

Étude #20, g minor

This insistent, driving étude is one of the finest technical pieces of the 32, and is often listed as a preferred étude for music school auditions. It is also one of the most fun to play.

Since it is in compound meter, it must be practiced to the 8th-note beat. Like all compound meters, it has a little swing, an emphasis on the first note of each bar. After practicing it in three, having it well in hand, practice it in two beats to the bar; you may have to practice bars 17–20 without the trills a few times to get the feel of this section when played in two. Finally, play it in one beat to the bar with three 8th-note subdivisions.

Kalmen Opperman's LH anchor, first mentioned in regard to Étude #4 (see page 7), can be used to very good effect with this étude. Keep the LH little finger touching but not depressing (until required to do so) the E / B key. This anchor stabilizes the LH and makes its motion more efficient. Once the learning of this étude is well underway, practice it in front of a mirror to see that the fingers stay as close to the keys as possible.

Bars 17–31: many editions indicate repeat signs for this passage. This edition, based on the first edition of 1893, does not. However, players should feel free to repeat this passage, if so desired.

Bar 30: many editions have a third-space C as the last note of this bar (and some other editions use a first-space F). This edition is in agreement with the first edition (1893), which uses a throat tone A.

This étude poses three main technical challenges:

1) The first challenge is the need to keep the air steady between the slurred notes and the articulated ones. This occurs in the very first bar, and is repeated many times throughout the étude. Whenever going from slurring to articulating, one needs to speed up the air right before the moment the articulation begins. This is a compensation for the tendency to slow down or stop the air during the "shift" between slurring and tonguing. Make a little crescendo between the last note of each slur into the first articulated note, and do not clip the end of each slur. The crescendo will not be heard by the audience unless it is overdone; the result is that the passage sounds even and well-sustained. Once learned, this technique is used, literally, all the time in all kinds of repertoire.



2) **Bars 17–20:** the most obvious technical challenge. Use the side trill keys #3 and 4 for the B \flat -C trill. Keep the LH thumb very alert to make clean jumps into the clarion register after each trill—it feels as if the thumb leads the other fingers. This passage, from bar 17 through 31, should be repeated many times in practice. Two options for practice (disregarding a time signature):



3) The final challenge starts at bar 31, after the breath taken during the 16th-note rest. There is no good place to breathe until the end of bar 64! One place is the end of bar 48. This must be a catch breath, and try to keep the tempo through it (by slowing down, you draw attention to the breath-taking) but it requires some practice to incorporate. One option is to allocate one 8th-note rest for the breath, but otherwise to keep the tempo intact. For those players who can circular-breathe, here is a good opportunity!

20)

7

14

21

28

35

42

49

56

63

70

74

mf

f

mf

p

f

mf

p

p

p cresc.

p

f

mp

p

f