

about the Etudes...

Op. 10

"I have done a large en forme Exercice, in a manner of my own; I shall show it to you when we meet."

"I have written a few exercisses – I could play them to you well."

From letters by F. Chopin to Tytus Woyciechowski in Poturzyn, Warsaw 20 October and 14 November 1829.

"I write unaware of what my pen is scribbling since at this very moment Liszt is playing my Etudes, transferring me beyond the range of sensible thoughts. I would like to steal from him the manner of performing my own compositions."

Fragment of a joint letter by F. Liszt, F. Chopin and A.-J. Franchomme to Ferdinand Hiller in Frankfurt, Paris 20 June 1833.

Op. 10, no.1

"When I played with him the study in C major, the first of those he dedicated to Liszt, he bade me practice it in the mornings very slowly. «You shall benefit from this Etude. If you learn it according to my instructions it will expand your hand and enable you to perform arpeggios like strokes of the bow. Unfortunately, instead of teaching, it frequently un-teaches everything». I am quite aware that it is a generally-prevalent error, even in our day, that one can only play this study well when one possesses a very large hand. But this is not the case, only a supple hand is required."

From a diary of Chopin's pupil, Friederike Müller-Streicher, quoted in: F. Niecks *Chopin as a Man and Musician*, London 1888.

Op. 10, no. 3

"With regard to the [...] Lento ma non troppo (Op. 10, no. 3) Chopin said to Gutmann that he had never in his life written another such beautiful melody ('chant'); and on one occasion when Gutmann was studying it the master lifted his arms with his hands clasped and exclaimed: «O, my fatherland!»"

Reported by Chopin's pupil, Adolf Gutmann, to F. Niecks, in F. Niecks, *vide supra*.

Op. 10, no. 5

"Did [Clara] Wieck play my Etude well? How could she have chosen precisely this Etude, the least interesting for those who do not know that it is intended for the black keys, instead of something better! It would have been better to remain silent."

From a letter by F. Chopin to Julian Fontana in Paris, Marseilles 25 April 1839.

Op. 25

"[Chopin] played his new Etudes to the astonished residents of Leipzig with the speed of lightning [...]"

From a letter by F. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy to his sister Fanny Hensel, Leipzig 6 October 1835.

"As regards the Etudes [...] I heard the majority played by Chopin himself, who performed them in 'an extremely Chopinesque manner' [...] Imagine an aeolian harp having all the tonalities, and an artist's hand combining them with all kinds of fantastic embellishments, but always an audible deeper tone in the bass and a softly flowing cantilena in the treble – and you will have some idea of his playing. No wonder, then, that I was charmed by all those pieces which I heard him play."

R. Schumann *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker*, Leipzig 1888, vol. II.

Op. 25, no.1

“Among them I must mention predominantly the first, in A♭ major, more of a poem than an Etude. It would be a mistake to suppose that he permitted us to hear every one of its small notes. It was rather an undulation of the A♭ major chord, strengthened here and there by the pedal; but through the harmony there emerged a wonderful melody in big notes. Only in the middle section did a tenor voice break clearly from the chords and join the main melody. This Etude yielded an impression similar to the one made by a wonderful dream which, half awake, we would like to recapture. This is difficult to express and even more so to praise with the help of words.”

R. Schumann, *vide supra*.

“It is said that while describing the rendition of this etude Chopin said to one of his pupils: «Please imagine a young shepherd seeking refuge in a sheltered cavern against an encroaching storm. While the distant wind and rain sough he g e n t l y plays his melody on a pipe».”

Recounted by J. Kleczyński in: *Chopin w celniejszych swoich utworach*, Warszawa 1886.

Op. 25, no. 2

“He immediately passed [from the Etude in A♭ major] to the second one in the fascicle – in F minor, also bearing the unforgettable imprint of his personality, an Etude as charming, dreamy and soft as the song of a child singing in his sleep.”

R. Schumann, *vide supra*.

Op. 25, no. 3

“It was followed by the successive, beautiful Etude in F major, novel not so much as regards its character as the employed motif; its intention was more to demonstrate the charming [liebenswürdigste] bravura for which the master deserved greatest praise.”

R. Schumann, *vide supra*.

Dbop. 36

“I, the undersigned, declare that I sold to Mr. Maurice Schlesinger exclusive rights for all countries to my Etude, intended for the Méthode des Méthodes by Messrs. Moscheles and Fétis, and that I received the sum of two hundred franks.

Frédéric Chopin”

“I received the sum of five hundred franks from Mr. Maurice Schlesinger in return for exclusive rights to the second Etude for Méthode des Méthodes.

Chopin”

To the publisher Maurice Schlesinger in Paris, Paris 19 November and 1 December 1839.