

Musical Genre and Style

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Studies by Moritz Moszkowski op. 72: Towards a Formulation of the Problem of the Instructional Genre

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Abstract. The article attempts to determine the place of the piano Études op. 72 by Moritz Moszkowski (1864–1825) in the context of the development of the instructional genre. The works are considered in the context of the “instructional – concert” opposition traditional for Russian musicology. In this regard, the approximate and intuitive nature of the very definition of an instructional étude is noted to inform the determination of criteria on the basis of which certain études can be classified as varieties of the designated genre. Moszkowski’s piano Études op. 72 are particularly representative in this regard since they do not fit unconditionally into any one category. To further their study, the article draws two lines of comparison: Moszkowski – Czerny and Moszkowski – Chopin. According to the first line, Op. 72 is analysed with a focus on the generally accepted example of the instructional variety of étude (in particular, Czerny’s op. 740 Études), while in the second, comparisons are made with Chopin’s concert texture. It is shown that romantic elements penetrate the piano texture and themes of Moszkowski’s études to become an immanent property of the genre. While certainly retaining instructive features, the tasks set for the performer by the pianism of the études are principally of an artistic nature. Since this makes it impossible to classify Moszkowski’s études as a purely “school” type of étude, the author proposes to consider them as instructional études of a new type.

Keywords: piano étude, Moritz Moszkowski, Frédéric Chopin, Carl Czerny, romantic pianism

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Introduction

The piano works of the Polish composer Moritz Moszkowski (1854–1925) are related to a research problem that, at first glance, may seem self-evident. In a number of studies, [1; 2; 3; 4; 5] this problem is not exposed to special development but instead formulated as a kind of axiom. Here it becomes important to distinguish between two genre varieties of piano étude, which are referred to in Russian musicology as “instructional” and “concert.”

If the first is connected with the didactic function inherent to the genre, then the second arose as a consequence of the unprecedented actualisation of its concert-artistic properties and its transformation into an entire system of musical-poetic expressiveness. During the Romantic era, the concert étude became a vivid musical form in the hands of outstanding composers and pianists such as Chopin and Liszt. The poeticisation of the étude genre and consequent departure from its original utilitarian nature placed it on a par with other romantic genres of piano music.

Is it sufficient, however, to simply accept the accepted genre classification as an established fact without any scholarly disputation? Obviously not. Moreover, any serious attempt to analyse Moszkowski's études from the point of view of the evolution of the genre confirms the impossibility of maintaining the existing status quo.

In light of the above, it seems important to identify the criteria according to which

certain études should be considered as concert or instructional. Despite their strong roots in performing and musicological usage, these definitions remain at present largely subjective¹; as such, the assignment of an étude to one of the genre varieties tends to be carried out rather on the basis of their author's deemed belonging to the list of composers of the first or second rank. Thus, piano études by Liszt, Chopin, Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, Debussy are usually considered as concert, while those by Clementi, Cramer, Czerny, Moscheles and others are considered as instructional. In this case, such parameters as the technical complexity of the études and their place in teaching and performance practice, the scale of the compositions and artistry (the most subjective and controversial quality) play a role.

However, the present article cannot claim to solve the problem outlined but is undertaken, rather, with the aim of adequately posing it. This is the reason for turning not simply to the period when the instructional and artistic varieties of the étude became most difficult to distinguish,² but to the figure of the composer in whose work they began to intertwine even within the framework of a single composition. Moritz Moszkowski turned out to be such a unique figure in the history of romantic piano music.

Along with his piano works, Moszkowski's creative personality currently remains a little-studied area in Russian musicology; moreover,

¹ In the present author's opinion, the intuitiveness of classifying this or that étude as belonging to the area of concert or instructional repertoire is mainly connected with the utilitarian-practical genesis of this division. Accordingly, the justification has often been based on the more subjective views of individual pianists. From the many striking examples, we will cite a statement from Arseny Shchapov's *Piano Pedagogy*: “[In a music school] it is not recommended to use the études of Burgmüller and Schitte, which have a cheap salon taste, as well as such dry études as, for example, the études of Keller.” [6, p. 59]

² According to Irina Portnaya, who carried out a major study into Debussy's étude work, “the division into instructional and concert-artistic études subsequently (in the second half of the 19th century. — E. Kh.) became largely conditional.” [3, p. 7]

the musician himself belongs (probably not without reason) to the category of second-tier authors. Nevertheless, despite his reputation as a salon composer,³ Moszkowski left quite a noticeable mark on the history of pianism: he was a teacher of many outstanding pianists of the early 20th century (including Joseph Hoffmann), and wrote many études that remain extremely popular to this day.

His most famous opus is the *15 Virtuoso Études* op. 72, which have the author's subtitle "Per aspera ad astra" (1902). Since their first

publication in 1903, they have been reprinted many times throughout the world. Table 1 presents data on Polish, American and Soviet-Russian publications.⁴

From the presented data it follows that the composer, despite the scanty research attention paid to his work, paradoxically belongs to the most sought-after. It is enough to note just one fact: op. 72 went through 15 editions in Russia between 1933 and 1994! The reasons can probably be seen in the very nature of Russian musical education with its

Table 1. Moritz Moszkowski Études op. 72 Editions

First Editions (1903)
Paris: Enoch & Cie.
London: Enoch & Sons
New York: Boosey & Co.
Braunschweig: Henry Litloff's Verlag
Berlin: Benno Balan
Later Editions
Krakow: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne 1953; 1960; 1967 (Zbigniew Drzewiecki, Josef Hofmann)
New York: Boosey & Hawkes
New York: International Music Company 1963 (Isidor Philipp)
Warner Bros Publications, 1985
New York: G. Schirmer, 1986
New York, London: Alfred Publishing, 2006 (Maurice Hinson)
Buenos Aires: Ricordi. Musica Muy Bueno
Moscow: Muzgiz Publ. / Muzyka Publ.; Kompozitor Publ.: 1933; 1935; 1936; 1937; 1941; 1951; 1955; 1957; 1960; 1963; 1966; 1976; 1982; 1986; 1994

³ Thus, Alexander Alekseev reports about Vera Timanova: "The greatest impression in her performance was made by bravura virtuoso compositions, like Liszt's operatic fantasies or Balakirev's *Islamey*, and pieces by salon authors — Moszkowski, Paderewski and others, which she performed with great grace and brilliance." [7, p. 82] Later, speaking about Anna Yesipova, the researcher notes: "Looking through her notes, I noticed that her repertoire included an extraordinary number of pieces designed for brilliance, feminine grace, the play of rhythm and colour, external virtuosity, the beauty of sound, and, so to speak, 'piquancy.' For example, Yesipova's repertoire includes a large number of works by Rameau, Scarlatti, and composers such as Saint-Saëns, Moszkowski, Paderewski, Leschetizky, and Tausig." [Ibid., p. 205]

⁴ Cit. ex: [8, pp. 227–228].

three-stage structure [9] and careful approach to the training of pianists. Based on the number of editions, one can conclude that in the pre-war and post-war years in the Soviet Union the demand for the *Études* op. 72 was colossal.⁵

In the literature on piano methodology, they are given a place in the senior grades of music school and in the early years of music college. Thus, Moszkowski's *études* are tacitly positioned as a kind of transitional stage between Czerny's *études*, that is, the *étude* repertoire of primary school, and the more advanced concert *études* of Chopin and Liszt.⁶ Therefore, in further study it seems appropriate to follow two main lines of comparison: Moszkowski – Czerny and Moszkowski – Chopin.

The New "School of Fluency"

Moritz Moszkowski's studies fall into the field of comparison with Czerny as if "by default" due to their popularity in classrooms. Moreover, it seems axiomatic that Czerny's influence was felt in one way or another by all the composers of piano *études* in the middle and second half of the 19th century. For example, Liszt, a direct student of Czerny, dedicated his

Transcendental Études to him, and Debussy's opus dedicated to Chopin (1915) opens with an *étude* "for five fingers — after Monsieur Czerny" with a direct quotation from *Études* No. 1 from op. 740.

Even in cases where such a connection is not declared, one can consider as an absolute fact a certain, at least subconscious, readiness of composers of the second half of the 19th century to remain in the plane of comparison with Czerny, whose name, according to Sergei Eisenstadt, became "a symbol of the *étude* genre." [11, p. 108] Moszkowski was no exception. His "alignment" with Czerny is confirmed by his own words: in 1902 he wrote a letter to the publisher Henry Hinrichsen⁷ that included the following: "What do you say about the series of piano *études* (probably 25) with which I am currently occupied? These *études* [...] must be some new school of fluency, something like a continuation of Czerny's complex *études*" (Cit. ex: [8, p. 228]).

Moszkowski modesty is very typical⁸: he used the expression "school of fluency" (*Schule der Geläufigkeit*), although he undoubtedly

⁵ It is also worth noting that the very first Soviet editions of Moszkowski's *études* op. 72 were published in 1924 and 1925 during the first years of the Soviet state.

⁶ Thus, Alexander Alekseev notes that Moszkowski's *études* "directly prepare for the texture of the romantics and composers of the subsequent period." [10, p. 259]

⁷ The fate of Hinrichsen, who headed the publishing house "Peters" in Leipzig for almost 40 years (from 1900 to 1938), turned out to be tragic: soon after the publishing house was confiscated by the National Socialist authorities of Germany, Hinrichsen was sent to Auschwitz, where he died on September 17, 1942.

⁸ In this regard, Moszkowski's words about his piano concertos seem indicative. In 1887, in a letter to Ernst Perabo accompanying the First Concerto (which subsequently remained unpublished and was considered lost until 2011, when its manuscript was found in the National Library of Paris), Moszkowski wrote: "I feel happy in sending you my concerto for only two reasons: firstly, it is not worth a dime; secondly, it is very convenient (the score is 400 pages long) to put on a chair and sit higher at the piano while I am immersed in studying more worthy works" (Cit. ex: [12, p. 15]). It is worth noting that this concerto received warm praise from Liszt, who organised a private evening at which he performed the concerto on two pianos together with the author. Twelve years later, on November 7, 1898, Moszkowski, following the premiere of his Second Concerto (op. 59 *E major*) jokingly remarked that if he himself had known that he would have to perform it, he would not have written such a difficult concerto. [13, p. 102; 14, p. 1051] Thus Moszkowski's noble modesty did not prevent him from recognising the high technical perfection of his compositions.

meant “the art of finger fluency”⁹ (*Kunst der Fingerfertigkeit*) when speaking about Czerny’s “complex” studies. At the same time, a comparison with op. 299 indicates the instructional nature of the author’s intention, which only confirms the ambiguity of genre categories when considering études from the second half of the 19th century.

A number of Moszkowski’s études are characterised by a type of presentation that can be called “deliberately instructive”: such are Études Nos. 1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 12. They are distinguished by the emphatically étude-like

character of the texture: very typical formulas with a more or less obvious distribution of functional roles between the parts of the hands. In the first étude there is a scale-like movement in the right hand against the background of chords and bass in the left; in the fifth there is a similar textural solution, but even more simplified; in the third and seventh études there is a parallel movement (in the seventh, in principle, unison), etc. (Example No. 1).

At this point, however, the “instructional” nature of Moszkowski’s études practically ends.

Example No. 1

Moritz Moszkowski. *Études* op. 72

a) *Étude* N° 1, mm. 1–4



b) *Étude* N° 3, mm. 1



c) *Étude* N° 5, mm. 1–3



d) *Étude* N° 7, mm. 1–2



⁹ In the Russian literature, the translation “The Art of Finger Dexterity” [*Isskustvo beglosti pal'tsev*] is considered standard. For the subtleties of translating the title of Czerny’s main collection of sketches, see: [15, pp. 9–10].

The “Czerny” model of the exemplary instructional *étude*, as represented in op. 740, presupposes the stable preservation of the initial textural idea: the *étude* is constructed in simple ternary form; at the end of the first period (typically consisting of two phrases) a modulation occurs to the parallel minor tonality or to the dominant tonality of the major, and the initial textural formula can either transfer unchanged to the other hand, or (more commonly) be transformed into a different type of movement according to the principle of derivative contrast.¹⁰ At the same time, the texture of remains more or less close to the “instructional” forms of movement: scale-like movement without chromaticism, various kinds of arpeggios, broken octaves, etc. However, in those cases where the figurative exposition is not initially endowed with melodic brilliance (the absence of which we have termed above as deliberate instructiveness), Moszkowski departs from the instructive typification of texture immediately upon completion of the first period of the *étude*, introducing in its place individualised, characteristic thematicism.

Let us consider two examples: *Études* No. 1 and No. 5. The material that arises in the 17th measure of the First *Étude* (*E major*) following the modulation in *G-sharp minor* undoubtedly departs from the classical form of instruction (Example No. 2).

Example No. 2 Moritz Moszkowski. *Étude* op. 72 № 1, mm. 17–18



This is facilitated by the wide, romantic¹¹ arrangement of the chord in the left hand that ends with a bright syncopation in the first finger, as well as the extremely expressive line in the right hand that outlines the melodic *G-sharp minor*, and, finally, the “shimmering” sixteenth notes in the descending section of the melody. This texture is characterised by extended “breathing” [Russian musicological term referring to gestural unity] that extends over two measures and is accompanied by the performer’s and listener’s feeling of the passage as a single melodic wave. The heartfelt lyricism of the section, which vividly sets off the fanfare-like, polonaise-like beginning of the *étude*, is complemented by a completely non-“*étude*” remark *lusingando* (softly, ingratiatingly, flattering¹²).

Moszkowski proceeds in a similar manner in the Fifth *Études* (*C major*). Here the “deliberate instructionality” is extremely sharp: the presentation evokes memories of Czerny’s 8th and 9th *Études* op. 299 and many Czerny – Germer studies (Example No. 3).

¹⁰ We present the characterisation given by Arseny Shchapov: “Exercises are always built on the repetition of a single sound formula, whereas in an *étude* the formulae underlying it are varied, alternated, or diversely combined.” [6, p. 58]. The author follows this statement with the remark “...and for an *étude* it is often necessary to compose auxiliary exercises. [...] Here [in the *études*] attention is mainly occupied with *switching* from one technical formula to another, and not *coordinating* movements *within* the figure; the latter is possible only in exercises where each figure is repeated many times.” [Ibid., p. 118]

¹¹ Yakov Milstein describes the constructive principle that expands the range of possibilities of the piano as typical of romantic pianism: “If the classics, as a rule, show a noticeable desire for a narrow, tight, somewhat rationalistic registration, then Chopin and Liszt constantly strive for greater register distances, for the use of the natural vertical order of overtones.” [16, p. 111]

¹² According to the characteristics of Natalia Terentyeva, in instructional sketches “designations of character [...] in most cases are completely absent.” [1, p. 43]

Example No. 3 Moritz Moszkowski. *Étude* op. 72 № 5, mm. 1–2**Veloce e leggiero (Быстро и легко)**

However, in the ninth measure of the *étude* (exactly at the end of the first period), the texture changes: the breathing becomes larger again, an independent melodic line in the left hand appears again, and the melodic profile of the right hand is individualised again, leading to a bright, joyful episode in *B major*, which is exceptionally convenient pianistically after the initial white-key scale constructions (Example No. 4).

In both examples given, the textural, melodic and figurative content of the middle sections forces us to perceive the initial “instructional”

constructions as an introduction to more vivid material. Such a deep contrast is caused by the obvious stylistic and genre transformation of the material within the framework of one composition. If the initial sections, which represent an obvious “genre memory,”¹³ refer to Czerny, then much in the texture of the middle, more “romantic” sections, refers to a genesis in Chopin.

Aspects of Chopin

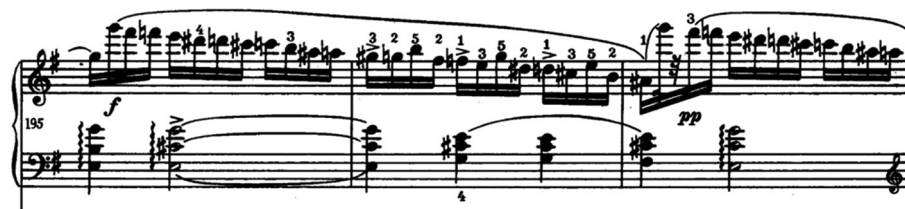
For example, the melodic line of the right hand in the last of the examples considered (Example No. 4) is reminiscent of similar descending passages in Chopin’s *First Piano Concerto* (Example No. 5), which, from a performance point of view, can provoke a further break with the purely motor “étudeness”¹⁴ in the form of Chopin’s micro-slowdowns at the peaks.

The left hand part in both of Moszkowski’s *études* is also perceived as melodious

Example No. 4

Moritz Moszkowski. *Étude* op. 72 № 5, mm. 18–20

Example No. 5

Frédéric Chopin. *Piano Concerto* № 1 op. 11.
1st Mov., mm. 195–197 (piano part)

¹³ Mikhail Bakhtin’s expression was applied to a piano *étude* by Tatyana Maslova. [5, p. 14]

¹⁴ By “étudeness,” we mean metronomically even playing.

in a Chopin-like manner. Let us give another example from the Concerto (Example No. 6).

From the comparison it follows that the inclusion of cantabile accompaniment (in Chopin this texture corresponds to the secondary theme) in conditionally “motoric” sections of the musical fabric testifies to a profound assimilation of one of the fundamental principles of Romantic pianism — that is,

“singing” on the piano. It can be asserted that by the time of Moszkowski, this element of piano mastery had become so typical of pianistic thinking that it became an immanent part of the texture of the instructional étude.

The “romanticism” and “concert” nature of Moszkowski’s texture can also be seen in the initial sections of the études. To do this, let us consider the features of the genre from

Example No. 6

Melodic Accompaniment in Moszkowski and Chopin's Texture

a) Moritz Moszkowski. *Étude* op. 72 № 1, mm. 41–42



b) Moritz Moszkowski. *Étude* op. 72 № 1, mm. 81–83



c) Moritz Moszkowski. *Étude* op. 72 № 5, mm. 10–12



d) Frédéric Chopin. *Piano Concerto* № 1 op. 11. 1st Mov., mm. 606–609 (piano part)



the performing side. Thus, in the *First Étude* there is a characteristic thematic nature of the material (Example No. 7): the right hand part is precisely a melody with numerous flexes, which shifts the focus of attention from a purely technical task (even performance of scale passages), constituting the most important genre feature of the instructional étude, to the artistic task of its meaningful intonation at a fast tempo.

On closer inspection, this figurative fabric has very little in common with dry instruction. It represents a figurativeness of a similar quality to defined by Konstantin Zenkin, when speaking about the texture of Schubert's *Impromptu No. 2* in *E-flat major*, as “free acceptance of the presupposed conditions, ‘rules’,” as “the primordially of intonation.” [17, p. 42, 43]¹⁵

Later, the genre and melodic characteristics of the texture become even stronger (Example No. 8).

Firstly, the left hand part is individualised: an additional lower voice appears, requiring the performer to demonstrate it in relief (especially in the sixth measure, with a third quarter that is varied relative to the previous one, extended in a polonaise-like manner). Secondly, the right hand part, which recedes into the background before the individualised left hand part, does not turn into a typical “background”: the bright “tops” of *si* on the first beats of the fifth and sixth bars, preceded (especially the first of them) by a rapid rise of the hand, are necessarily taken by a movement from above. Thus, the right-hand part represents not an artistically meaningless figurational layer having the sole purpose of training finger dexterity (as is presumed in the instructional étude), but fully serves as a conduit for the festive and nobly daring character of the music that opens the collection. The genre characteristics of the polonaise and the resulting imagery of the *E major Étude* do not allow us to consider it as completely instructive.

Example No. 7

Moritz Moszkowski. *Étude* op. 72 № 1, mm. 1–4

Example No. 8

Moritz Moszkowski. *Étude* op. 72 № 1, mm. 5–8

¹⁵ In the étude under consideration, as well as in the impromptu, the right hand part represents the “inseparable fusion of melody and harmonic figuration” mentioned by the researcher. [17, p. 42]

The stated imperative to lift the hand from the keyboard brings to mind Chopin's Concerto and another example in *E major* (Example No. 9) with a very similar type of romantic virtuosity (in Chopin's case, the elastic lifting of the hand is subtly depicted with the help of pauses¹⁶).

In conclusion of our examination of the Moszkowski – Chopin parallel, we will give two more examples from *Piano Concerto No. 1*. In the middle section of the first étude, Moszkowski places the figurative themes practically unchanged in the left hand. In this regard, the explanatory note that Moszkowski wrote before the publication of op. 72, which was printed on the reverse of other compositions

by the composer that came out around 1902, is interesting: “In composing these études, the author primarily pursued the goal of evenly developing the technique of both hands. [...] He therefore [...] composed them in such a way as to create sections that would be practically a reversal of each other.”

In a pianistic sense, this entailed the need for a playing technique characteristic of romantic piano texture in this section (Example No. 10): the performance involves “lengthening” the left hand towards the fifth finger, by crossing the long fingers over each other (the fourth over the fifth). An identical playing technique was used by Chopin in the final part of *Piano Concerto No. 1*.

Example No. 9

Frédéric Chopin. *Piano Concerto N° 1* op. 11.
1st Mov., mm. 278–281 (piano part)



Example No. 10

Transposition of the Fourth Finger over the Fifth
in Chopin and Moszkowski's Texture

a) Frédéric Chopin. *Piano Concerto N° 1* op. 11. 1st Mov., mm. 291–293



b) Moritz Moszkowski. *Étude* op. 72 N° 1, mm. 59–61



¹⁶ Without the risk of falling into excessive physicality of presentation, one can note the role of these pauses on the right as a kind of “springboard” to the subsequent downward movement.

Finally, in the *Fifth Étude*, on the approach to the reprise, there is a chromatic sequence, with an exact repetition of links, typical of the connecting and final constructions in Chopin's texture (Example No. 11). Such a sequence could not have arisen in Czerny's etude; Moszkowski, however, needed it for a quick return to *C major* following the *B major* episode.

Conclusion

We have seen how Moritz Moszkowski's études occupy a transitional position between classical instructional etudes (of which Czerny's works are a model example) and artistic compositions of the romantic piano repertoire, amply demonstrating features of both. Whilst preserving the instructional memory of the genre, Moszkowski in op. 72 brings the performer close to the typical formulae and textural ideas of the new, romantic pianism, conceptualising

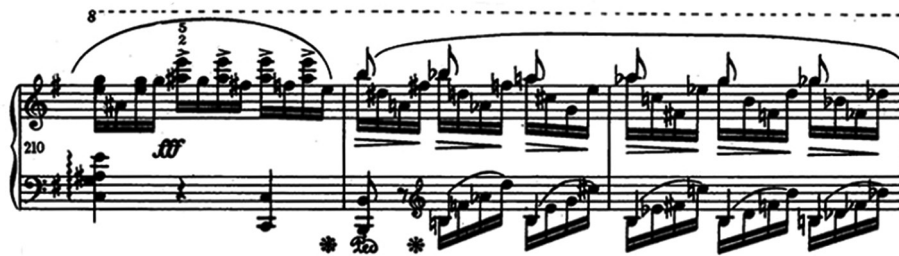
the brilliant insights of the romantics (primarily Chopin) as a necessary element of the pianist's technical equipment at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

What type of étude is presented in Moszkowski's op. 72? In the article we have examined the texture and thematics of the compositions. At this level, Moszkowski's etudes clearly represent a new stage in the development of the genre of the instructional etude. In contrast to the classic genre of the purely instructional étude, the demonstrated features of pianism associated with the performance of études can be seen as directly generated by romanticism. From the point of view of these criteria, these are probably instructional studies of a new type. Perhaps the author's title of the opus — *15 Virtuoso Études* — implies something a little deeper than just a catchy title for another opus by a salon composer?

Example No. 11

Chromatic Sequences in Chopin and Moszkowski's Texture

a) Frédéric Chopin. *Piano Concerto N° 1* op. 11. 1st Mov., mm. 210–212



b) Moritz Moszkowski. *Étude* op. 72 N° 5, Transition to Reprise



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