especially no. 3 were mentioned several times in Clara's correspondence with Robert Schumann between April and July 1839. The second romance is proved at an earlier date. An album leaf bearing its incipit is dated "Dresden Nov. 1838" (Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Berlin – Musikabteilung). ... The first edition of the *Trois Romances* was issued in 1840 by Mechetti in Vienna (plate no. 3391). By then no. 2 had already appeared in September 1839 as a supplement to the *Neue Zeitschrift fuer Musik*.[47]

Nancy Reich's landmark biography of Clara Schumann was originally published in 1985, before the Henle edition (which itself may have been spurred by the rising interest in Clara Schumann). She does not mention the earlier album leaf containing music from Op. 11, No. 2 and names 1839, while Clara was on tour in Paris, as the time of composition for all the Romances.[48] While the earlier time for Op. 2 gives even more weight to the connection with

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[46] George Kehler, *The Piano in Concert* (United Kingdom: Scarecrow Press, 1982), 2:1186.
[47] Janina Klassen, "Preface," in *Clara Wieck-Schumann: Selected Piano Works* (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 1987), v.
[48] Nancy B. Reich, *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman*, Revised Edition (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987), 229.

Henselt, being a time when Clara would have been freshly excited about adding his etudes to her repertoire, she clearly still played at least some of them in 1839.

Notably for this discussion, Reich summarizes the correspondence between Robert and Clara at the time of composition and cites Robert as being "particularly impressed by the second Romance. He wrote on July 18[49]: 'I like your Romance more and more, especially the idea in the allegro beginning in the third measure; it is like Beethoven and very heartfelt and full of passion.'" Robert thought so highly of this second Romance that he chose it as the only one from this opus to be published in a supplement to his *Neue Zeitschrift fuer Musik.*

Henselt's Etude, Op. 2, No. 4, subtitled "Repose d'amour" ["Love's Repose"] in some French editions, is a beautiful song without words and, as editor Alberto Jonas puts it in a footnote in the Schirmer edition, "essentially a study for beautiful tone production, legato playing, and expression." [50]In addition to the evocative title, the texture of the piece is a duet between two melodies, one in the low register and one in the high register, which would remind any listener of a male and a female voice. In this regard, the piece is very similar to Mendelssohn's Song without Words, Op. 38, No. 6, which is subtitled "Duetto." Several (though not all) editions add the title "Duo" to Henselt's piece due to these very obvious connotations. One could read further implications from the markings attached to the two voices: in m. 22, the lower voice is marked *marcato* while the top voice is marked *cantabile*, potentially expressing some of the historical stereotypes of the period where the male musical protagonist may be portrayed as more assertive and the female as more gentle (see Example 10).

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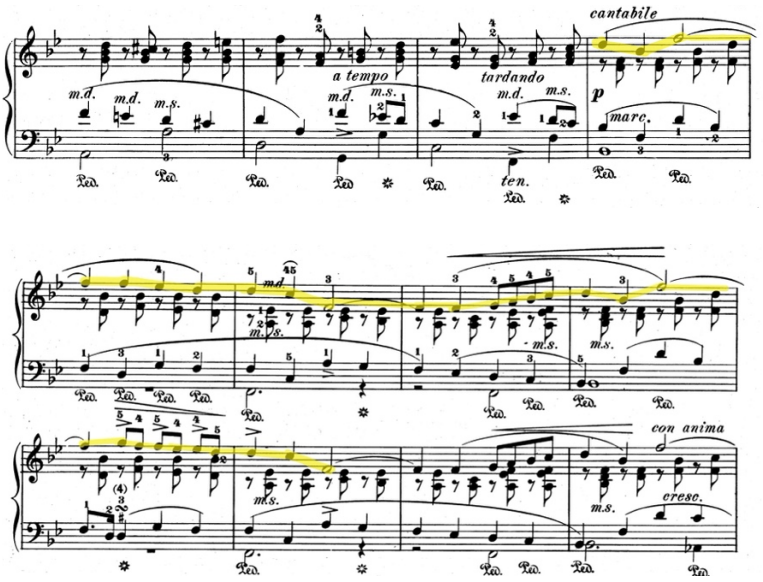
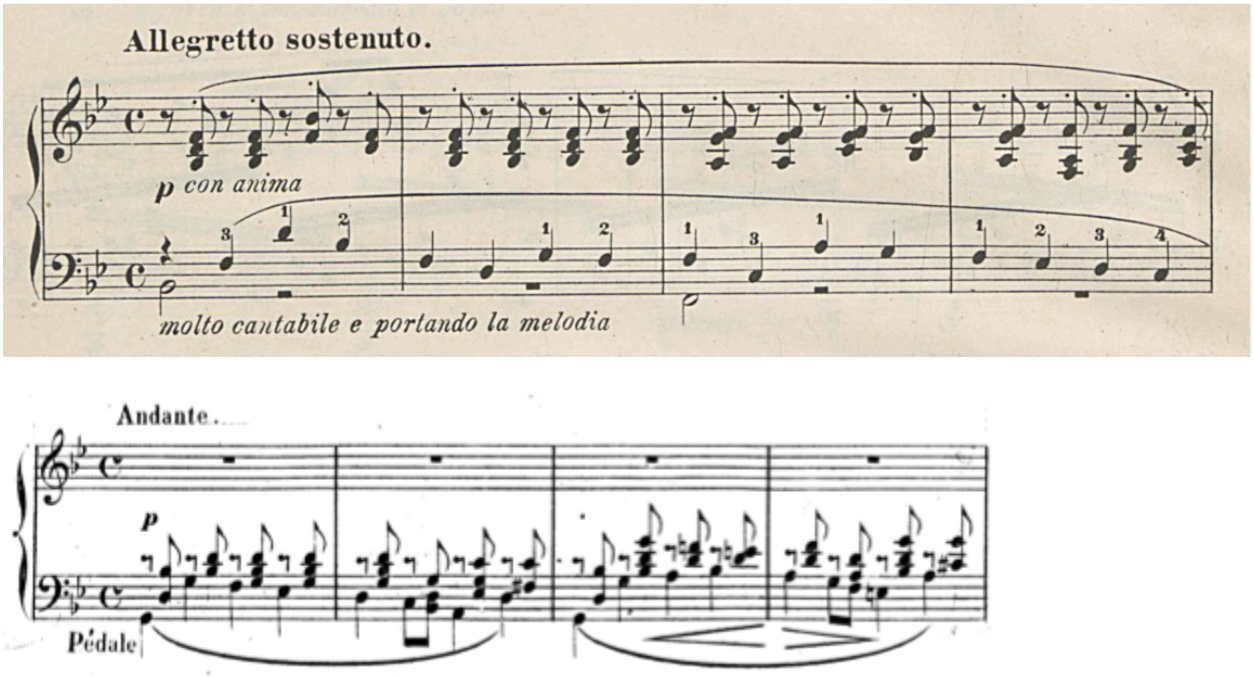
[49] Ibid.
[50] Alberto Jonás, *Adolf Henselt Op. 2: Twelve Characteristic Concert-Studies for the Piano* (New York: Schirmer, 1902), 18.



Example 10. Adolf von Henselt: Etude Op. 2, no. 4, mm. 19-25.

Undoubtedly, Clara must have at least read through Op. 2, No. 4 along with all the other etudes in the opus, even if we don't know for sure from her limited recital programs that we have access to if she played this specific etude publicly. One is left to wonder, biographically, how the young woman may have related to the title and the implications in this piece given that the late 1830s were a particularly tumultuous time in the Robert-Clara courtship. Robert proposed to Clara in late 1837, upon her turning 18 years old, and the years between the proposal and the wedding on September 12, 1840 were marred by a bitter dispute with Clara's father, Friedrich Wieck (Reich). Playing through a work that celebrated love's calmer moments may have had romantic meaning for Clara. In any case, her Romance, Op. 11, No. 2 bears noticeable traces of Henselt's etude (Example 11).



Example 11. Adolf von Henselt: Etude, Op. 2, No. 4, mm. 1-4, and Clara Schumann: Romance, Op. 11, No. 2, mm. 1-4.

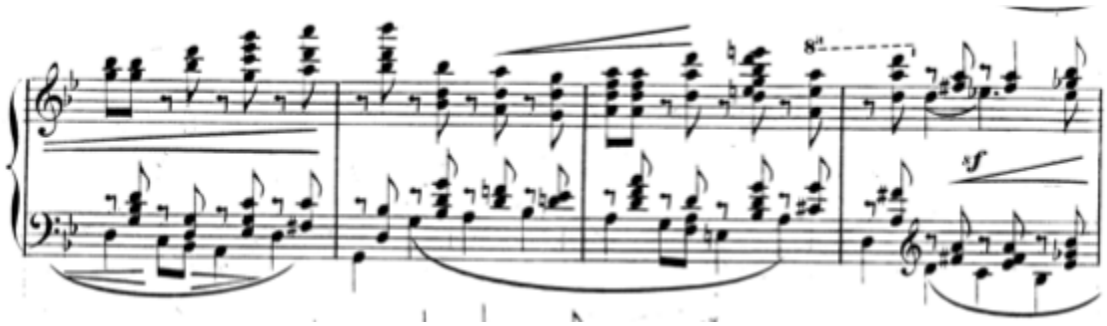
Both pieces are in a key with two flats, though Henselt's work is in major and Clara's is in minor (however one might be tempted to interpret this given the biographical circumstances). Both pieces begin with an expressive melody in the bass accompanied by offbeats in the right hand, and both works introduce a countermelody in the top register at some point. In their initial technical demands, both of these works should be practiced like songs without words in the ways already provided in the earlier discussion of Henselt and Mendelssohn.

What is much more compelling is the ways in which these two pieces unfold beyond the initial statements of the themes, and how much more ambitious the Clara Schumann work turns out to be. When Robert compares this Romance to Beethoven in his quote above, he is referring to the ways in which the piece is pushing the envelope, which happens harmonically, formally, and in its sonic range:

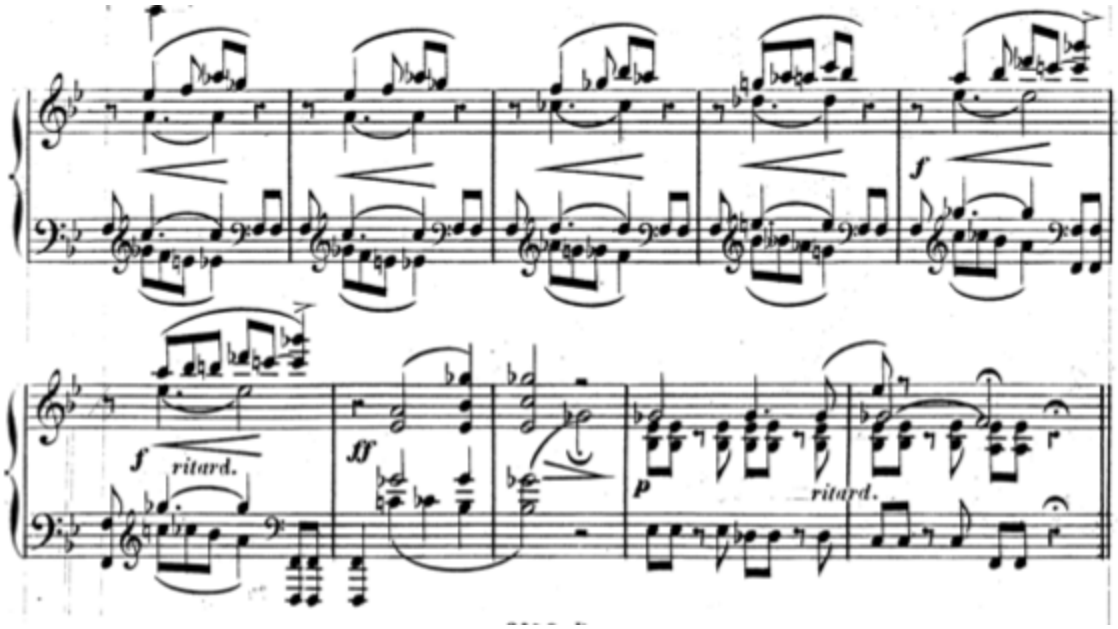
(1) Range of register and dynamics. Where Henselt stays mostly on the staff, Schumann ventures far into the top register of the piano (see Example 12). The highest dynamic in Henselt is *forte* while Schumann goes to *fortissimo*.

(2) Length and formal complexity. Henselt's Etude, Op. 2, No. 4 is only 44 measures long where Clara Schumann's is an extended character piece with 151 bars. Formally, it combines elements of variation, rondo, and fantasy with the main theme returning in varied forms and alternating with strongly contrasting sections. Transitions between the sections also display a freedom of imagination comparable to the ways Chopin and Liszt crafted such passages (see Example 13).

(3) Example 13 also shows Clara's greater harmonic boldness.



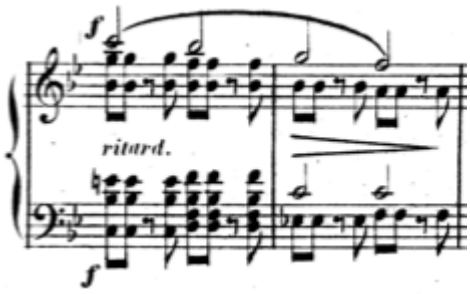
Example 12. Clara Schumann: Romance, Op. 11, No. 2, mm. 105-108.



Example 13. Clara Schumann: Romance, Op. 11, No. 2, mm. 41-50.

While it is true that Clara Schumann exceeded Henselt in her compositional ambition in every way in this particular piece, when looking at Henselt's output as a whole, the assessment becomes more balanced. There are certainly other pieces of Henselt, many of which Clara had in her repertoire, where he also demonstrates a greater range of keyboard sounds as well as a larger formal scope. His *Poeme d'amour*, Op. 3, another love-themed work, has a contrasting section in a faster tempo as does his already discussed Etude, Op. 5, No. 1 where he goes beyond what might be expected of a simple song without words in including a *prestissimo* section. Most notably, one of the defining pianistic characteristics of Clara Schumann's style is her willingness to write much wider hand stretches than almost any other contemporary except for Henselt. One would never find writing like Example 14 in Chopin or even Liszt. The Henle edition notes in a footnote to m. 81 that some sources add another G to the left hand, making the already uncomfortable stretch unplayable for any pianists except those with exceptionally large hands

(see Example 14). Clara's deep pianistic familiarity with the works of Henselt is the obvious model here.



Example 14. Clara Schumann: Romance, Op. 11, No. 2, mm. 81-82.

The mutually influential connection between Clara Schumann and Henselt, especially early in both of their lives, runs deeper than possibly that of any other pairing in this study. Early exposure to Henselt's music undoubtedly influenced Clara's pianism for the rest of her compositional and performance career. In turn, it is notable that Clara's artistry inspired Henselt's most ambitious composition among all of his works, his Piano Concerto Op. 16.

Another Forgotten Romantic and Seeking Inspiration in Bach: Adolf von Henselt and Johann Baptist Cramer

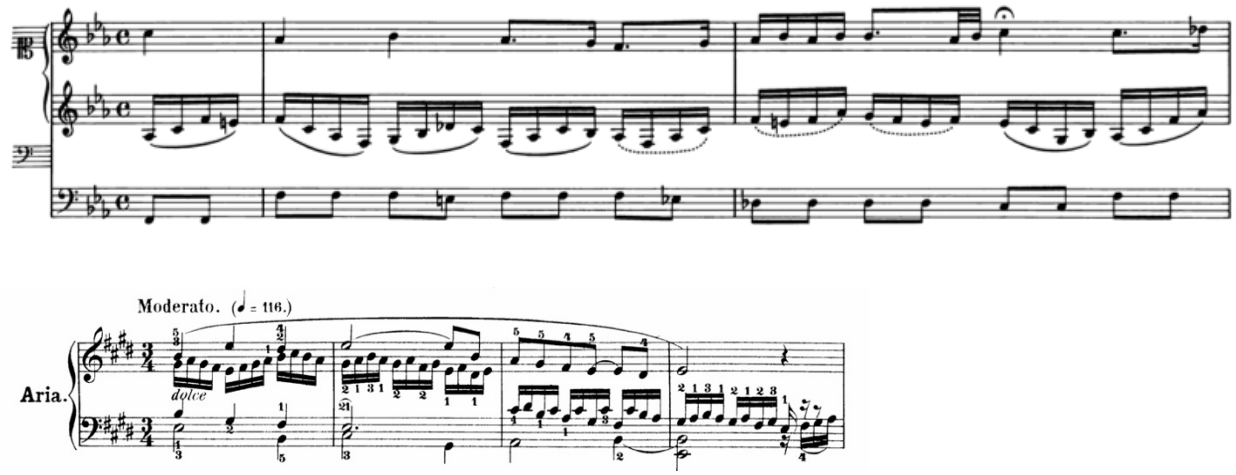
Focal works: Johann Baptist Cramer: Etude, Op. 30, No. 41 and Adolf von Henselt: Etude, Op. 5, No. 4.

For the last two comparative discussions, we turn to two composers whose chief historical contributions have been to piano pedagogy and formalized development of piano technique, as opposed to concert music that has found a lasting place in recital repertoire: Carl Czerny and Johann Baptist Cramer. Johann Baptist Cramer (1771-1858) was a composer, pianist, and publisher. Born in Germany, he settled in England at an early age following his father. He studied in London with Muzio Clementi. Despite being younger than Clementi by twenty years, Cramer's influential 84 Etudes, Op. 30, and Op. 40, predate Clementi's famous *Gradus ad*

Parnassum by over ten years. Reginald Gerig notes that Cramer uses many of the same textures as Clementi but makes them more "refined," [51]with the implication that many of Cramer's etudes might be more musically satisfying. Gerig also points out Cramer's love for Johann Sebastian Bach, which may explain his interest in polyphonic textures. Both Gerig and Gerald Graue/Thomas Milligan note that Cramer had an enormous influence on several generations of composers, also due to his long life.[52] As discussed in Chapter 2, Henselt held Cramer in high regard and was able to visit him in London when Cramer was already in his seventies. Hans von Bulow's edition of 60 selected Cramer studies has remained a staple of pianistic education. Ferruccio Busoni dedicated an entire volume of his *Klavieruebung* (completed 1922) to eight etudes after Cramer.

Contrary to a preconception that etudes before the age of Romanticism are musically dull affairs written in simple keys, Cramer's etudes are versatile, musically sophisticated, and venture into remote keys including E-flat minor. Pedagogically, keys with more accidentals are important not only for their color or for practicing reading complexity but for the inclusion of black keys, which has technical implications for hand positions and thumb sliding, among others. His Etude, Op. 30, No. 41, in E major, adopts the texture of a chorale prelude in the style of Johann Sebastian Bach, with a slow top voice and a moving, contrapuntal middle voice. Compare Cramer's piano writing with Bach's famous *Ich rufe zu Dir, Herr Jesu Christ*, BWV 639 (see Example 15).

[51] Gerig, *Famous Pianist and their Technique*, 61.
[52] Thomas Milligan, Jerald C. Graue, and Simon McVeigh, "Cramer Family," *Grove Music Online*, accessed April 2, 2024, https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000044589.

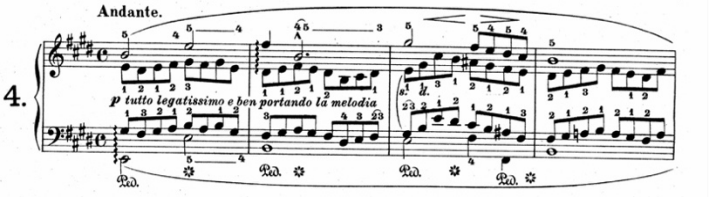


Example 15. Johann Sebastian Bach: Chorale Prelude, BWV 639, mm. 1-2 (above) and Johann Baptist Cramer: Etude, Op. 30, No. 41, mm. 1-2 (below).

Note that Cramer's etude is marked Aria, a title that goes back to the first edition. Bulow, who includes this etude in his collection of 60 as No. 56, retitles it "Arioso," perhaps to discourage a plodding interpretation, but the broader reference to singing remains.

Henselt's Etude, Op. 5, No. 4, subtitled "Ave Maria," written more than two decades after Cramer, bears more than a passing resemblance to its predecessor (see Example 16). Davis notes that Henselt was a Protestant, despite "Ave Maria" being a Catholic reference.[53] The title notwithstanding, the musical model here is clearly Cramer via Bach's arrangements of Lutheran chorales, which brings the music back to Protestantism. The title may have been chosen for its evocative power more than any specific religious reference.

[53] Davis, "Henselt Études Opp 2 & 5," program notes for pianist, Piers Lane.



Example 16. Adolf von Henselt: Etude, Op. 5, No. 4, mm. 1-4. Most editions include the title "Ave Maria."

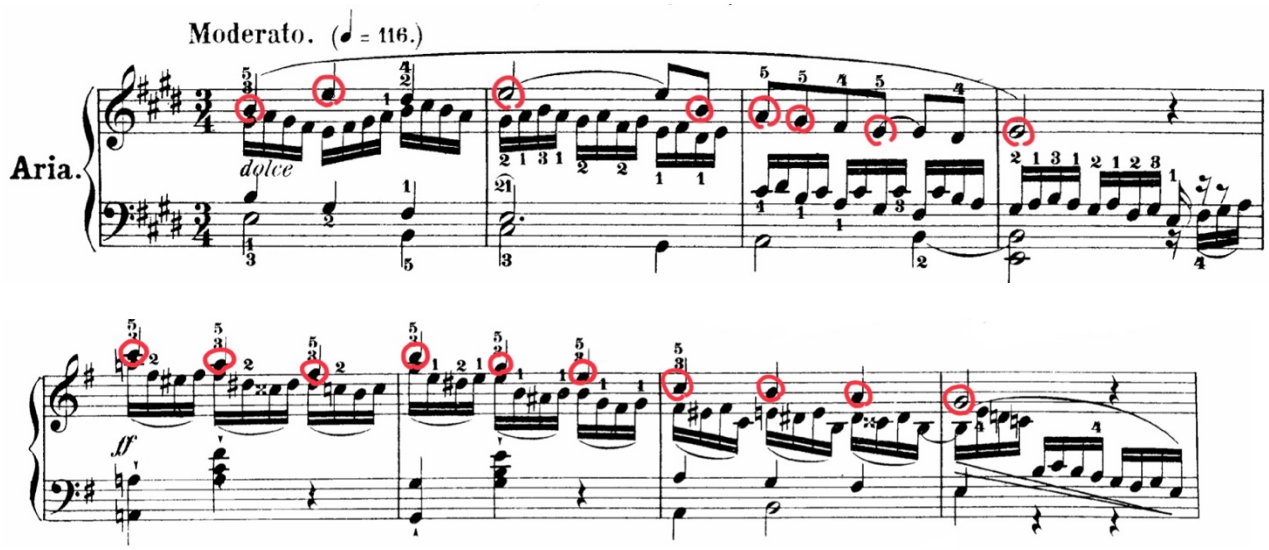
In terms of piano technique, Cramer was most admired for his legato touch, which later became the norm. McVeigh, Graue, and Milligan quote Moscheles as saying about Cramer that "'his legato could almost transform a Mozart Andante into a piece sung by the human voice." And continue that "[Cramer] apparently liked to view himself as a latter-day Mozartian, preserving Mozart's grace, elegance, and clarity." [54]

The two main technical challenges in Cramer's etude, expanded in the Henselt, concern the use of the fifth finger on a large number of melodic notes and the agility of the thumb in the middle voice (see Examples 17 and 18). Aspiring pianists can use the etude to learn how to shift the weight evenly and maintain a beautiful tone and legato sound in the top voice despite using the same finger on several consecutive notes. At the same time, the middle voice teaches to maintain a lightness of the thumb despite frequent usage including crossings.

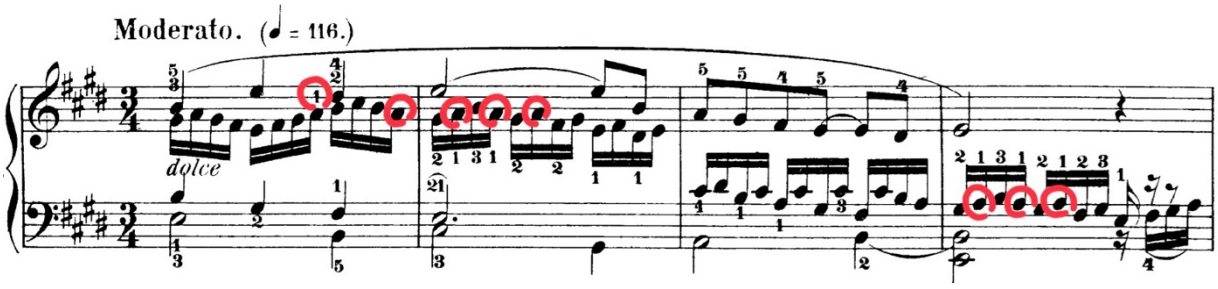
Unsurprisingly, Henselt's etude adds larger intervals and hand span into the technical mix. Consequently, it is unavoidable to use the thumb on consecutive notes including sliding the thumb from a black key to a white key, a technique much used by Chopin (see Example 16, observe the sliding between d-sharp and e-natural in the right hand in several instances). Despite Cramer's etude being in a faster tempo, Henselt's piece is more challenging because the

[54] Milligan, Graue, and McVeigh, "Cramer Family."

positions are less comfortable throughout. While I was unable to verify this quote, Jeremy Nicholas, a well-known British writer about music, quotes Anton Rubinstein (in his liner notes for Marc-Andre Hamelin's lauded recording of Henselt's Concerto) as having said after practicing Henselt etudes that, "it was a waste of time, for they were based on an abnormal formation of the hand. In this respect, Henselt, like Paganini, was a freak." [55]



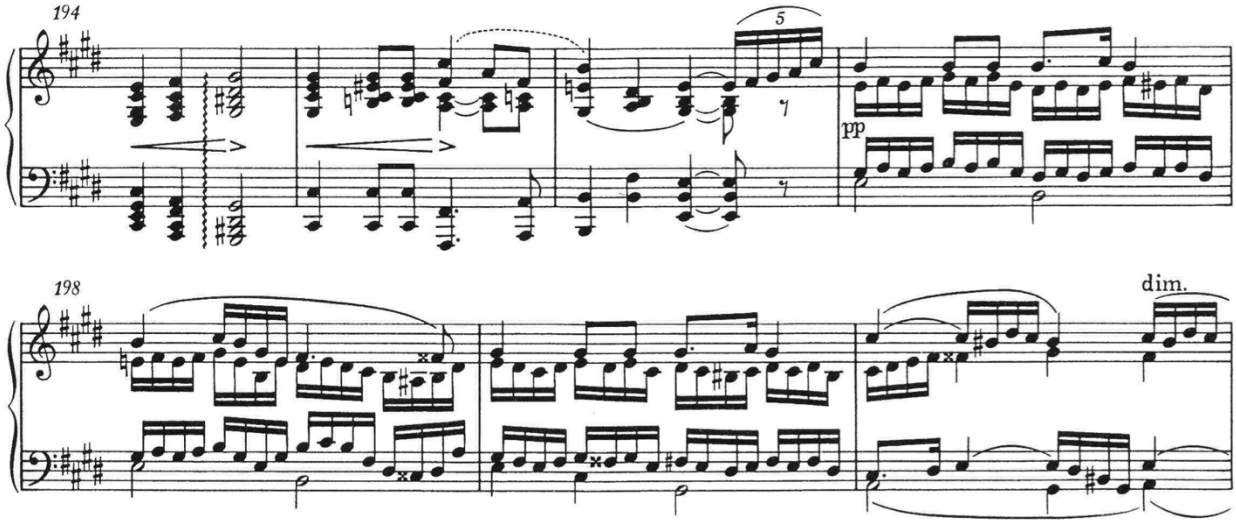
Example 17. Johann Baptist Cramer: Etude, Op. 30, No. 41, mm. 1-4 (above) and mm. 23-26 (below), with the fifth finger in the right hand highlighted.



Example 18. Cramer: Etude, Op. 30, No. 41, mm. 1-4, thumb crossings highlighted.

[55] Jeremy Nicholas, "Alkan and Henselt: Piano Concertos," liner notes for BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, pianist, Marc-André Hamelin, conductor, Martyn Brabbins, recorded December 1993, *Hyperion* CDA66717, 1994, CD.

I will return to the value of Henselt's etudes in the conclusion to this paper. Despite this strongly-worded assessment from Rubinstein, Henselt went on to teach at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, which was founded by Rubinstein. While some of the specifics of Henselt's textures might be fanciful, it is impressive how many different challenges he was able to tackle in his two collections and just how much he had assimilated and synthesized from his contemporaries and predecessors. Equally impressive are the achievements of Johann Baptist Cramer, who could also be described as a nearly forgotten Romantic. Cramer's etude, which inspired Henselt, predates by decades similar textures by Schubert and Chopin (Example 19; see also Chopin's Etude, Op. 10, No. 3 for a study in many similar pianistic and musical issues that also happens to be in E major).



Example 19. Franz Schubert: "Wanderer"-Fantasy, D 760, mm. 194-200.

By the time Cramer passed, in 1858, he was considered somewhat of a dinosaur among musicians, and it is easy to forget that his etudes, written when Beethoven was barely in his middle period, were revolutionary in their new understanding of pianistic capabilities.

Etudes and Pedagogical Thinking: Adolf von Henselt and Carl Czerny

Focal Works: Carl Czerny: Etude in E minor, Op. 692, No. 21 (or Book II, No. 9), "Heroisme," and Adolf von Henselt: Etude, Op. 2, No. 1, "Orage, tu ne saurais m'abbatre!" ("Storm, you will not fell me!").

For many aspiring pianists, Carl Czerny (1791-1857) is synonymous with the genre of piano etude and exercise. Among his nearly thousand opus numbers, he composed well over a thousand exercises directed at students with a wide range of abilities, from beginners to concert pianists. A student of Beethoven's, his treatise on how to play Beethoven's works is still studied today as an important historical document about interpretation. Czerny, who began teaching as a teenager, went on to become one of the most celebrated pedagogues, claiming Liszt as his most famous student. He is thus a crucial link between Beethoven and Liszt in pianistic genealogy. Czerny also knew Clementi and incorporated Clementi's ideas into his own pedagogy.[56]

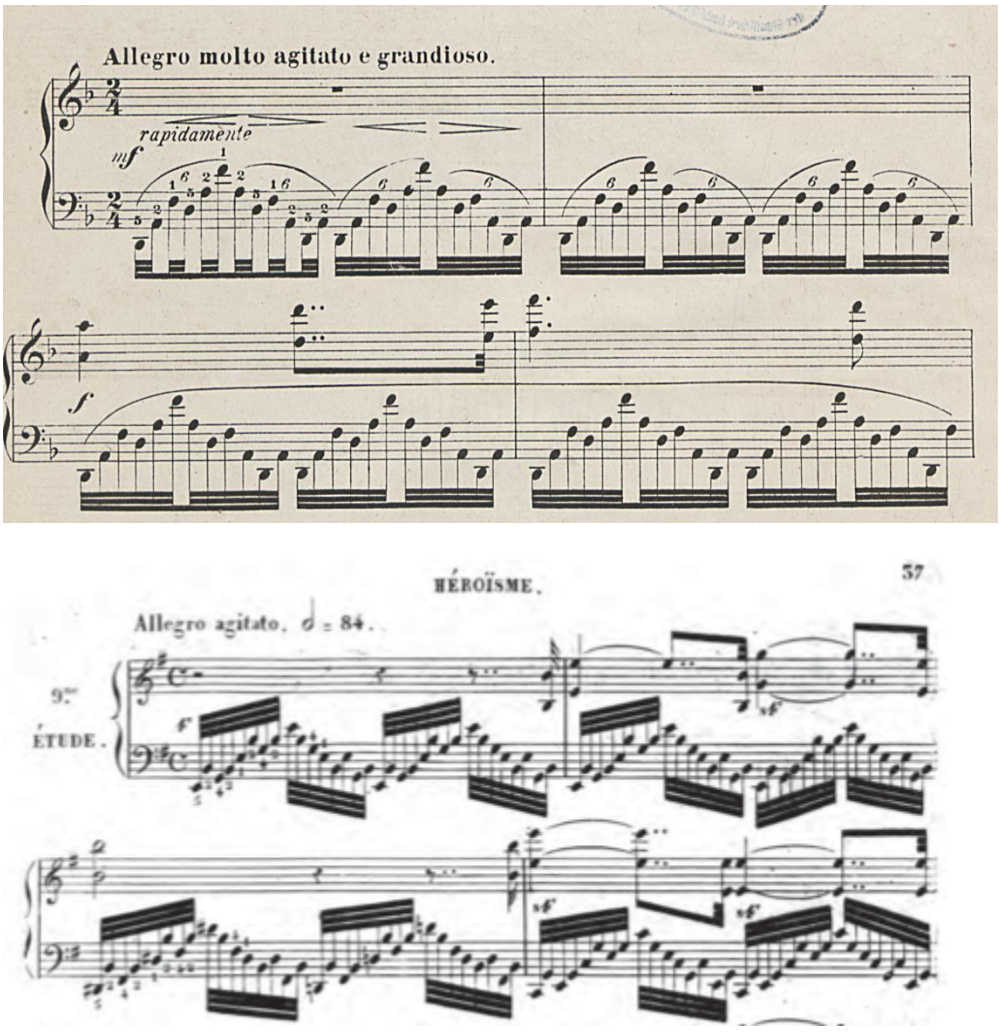
As a teacher, Czerny had to be familiar with the work of his contemporaries, and his pedagogy is forward-looking in its analysis of the styles of different composers. Volume 4 of his *Grosse Pianoforte*-Schule, Op. 500 (1839) is titled "Die Kunst des Vortrags der aelteren und neueren Claviercompositionen oder: Die Fortschritte bis zur neuesten Zeit" ("The Art of Performing [both] Older and Newer Compositions for the Piano Or: The Progress Until Current Times"). The second and third chapters in this ambitious work deal with Beethoven, but the first chapter starts with the younger generation: Thalberg, Doehler, Henselt, Chopin, Taubert, Liszt,

[56] Stephan D. Lindeman and George Barth, "Czerny, Carl." *Grove Music Online*, accessed March 4, 2024, https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000007030.

and others. Concerning Henselt, Czerny gives examples from multiple compositions by the younger musician, including Op. 3, Op. 6, Op. 11, and Op. 16. Curiously, Czerny does not feature any examples from the etudes, though by 1839, he would have been familiar with them. He analyzes the compositions as an experienced teacher would: identifying hand distribution as a major issue (see earlier discussion of Op. 2 in conjunction with Mendelssohn's Song without Words) and notes that the pedal needs to be used judiciously given the complicated textures.

Today, many pianists start their training with Czerny's easier compositions. The most difficult Czerny etudes which are still widely practiced are drawn from his Op. 740 "The Art of Finger Dexterity." Some etudes in this opus, particularly in the later part, come closer to being performance pieces. Yet, it is less known that Czerny had written compositions that are more difficult and more brilliant than even the hardest Op. 740 etudes in collections, such as his *Grandes Etudes*, Op. 692, which appeared in 1836. If one is used to thinking of Czerny's etudes as nameless and perhaps somewhat unevocative, the etudes in Op. 692 will be a surprising discovery for their poetic titles, similar to Henselt, and their Romantic verve. The focal etude for this discussion, Op. 692, No. 21, bears the subtitle "Heroisme."

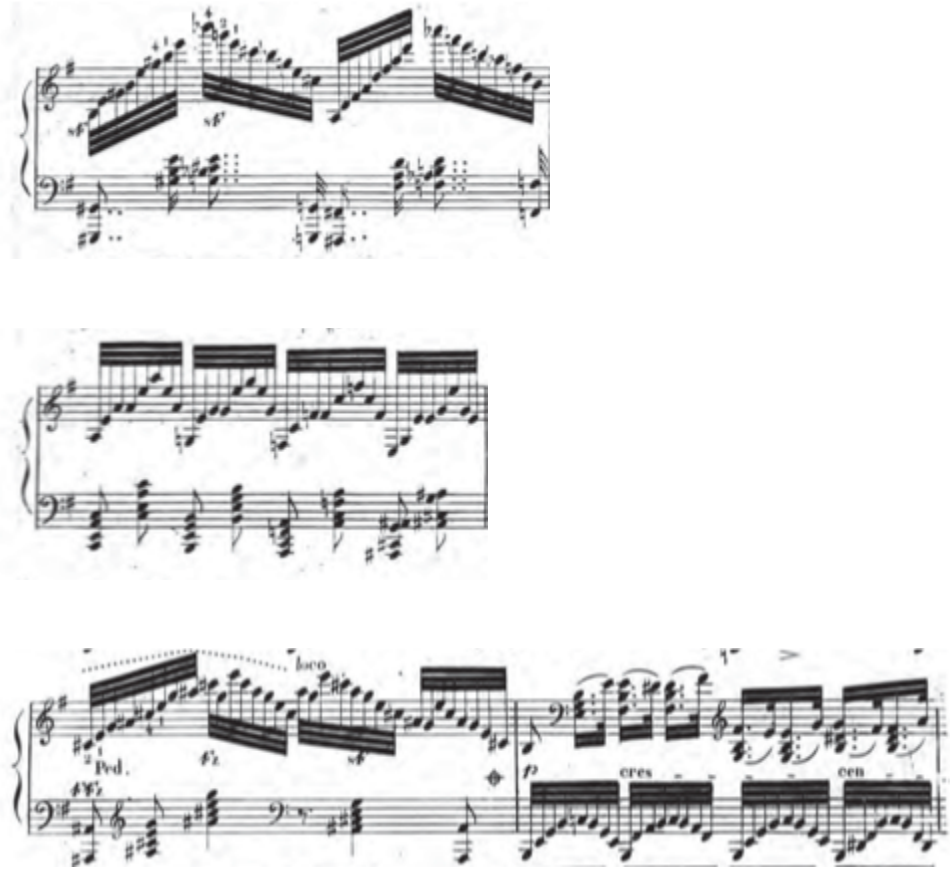
Many of the main musical ideas in Op. 692, No. 21 are similar to Henselt's Op. 2, No. 1, composed two years later (see Example 20). There are the arpeggio waves in the left hand, double-dotted rhythm and octaves in the right hand expressively emphasizing the upward leap from scale degree 5 to scale degree 1, and dramatic dynamics and tempo markings. One also wonders how much both composers may have learned from Chopin's famous "Revolutionary" Etude, Op. 12, No. 12, which was published in 1833.



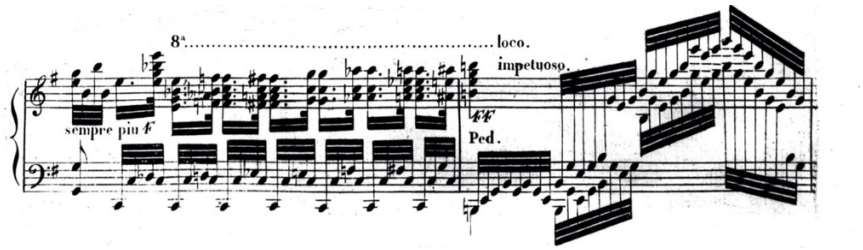
Example 20. Adolf von Henselt: Etude, Op. 2, No. 1, mm. 1-4 (above), and Carl Czerny: Etude, Op. 692, No. 21, mm. 1-4 (below).

It is interesting to compare the two etudes in their pedagogical objectives. Henselt's left hand pattern does not just require a wider hand span but is technically more forward-looking, requiring rotation and a rapid opening and closing of the hand similar to Chopin's Op. 10, No. 1. Czerny, by contrast, is more concerned with practicing thumb crossings. However, over the span of the whole etude, Czerny covers more ground. He switches to right-hand arpeggios sooner (in measure 9) and continues to vary how the arpeggios are alternated as well as combined in the

two hands. Henselt gives arpeggios to the right hand only once, at the climax of the piece, and he adds double-notes for greater dramatic effect, which works well musically but is a more esoteric technique and thus less immediately useful pedagogically. Czerny also offers more different arpeggio patterns (see Example 21). Even harmonically, the older composer is at times more adventurous (see Example 22).



Example 21. Different arpeggio patterns in Czerny's Op. 692, No. 21.



Example 22. Carl Czerny: Etude, Op. 692, No. 21, mm. 33-34.

In a surprise twist, Czerny comes out as both the more experienced pedagogue as well as the quietly more imaginative and inventive composer in the comparison of these two particular etudes. While Henselt's etude is likely to be more difficult to perform, Czerny's etude has more pedagogical benefit for a greater variety of students and performers. Still, Henselt's etude remains effective, brilliant, and would make for an attractive repertoire piece. For this reason, this is one of the etudes that Clara Schumann included in her recitals (see earlier discussion of Schumann's and Henselt's relationship).

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters used a comparative approach to present a historical and pedagogical context for select etudes by Adolf von Henselt. Several conclusions can be drawn from this discussion:

(1) Henselt was an important part of the fabric connecting many prominent musicians in the 19th century. As a result, he was a musical chameleon, and his two collections of etudes show an encyclopedic breadth of influences, at times looking back at earlier models like Cramer but also looking forward, incorporating Chopin's achievements to create a link to late 19th-century pianism, especially in Russia.

(2) Henselt's unique contribution to the technical literature lies in his interest in hand stretches. All writings about Henselt state that he did not have a big hand himself but was working hard on extension in his own playing and reflected this interest in his compositions. Alberto Jonas writes in the Schirmer edition: "The aim of nearly all the Henselt Etudes, Op. 2, is the strengthening and making supple of the hands by extension. Henselt liberally uses chords of the tenth, and also arpeggios with a larger stretch than the octave. Many of these passages seem extremely difficult, but intelligent practice will enable the smallest hands to master them."[57]

(3) Of all the major musicians discussed in this study, the one most influenced by Henselt was likely Clara Schumann, due to the very prominent place that Henselt's compositions occupied in her repertoire and her own propensity for composing textures requiring

[57] Alberto Jonas, *Adolf Henselt Op. 2: Twelve Characteristic Concert-Studies for the Piano* (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1902), 1.

significant hand extensions. How much this propensity was natural to her hands and how much was developed by studying Henselt's compositions is difficult to say but the link is significant, and one might consider using Henselt's compositions as preparation studies for some of Clara Schumann's works.

(4) Henselt is one of several underappreciated Romantic composers who are now mostly remembered as pedagogues. Cramer's revolutionary approach to technique deserves more attention (not to mention that he has a large body of concert works that are almost never performed, including nine piano concertos). Czerny, while the most played and famous of the three, sometimes does not get enough credit for the musical interest of his most ambitious compositions as well as for the technical nuance in his compositions.

(5) Along with historical and pedagogical interest, many of Henselt's etudes are written in the evocative style of Romantic character pieces, with attractive titles and memorable character. Not all of them are fast. Several are written in the style of songs without words featuring attractive lyricism. As such, they deserve a more prominent place in the concert hall as well as the piano studio.

(6) In the piano studio, Henselt's etudes are helpful to keep in mind for students with large hands but also as alternatives to better-known, wonderful, but also overplayed etudes such as Chopin's Etude, Op. 10, No. 1. It is further worthwhile to explore their pedagogy for students with smaller hands. Smart fingering and redistributions can be very helpful, and students can be encouraged to use rotation and flexibility to minimize strain. Where strain is a concern, several editions suggest *ossias* for the most taxing passages, and students and teachers can find other subtle ways to make modifications to prevent injury.

In sum,

(7) I hope to contribute to a rediscovery of this music which deserves a larger place in the performing and teaching repertoire. On a personal note, I find this music fascinating and rewarding to study, perform, and teach, and hopes that more musicians will explore it for themselves.

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