

Étude on Ab

Composed by Richard Hughes

For Grand Piano

Performance Techniques & Instructions Index

i.) Cue notes are used as an indication to play the notes at performer's discretion, as often or as seldom as one wishes along with the A flat.

ii.) Music notated in the black bordered box indicates that one hand will play inside the piano while the other plays the keys. (see figure 1). Symbols inside the box are techniques for the hand inside the piano.

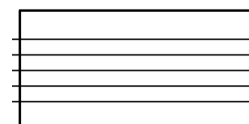


fig.1

iii.) The triangle wave indicates to slide the finger between the damper and the 'end' of the string, more specifically the end of the copper coil over the string near the tuning pegs (See figures 2 & 3).



fig.2

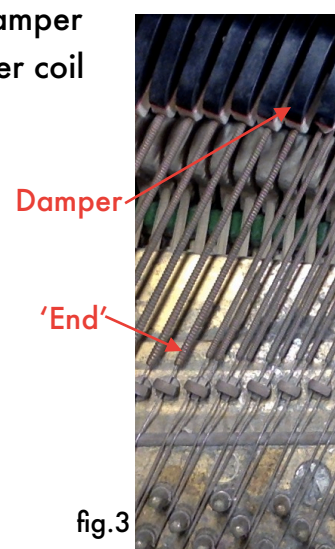


fig.3

iv.)  This symbol indicates to place finger firmly on the 'end' of the string.

v.) Figure 4 indicates harmonics are to be played. The pitch and amount of harmonics is a choice by the performer.

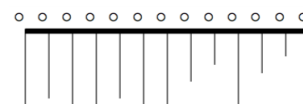



fig.4

vi.)  The slashed note-head means for the key to be depressed, although without making any sound.

Étude on A_b

Richard Hughes

Senza tempo

The musical score for 'The Swan' by Camille Saint-Saëns is presented in a single system. It features a piano and celeste. The piano part is written in G major, 3/4 time, and includes various musical notations such as staccato, piano (p), fortissimo (ff), and pedal (Ped.) markings. The celeste part is written in G major, 3/4 time, and includes various musical notations such as staccato, piano (p), fortissimo (ff), and pedal (Ped.) markings. A detailed diagram of the celeste keyboard is included, showing the layout of the keys and the placement of the celeste's keys. The score is a single system, and the piano and celeste parts are written in G major, 3/4 time.

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‘Étude on A ♭’ is a study not of a key but a single note. The composition focuses on timbral qualities of notes, much inspired by Giacinto Scelsi. The piece is quite aleatoric, the performer has discretion on duration in all regards. This allowance of discretion does not take away from the piece itself. As musicologist Bowen construes, “the score is a spatial representation of only some of the elements of the temporal phenomena.”¹ It is temporal and musical phenomena that this composition investigates.

The tremolo notes heighten the tone of the note and the semitones either side bring out almost microtonal features. A key aspect of this piece is about harmonics, the overtone series and resonance. 5ths are stacked up, as the strongest harmonic interval, to each successive note (strongest meaning the first tonically biased interval of the overtone series). These seven notes make up the Lydian scale. It is played in fifths and in thirds. Russell has demonstrated that the Lydian scale sounds closest in harmonic unity of all scales.²

Further exploration goes into the overtone series in line 4. The performer is instructed to use one hand inside the piano and one on the keys. The hand inside performs various techniques on the strings. Sliding the finger between the damper and the end of the string yields a phaser effect as very high overtones are being highlighted. Placing one’s finger firmly at the end of the string while striking the key

¹ Jose, Bowen. Ch. 19, ‘Finding the Music in Musicology: Performance History and Musical Works’ in *Rethinking Music*, Cook and Everist (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1999), 425.

² George Russel, *Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization* (Massachusetts: Concept Publishing Co., 2001).

makes a unique tone. As the pedal is lifted throughout, resonance is occurring on other strings building an atmospheric sound from the piano, almost electronic.

The final technique uses the existence of the overtone series and resonance.

The keys A \flat , C and E \flat (a major chord) are depressed without making sound.

When A \flat , the octave lower, is staccatoed its sound ends immediately but sound still exists and this is the resonance from the strings in which the dampers have been lifted in particular. These keys resonate well because they are early in the overtone series.

‘Étude on A \flat ’ is a study on what is inside one note. The composition takes a look at its atomic features through the use of harmonics, resonance and experimenting with its tone.

Bibliography:

Bowen Jose. Ch. 19, ‘Finding the Music in Musicology: Performance History and Musical Works’ in *Rethinking Music*, Cook and Everist (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1999).

Russel, George. *Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization* (Massachusetts: Concept Publishing Co., 2001).