UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI

February 19 82

I hereby recommend that the thesis prepared under my supervision by Phillip Avery Hayner II

entitled "The Role of the Piano Etude in the Compositions of Karol Szymanowski"

be accepted as fulfilling this part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Approved by:

Donald H. Foster

Joel Hoffman

Béla Siki

THE ROLE OF THE PIANO ETUDE IN THE COMPOSITIONS OF KAROL SZYMANOWSKI

A thesis submitted to the

Division of Graduate Studies
of the University of Cincinnati

in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS IN PIANO

in the College-Conservatory of Music

1981

by

Phillip Avery Hayner II

B.A., Bob Jones University, 1973

M.M., University of Cincinnati, 1975

CONTENTS

PREFACE

Arthur Rubinstein's unqualified praise of Karol Szymanowski's piano music in his autobiography My Young Years first provoked my interest in the relatively unknown Polish composer. Further research revealed the general scarcity of information concerning his piano output and indicated the need for a study such as this.

I wish to thank Dr. Donald Foster for his kind guidance and care in suggesting textual revisions. I also thank Mrs. Ruth Good, head librarian of the Seby Jones Library at Toccoa Falls College, for her aid in acquiring various reference sources.

INTRODUCTION

Poland's culture has endured for over one thousand years, but because of its lowland geography and strategic position it has suffered barbaric invasions, tragic partitions, and horrible persecutions. During brief periods of respite in the twentieth century, however, there has flowered a musical culture equal in intellectual endowment and emotional warmth to any in the West. This modern river of creativity springs from two primary sources--one, the life and music of Frédéric Chopin (1810-49), a Pole whose main center of activity was outside his homeland; and the other, the music of Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937), a Pole who chose, after becoming known abroad, to return to his homeland. There he assisted his countrymen, despite many obstacles, in the establishment of a superior musical culture.

The history of Poland divides into four primary periods--the Middle Ages (966-1492), the Polish Commonwealth (1492-1795), the Period of Partition (1795-1914), and the Modern Era (1914-).[1] Christianity was introduced

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[1] Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th ed., s.v. "Poland, History of," by Hans Roos.

in both Latin and Greek forms during the Middle Ages. In this period of monarchy the land was parcelled out amongst the nobility and there was a large class of peasants. The landowning class persisted well into the twentieth century; indeed, Szymanowski's father was one of a long line of landed Polish gentry.[2] During the Polish Commonwealth parliamentarianism became firmly entrenched. The monarchy continued, albeit in a weakened role. In 1795 the country was partitioned for the third time amongst Russia, Prussia, and Austria and ceased to exist as a sovereign state until the end of World War I. The years of partition produced numbers of zealous and patriotic Poles, not the least of whom was Frédéric Chopin, whose music captured the poetry and fierce nationalism of the courageous Polish people. It was during Chopin's life that the Rising of 1830 was crushed by the Russians. There were further unsuccessful uprisings--against the Prussians in 1846 and against the Russians in 1848, 1861, and 1863. The events of World War I eventually brought about the establishment of the Second Polish Republic on November 11, 1918. From this time until 1935, the primary political figure was Jozef

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[2]Teresa Chylinska, Szymanowski (New York: The Kosciusko Foundation, 1973), p. 11.

Piłsudski, during whose virtual dictatorship the career of Karol Szymanowski flourished. Following World War II, Poland became a socialist state in close cooperation with the Soviet Union and other East European allies. Musical life has continued to flourish, however, and the thousand-year culture endures.

Poland's musical life has been vigorous in two primary spheres--those of folk music and art music.[3] The tradition of folk music is important to an understanding of Polish culture and to an appreciation of the incredible influence it has exerted on Western music through Chopin, Szymanowski, and others. Research into this field was begun early in the nineteenth century and has since continued unchecked. The rich cultural heritage includes many types--ceremonial songs, lullabies, dances, carols, etc.[4]

Polish art music began its career in the Church and its growth parallelled developments in the rest of Europe. It never, however, achieved international stature until Chopin. Following Chopin, there was no composer of stature to carry on the tradition. The opera composer

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[3]The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 1980 ed., s.v. "Poland," by Bogusław Schaffer.

[4]Ibid.

Stanisław Moniuszko produced a number of works, of which Hałka (1847) is his primary contribution. By the time of Szymanowski, Poland itself remained musically conservative and Warsaw led the way in upholding the primarily German tradition. Since Szymanowski, however, Poland has been in the avant-garde. Numerous composers have produced fine works of international stature and influence. Krzysztof Penderecki and Witold Lutosławski are the best known among many fine contemporary Polish composers. Seen in this light, it is impossible to overestimate the importance of Szymanowski to twentieth-century Polish music.

Szymanowski spent his childhood primarily at the family estate of Tymoszówka, which was located in the Ukraine near Kiev.[5] His musical influences during this time included his father, who began to teach him piano, and Gustav Neuhaus, his first composition teacher. It is certain that Szymanowski began careful study of the scores of both Chopin, his compatriot, and Skryabin, his elder by ten years. Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms were also

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[5]The facts of Szymanowski's life have been most importantly treated in Chylinska, Szymanowski; New Grove, "Szymanowski"; and Bogusław M. Maciejewski, Karol Szymanowski, His Life and Music (London: Poets' and Painters' Press, 1967). The following paragraphs are based chiefly on them.

given high priority in his early training. Although a number of student compositions resulted, including short piano pieces, several songs, and two sonatas, only the Nine Preludes, op. 1, for piano survive.

During the years 1901 to 1907 Szymanowski was in Warsaw studying composition at the Conservatory under Zygmunt Noskowski. Together with three other young Poles--Apolinary Szeluto, Grzegorz Fitelberg, and Ludomir Różycki--he formed a group called Young Poland, under the patronage of Prince Władysław Lubomirski. This group had as its goal the publication and performance of new Polish music. The young composer fell under the spell of such luminaries as Wagner, Richard Strauss, Franz Schreker, and Skryabin. He further delved into Chopin's music and immersed himself in German romantic poetry. He befriended a number of poets and musicians who were to be of primary significance to his later work. These include Arthur Rubinstein, Henryk Neuhaus, the poet Jarosław Iwaskiewicz, Pawel Kochański, and Grzegorz Fitelberg.

Szymanowski returned from travel abroad in 1914 and then limited his travels to Poland and Russia until 1920. His musical experiences in France and his absorption of Eastern and early Christian mysticism led to an impressionistic phase in his writing, combined with

Skryabinesque expressionism. The years 1920-32 were marked by visits to the United States, England, Cuba, France, Germany, and his beloved Zakopane--a resort town in the mountains of southern Poland where the composer frequently visited and worked. In 1926, he took up residence in Warsaw, with visits thereafter to Zakopane, Cracow, and Prague.

During his final years (1932-37) he visited Paris, Copenhagen, Madrid, various places in Russia, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Hungary, London, Glasgow, Stockholm, Oslo, Bergen, Brussels, Riga, and Prague. He spent his final year in Warsaw, Grasse, And Lausanne, where he subsequently died of tuberculosis. This brief overview of the composer's primary places of activity and extensive travels indicates his cosmopolitan nature. He came in contact with almost every leading musical figure of the first third of this century. But his searching, individualistic mind assimilated only certain traits, adapting them to his personal style.

It is possible to divide Szymanowski's creative life into three periods.[6] During the early period (1898-1913) he was particularly attracted by the expressive

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[6] *New Grove*, "Szymanowski."

qualities of both the voice and the piano. This period derives its characteristics from the romantic composers and may be further subdivided according to the primary influences acting upon the composer's musical style. The Nine Preludes, op. 1, come from his adolescence and are stylistically related to the Nocturnes of Chopin. The works from op. 2 through op. 14 were written during his student days at the Warsaw Conservatory and owe a great deal to the composer's love for and study of the music of Chopin and Skryabin. The works from op. 15 through op. 25 were strongly influenced by the music of Richard Strauss, Wagner, and Reger. The increased use of chromaticism in these works eventually culminated in the opera Hagith, op. 25. Besides the works for solo piano, voice, and the opera, there were chamber and orchestral works and an operetta, The Lottery for Husbands.

Szymanowski's second period extends from 1914 to 1921 and includes the works from op. 26 through op. 44. This period was one in which French impressionism captured the Pole's imagination. The steady stream of solo piano and vocal works continued unabated and there was a continuation of his writing for chamber and orchestral media. He also began writing rather large choral works.

During his final period (1922-37) Szymanowski returned to his native land and embraced the national and folk elements of its culture. His personal contact and conversations with Stravinsky played an important role in introducing Szymanowski to the innate possibilities of building an artistic work on folk elements.[7] The last fifteen years of the composer's life were thus spent integrating Polish folk elements into his intricate artistic vocabulary. He also assumed an active role in furthering Polish musical culture through extensive foreign travels and through his directorship of the Warsaw Conservatory. Again, there were works for solo piano, voice, chamber media, and chorus; another symphony; another violin concerto; incidental music; and two big projects, the opera King Roger, op. 46, and the ballet Harnasie, op. 55.

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[7]Leon Pommers, "Polish Aspects of Szymanowski's Style" (Masters Thesis, Queen's College of the City University of New York, 1968), p. 30.

CHAPTER I

SZYMANOWSKI'S PIANO COMPOSITIONS

Szymanowski's output of piano music spans his entire creative life, and it is of interest that his first and last published compositions were for the piano. There is, however, an unfortunate paucity of information regarding these fine works and a widespread unfamiliarity with them as well. The difficulty of much of this music and a frustrating lack of available scores also create some problems when attempting to make a fair evaluation of Szymanowski's art. To this end, it is necessary to survey the works in a manner which, it is hoped, will introduce not only the Four Etudes, op. 4, and the Twelve Etudes, op. 33, but also the rest of the rich and varied corpus of piano music written by this master.

Three national traditions seem to circumscribe Szymanowski's piano music. The first, and perhaps the most characteristic, is the Polish tradition derived from Chopin. Works in this category are generally short and grouped together in cycles of varying lengths. There are two subcategories within this tradition. The first is more generalized, that is, less specifically Polish, yet basically derived from Chopin in concept. In this

subcategory are the Nine Preludes, op. 1, the Four Etudes, op. 4, and the Twelve Etudes, op. 33. The works in the second subcategory are more directly Polish--Twenty Mazurkas, op. 50, Four Polish Dances (1926), and Two Mazurkas, op. 62. All of these works, including both subcategories, may be considered continuations and refinements of the romantic character piece, although the Twelve Etudes, op. 33, and the dances are harmonically far removed from nineteenth-century romanticism.

The second national tradition represented in Szymanowski's oeuvre is the French, particularly that of the impressionists, especially Debussy--the Debussy of the Estampes, Masques, Images, and Preludes. This strain is present in Szymanowski's two cycles of long and difficult programmatic works called Metopes, op. 29, and Masques, op. 34, as well as the Twelve Etudes, op. 33, and the Sonata, op. 36.

The third national tradition represented in Szymanowski's output is the German, typified by large, unified pieces with absolute, as opposed to programmatic, content. In this group are the three Sonatas, op. 8, op. 21, and op. 36; the two sets of Variations, op. 3 and op. 10; a Fantasy, op. 14, and the Prelude (1905) and the Fugue (1909). It is of note that all of these compositions

except the Sonata, op. 36, rely to some extent on chromatic harmony and indicate a preoccupation with the expanded tonality of Wagner, Strauss, and Reger, thus reinforcing their German derivation. The Sonata, op. 36, is a unique cross-pollination of German ideals of construction with impressionistic ideals of sonority.

Comingled with these three traditions are the pervasive and preeminent influences of Chopin and Skryabin. Concerning this, Maciejewski quotes Ludomir Rozycki, Szymanowski's friend, and a fellow member of Young Poland:

> Szymanowski composed at the piano. . . . Above all he loved and worshipped Chopin and after Chopin's music, the piano works of Scriabin. When he was working on the First Piano Sonata, op. 8, I found him frequently at the instrument studying in minute detail the structure of the passages in Chopin and Scriabin. In their music he saw and was able to discover the secret of pianoforte style.[11]

In Chopin's music, Szymanowski discovered articulate pianistic figuration and nationalistic spirit; in Skryabin's, an expressionistic, complex harmonic language which continually progressed to include ever new modes of artistic expression.

Above all the traditions and influences, however,

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[11]Maciejewski, Karol Szymanowski, p. 27.

was Szymanowski's unique musical gift--a sense of fidelity to his artistic influences, an uncompromising approach to his art that set him apart from many of his contemporaries. His style underwent several transformations, but his essential personality was not to change during the course of his eventful life. Scott Goddard offers this evaluation of his contribution:

> Szymanowski's music belongs to none of the popular twentieth-century spheres of influence. It is worth remarking that at a time when Stravinsky on the one hand and Schoenberg on the other were the rage, there were still composers who in that generation, kept their own way. They never were the rage, never taken by fashion or run by cliques; their music was comparatively seldom heard. But they did keep the quality that shows in Szymanowski's best music, the original vision of the alert-minded creative artist.[12]

Szymanowski published eight opuses of piano music during his early, romantically oriented period. These include the Nine Preludes, op. 1 (1898-1900), Variations, op. 3 (1901), Four Etudes, op. 4 (1900-1902), Sonata no. 1, op. 8 (1904), Variations on a Polish Theme, op. 10 (1903), Fantasy, op. 14 (1905), Prelude (1905) and Fugue (1909), and Sonata no. 2, op. 21 (1910). As has been mentioned, the Nine Preludes, op. 1, date from his adolescence, prior to his enrollment at the Warsaw Conservatory. The

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[12]Ibid., p. 31.

Variations, op. 3, Four Etudes, op. 4, Sonata no. 1, op. 8, Variations on a Polish Theme, op. 10, Fantasy, op. 14, and Prelude (1905) all date from the Warsaw Conservatory period and still bear similarities to the works of Chopin and Skryabin, with the addition of the influences of Wagner, Strauss, and Reger.

The Sonata no. 2, op. 21, and the Fugue (1909) are the only works from the Viennese phase of Szymanowski's activity. The Sonata no. 2 thus represents the culmination of his early period. It is a lengthy, dramatic, technically demanding work. Early criticism recognized the high level of writing in it. Richard Specht wrote that it "reveals an extraordinary talent, abundant with inventiveness, fertilized by all conceivable musical cultures and yet clinging to its own path."[13]

Szymanowski soon tired of Vienna, both socially and artistically. In 1913 he wrote to Stefan Spiess, "Stravinsky (the one of the Russian ballets) is quite a genius, I am very impressed by him and par consequence I am beginning to hate the Germans (I don't mean the old ones of course)."[14] That Szymanowski did not, however,

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[13]Chylinska, Szymanowski, p. 55.

[14]Ibid., p. 58.

abandon the Germans to slavishly follow Stravinsky is revealed by an anecdote related by Arthur Rubinstein:

> We had coffee in the studio. Stravinsky sensed immediately the charm of the place, but at the sight of the concert grand he made some denigrating remarks about the piano as an instrument. "The piano is an instrument of percussion and nothing else," he said. Karol argued: "I don't agree with you. The greatest composers have written for the piano masterpieces which demand a singing tone." "They were all wrong," said the Russian composer. "I am sure that a new music will be written treating it in the right way."[15]

Nevertheless, a change of aesthetic was partially responsible for Szymanowski's departure from Vienna in 1913 and his subsequent travels to Zakopane, Sicily, North Africa, Paris, and London.

The second major period of Szymanowski's artistic development was oriented more towards impressionism. Hersh contends that he could well be considered "a kind of hybrid representing the fusion of two major currents in early twentieth-century music--impressionism and post-romantic expressionism."[16] This phase is represented by four large works--the Metopes, op. 29 (1915), Twelve Etudes, op. 33 (1916), Masques, op. 34 (1916), and

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[15]Arthur Rubinstein, My Young Years (New York: Popular Library, 1973), pp. 437-38.

[16]Alan B. Hersh, "The Third Piano Sonata of Karol Szymanowski" (DMA thesis, Indiana University, 1971), p. 4.

Sonata no. 3, op. 36 (1917). The spiritual metamorphosis which had occurred between the Sonata no. 2 and the Metopes is described in some detail by Chylinska:

> The impressions of Italy, Sicily, and Northern Africa, the influences of the vast treasures of the cultures of antiquity and the East, and those of early Christian art began to coalesce into a new focus of artistic interests. . . . Memory brought back a vision of the "Odyssean" landscapes of Sicily, the metopes from the temples of Selinunt, and tales out of Greek myths and oriental fables.[17]

The Metopes (L'île des Sirènes, Calypso, Nausicaa) are subtitled "Trois poèmes pour piano," whereas the Masques (Schéhérazade, Tantris le bouffon, Sérénade de Don Juan) are subtitled "Trois morceaux pour piano." Following the lead of Debussy's second set of Images, Szymanowski notated large portions of these works on three staves. The epithet "unplayable" has been applied to both sets.[18] They are indeed long and difficult and still remain the exclusive province of sensitive and patient virtuosi.

The Sonata no. 3, op. 36, represents the culmination of the second phase of Szymanowski's output, much as the Sonata no. 2 does for the first phase. Indeed, the

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[17] Chylinska, Szymanowski, pp. 75-78.

[18] Maciejewski, Szymanowski, p. 54.

two works exhibit certain similarities. Both are large works requiring mature pianism. Both seem to harken back to the models left by Liszt in his Sonata in B minor and by Beethoven in his Sonata, op. 106. Szymanowski's last two sonatas, for example, both conclude with large, difficult fugues, thus continuing the tradition of incorporating fugal movements or sections within the sonata. It is with Szymanowski's Sonata no. 3 that the French and German influences seem to coalesce. His early training in form and fugal procedure are wedded to the sonorities of impressionism. Hersh states:

> The impressionism /in Szymanowski's music/ is represented by the importance of sound and sonority--the sensuous appeal to the ear, coupled with an ability to create what one writer calls "the rare and perfect moment." At the same time, there is a preoccupation with form and formal design, with contrapuntal artifice, and with the possibilities of motivic generation and inherent unity. Szymanowski's concern with these areas tended to develop along nineteenth-century lines rather than serially, and his point of departure was not significantly different from that chosen by the post-Wagnerian German school, particularly Reger and Strauss, whose music Szymanowski studied intensively early in his career.[19]

Ever present, however, is the ardent expressionism of Skryabin, who had died in 1915 and whose ten sonatas

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[19]Hersh, "The Third Piano Sonata," pp. 4-5.

must have continued to interest Szymanowski. That he could attain this unique combination of German construction, French impressionism, and Skryabinesque expressionism, while still maintaining his own artistic identity, is ample proof of his originality. Hersh sums up this achievement:

> The Third Sonata is judged by many to be Szymanowski's finest work for solo piano. It is conceived on the grand scale and is remarkably coherent yet spontaneous and consistently interesting. The high quality of the harmonic and melodic invention, the unusual and highly integrated formal design, and the variety of moods make it an eminently successful and worthy successor to the great nineteenth-century pianistic traditions.[20]

Szymanowski's final period was marked by an abrupt return to his own ethnic origins. There are Twenty Mazurkas, op. 50 (1924-25), Four Polish Dances (1926), and Two Mazurkas, op. 62 (1933-34). His choice of a post also indicates this devotion to his homeland:

> Toward the end of 1926 Szymanowski received two offers: both of directorship of Conservatories of Music--one in Warsaw and the other in Cairo. The Egyptian government offered excellent terms, nature guaranteed an ideal climate and it appeared that the post might satisfy Szymanowski's ambition. Yet his decision surprised his friends--

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[20] Ibid., p. 8.

in February 1927 Szymanowski became the director of the Warsaw Conservatory.[21]

Refinements of style and approach are evident between the Sonata no. 3, op. 36, and the Twenty Mazurkas, op. 52. Szymanowski's style, which heretofore had been marked by ever-increasing difficulties, was now stripped bare of the lush figuration that had previously been its hallmark. Here, finally, he seems free of his former reliance on others--Strauss, Reger, Debussy, etc. Even Skryabin is a foreigner in this realm. Bartók's works may have served as an influence by way of example, but this connection is nowhere documented. Perhaps only Chopin can lay any claim to having influenced these late works. These marvelous dances indicate the mature Szymanowski's desire to divest himself of extraneous foreign influences--both French and German, and to turn to those sources of inspiration which lay most naturally at hand, the folk dances and songs of his native land. Thus these works are among Szymanowski's most inspired and refreshing. Far from being simple and folksy, however, they are artistic monuments of the highest calibre, the mature Szymanowski's final statement to posterity. Pommers eloquently sums up this achievement:

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[21]Chylinska, Szymanowski, p. 152.

> Chopin's romantic commentary on the mazurka found in Szymanowski's creations a worthy twentieth-century counterpart. By their full absorption of a folkloristic idiom and by their alliance with the Chopin tradition, the Mazurkas stand out as the strongest manifestation of Polish elements in Szymanowski's style. Their acceptance by the world is testimony to Szymanowski's ideal that music, to be national and yet universal, must soar above the provincial.[22]

Szymanowski's piano compositions present a synthesis of national styles and individual influences. Having explored the late romantic German school, he turned to French impressionism, and finally to ethnic Polish music. Although the three primary periods of activity are marked by a gradual decline in his output, his interest in the piano continued throughout his life. He composed in many genres and produced music of consistently high quality. His oeuvre thus represents a high point in Polish art music and is today a source of inspiration to musicians of all nationalities and cultures.

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[22]Pommers, "Polish Aspects of Szymanowski's Style," p. 85.

CHAPTER II

FOUR ETUDES, OP. 4

At the time of their genesis, the Four Etudes, op. 4, fell squarely within the conventions of late romanticism. The last two decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the deaths of the old guard--Wagner (d. 1883), Liszt (d. 1886), Franck (d. 1890), and Brahms (d. 1897). The end of the era was at hand, although the careers of Gustav Mahler, Max Reger, and Richard Strauss continued to flourish. In Russia new directions had been forged and new sounds had been conceived by Mussorgsky, who had died in 1881. Two Russian pianists were creating a stir both by their playing and with their music--Serge Rachmaninov was just beginning his long and successful career, while Alexander Skryabin was churning out "nocturnes, preludes, etudes, and mazurkas in the manner of Chopin."[23] Elsewhere Ives, Sibelius, Elgar, and a host of more or less nationalistic composers forged their own respective paths. In France, three long-lived individuals continued a French version of the romantic tradition--Camille Saint-Saëns (d. 1921), Gabriel Fauré (d. 1924), and Vincent d'Indy (d. 1931). Neither Debussy nor Ravel was yet well

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[23]Donald Jay Grout, A History of Western Music, 3rd ed. (New York: Norton, 1980), p. 659.

enough known to be influential in eastern Europe. In Poland, still partitioned amongst Russia, Prussia, and Austria-Hungary, Warsaw was merely a provincial capital. Yet for Poles it was the veritable hub of culture. Rubinstein describes the atmosphere of the city at the turn of the century:

> The Poles called it proudly "the Paris of the East," and I found they were entitled to the boast. . . . There was something special in the air, an undefined charm emanating from the streets and parks, from the houses and palaces, from the theaters, restaurants, and cafés.[24]

During the course of his composition of the Four Etudes, op. 4 (1900-1902), Szymanowski had moved from the family estate of Tymoszówka to Warsaw in order to study at the Conservatory. "In 1901 I went to Warsaw. . . . I studied harmony under professor Zawirski and counterpoint and composition under professor Noskowski."[25] The estate at Tymoszówka which Szymanowski left behind was an unusually artistic enclave:

> The Szymanowski home was an oasis on such a high cultural level that it would stand out not only in the Ukraine, but in the most civilized parts of the world, as an island separate from and superior to

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[24]Rubinstein, My Young Years, p. 115.

[25]Karol Szymanowski, quoted in Chylinska, Szymanowski, p. 19.

> its environment. . . . The house was filled with a throng of young relatives, close or distant, but nearly all with artistic ambitions, some degree of talent and a wild sense of humor . . . a family in which everyone was an outstanding personality. . . . Almost every family meeting converted the Tymoszówka living room into a concert hall. Music and lyrics for operettas were quickly improvised, stage sets painted and a performance put on a makeshift stage. On other occasions there were colorful sledge cavalcades or tableaux vivants with the accompaniment of music, choral singing, poetry recitations, dancing.[26]

In such an atmosphere, it must have been easy for Szymanowski's artistic tendencies to bud and flourish. His decision to write a set of etudes was probably governed to some extent by his veneration for the works in this genre by both Chopin and Skryabin. He had already written his Nine Preludes, op. 1, with which the Four Etudes, op. 4, share many similarities. The Etudes, however, represent an advancement in style over the Preludes since they are much broader in concept and design.

Yet the piano etude as a genre had had rather inauspicious beginnings. It was originally a didactic exercise focusing on the perfection of certain aspects of technique, i.e. scales, arpeggios, double notes, octaves, etc. Szymanowski's Four Etudes, op. 4, however, bear no

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[26] B. Gromadzki, "Wspomnienia o młodości Karola Szymanowskiego" /Memories of Szymanowski's Youth/, Ruch Muzyczny (February 1948), quoted in Chylinska, Szymanowski, p. 22.

resemblance to this genre. Instead they were intended to be concert etudes--pieces of more musical moment, designed to display virtuosity, develop musicianship, and focus on specific technical problems. A number of such sets were undoubtedly familiar to Szymanowski at the time he wrote the Four Etudes, op. 4. Foremost among these were the Twelve Etudes, op. 10 (1828-32), Twelve Etudes, op. 25 (1832-36), and Trois nouvelles études of Chopin; and the Etude, op. 2, no. 1 (1889), and Twelve Etudes, op. 8 (1892), of Skryabin.

Although Chopin and Skryabin are important to an understanding of Szymanowski, it is difficult to draw definite conclusions concerning specific influences without the aid of documentation. Certain general conclusions may be drawn, however, in the light of Szymanowski's known preoccupation with the scores of both of these composers. For instance, just as with the etudes of Chopin and Skryabin, Szymanowski's Four Etudes, op. 4, deëmphasize technical display for its own sake, emphasizing rather the unfolding of specific musical ideas. That they are nonetheless technically difficult and present specific and formidable challenges to the performer qualifies them to be designated as etudes rather than as preludes or poems.

Hersh complains about the strong nineteenth-century influence in Szymanowski's early works: "These early works, while often of considerable beauty and containing hints of future developments, are not consistent and are often excessively derivative."[27] The charge of inconsistency is, of course, highly subjective, since at the time of their composition others saw nothing but the beauties of these works. Indeed, no less a pianist than Arthur Rubinstein was overcome by the Nine Preludes, op. 1, and the Four Etudes, op. 4:

> We were convinced we would find the naive scribblings of a schoolboy. It is difficult to describe our amazement after playing only a few bars of a prelude. This music had been written by a master! We read feverishly all the manuscripts becoming more and more enthusiastic and excited, as we knew we were discovering a great Polish composer! . . . His style owed much to Chopin, his form had something of Scriabin, but there was already the stamp of a powerful, original personality to be felt in the line of his melody and in his daring and original modulations.[28]

It is interesting that Skryabin, who was but ten years Szymanowski's senior, should have exerted such a strong influence on the Pole. By the time of Szymanowski's

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[27]Hersh, "The Third Piano Sonata," p. 8.

[28]Rubinstein, My Young Years, p. 126.

completion of the Four Etudes, op. 4, in 1902, however, Skryabin had produced a prodigious corpus of piano music, up through the Fantaisie, op. 28. In some respects, Skryabin's influence appears to have been even stronger than that of Chopin. Chopin's etudes, for example, while obviously of high musical quality, nonetheless attempted in many cases to exploit specific technical challenges which were commonly associated with the didactic etude. Thus he wrote etudes for double thirds (op. 25, no. 6), octaves (op. 25, no. 10), arpeggios (op. 10, no. 1), double sixths (op. 25, no. 8), etc. Skryabin's etudes, on the other hand, as well as many of Chopin's etudes, are divorced from such strict technical concepts and tend to develop musical ideas in a freer fashion. They do, however, adhere rather rigidly to the musical ideas and their technical concomitants throughout. This concept is the model which Szymanowski chose to adopt in the creation of the Four Etudes, op. 4.

Szymanowski's Four Etudes, op. 4, are based on nineteenth-century ideals of form, melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, technique, expression, and sonority. And although they are stylistically similar to both Chopin's and Skryabin's etudes, there are important differences which betray Szymanowski's authorship. Formally, for

instance, the Four Etudes, op. 4, are built from the same design, which might be termed Preparation, Drive to Climax, Climax, and Relaxation, a procedure he had used in most of the Nine Preludes, op. 1. In this format motives and themes are introduced and developed in the opening section. In the following section the dynamic level increases, eventually culminating in a climax. At this point the opening theme is usually reintroduced and there follows a period of gradual dynamic decline and release of tension until the piece ends. This form may indicate a preoccupation with sexuality in these works. That this thesis may not be completely farfetched is supported by Szymanowski's novel Efebos, "based on the subject of love and eroticism, to him a most essential question."[29] Efebos, one of the composer's comparatively rare literary ventures, was written in 1917-19 during a period in which he produced very little music. Of it Szymanowski stated:

> It was written almost accidentally--at first merely for private use, as a solace and sweet remembrance of things past, in order to exorcise the black pit of an endless succession of days, weeks, and months spent amidst the most atrocious

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[29] New Grove, "Szymanowski."

> external conditions by a magic vision of Italy rising in the mind's eyes.[30]

According to Maciejewski, the story concerns homosexual love and is Szymanowski's "apologia pro vita sua."[31] In addition, the text of his opera King Roger is "based, broadly speaking, on the Dionysian thesis that only through bodily love can the mysteries of divine love be approached or creative work be accomplished."[32] By contrast to Szymanowski's Four Etudes, op. 4, the etudes of Chopin and Skryabin are less likely to reach a pre-ordained climax. Szymanowski's procedure for each of the Four Etudes, op. 4, is detailed in Table 1.

Another possible formal approach is that of statement-departure-return or ABA. The return to A, however, is always obscured by the fact that it occurs at or near the climax, endowing the original material with a heightened emotional intensity (Table 2).

Szymanowski's Four Etudes, op. 4, consist of thorough statements and developments of melodic material. The use of short melodic motives in the generation of long, arching melodic lines which avoid points of repose is

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[30]Chylinska, Szymanowski, p. 89.

[31]Maciejewski, Szymanowski, p. 62.

[32]New Grove, "Szymanowski."

TABLE 1

FORMAT OF THE FOUR ETUDES, OP. 4

Etude	Preparation	Drive to Climax	Climax	Relaxation
no. 1	mm. 1-25	mm. 26-46	m. 47	mm. 48-59
no. 2	mm. 1-18	mm. 19-33	mm. 34-41	mm. 42-64
no. 3	mm. 1-15	mm. 16-40	m. 41	mm. 42-58
no. 4	mm. 1-17	mm. 18-39	m. 40	mm. 41-64

TABLE 2

TRIPARTITE FORM IN THE FOUR ETUDES, OP. 4

Etude	A	B	A'	Coda
no. 1	mm. 1-25	mm. 26-37	mm. 38-47	mm. 48-59
no. 2	mm. 1-18	mm. 19-33	mm. 34-48	mm. 49-64
no. 3	mm. 1-15	mm. 16-30	mm. 31-44	mm. 45-58
no. 4	mm. 1-17	mm. 18-29	mm. 30-44	mm. 45-64

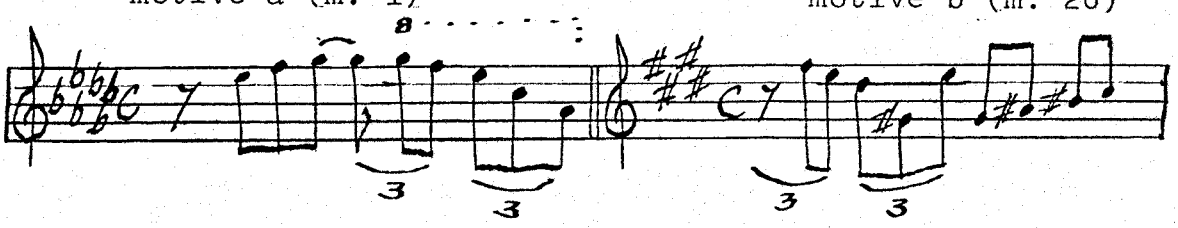
typical. This evocative, sensitive melodic gift is perhaps the point at which his style differs most profoundly from the styles of Chopin and Skryabin. The primary melodic motive is generally introduced at the outset. From this, a subordinate motive is drawn and used in developmental and/or contrasting sections. Ex. 1

gives the primary motives from each of the Four Etudes, op. 4. Of particular interest is the chromatic melody of

Example 1. Primary melodic motives in the Four Etudes, op. 4

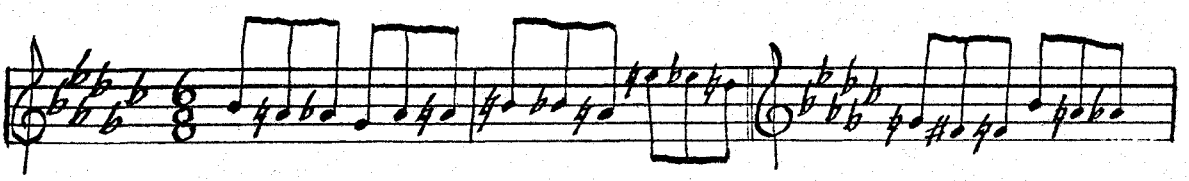
a. Etude, op. 4, no. 1, in E-flat minor

motive a (m. 1) motive b (m. 26)



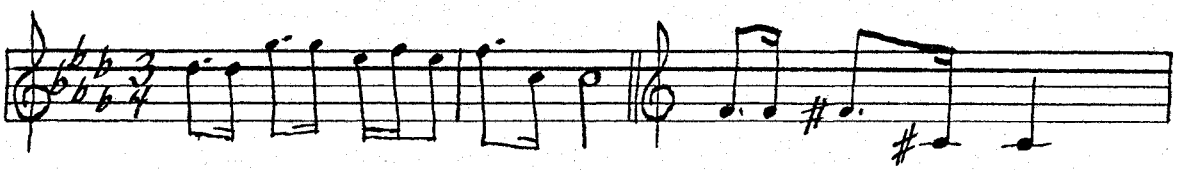
b. Etude, op. 4, no. 2, in G-flat major

motive a (mm. 1-2) motive b (m. 19)



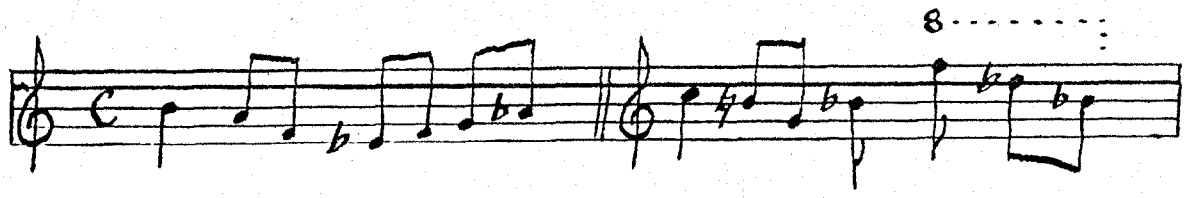
c. Etude, op. 4, no. 3, in B-flat minor

motive a (mm. 2-3) motive b (m. 15)



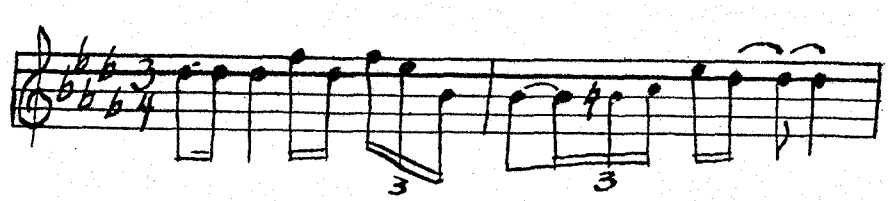
d. Etude, op. 4, no. 4, in C major

motive a (m. 1) motive b (m. 18)



op. 4, no. 2 (Ex. 1b). Another interesting feature is the striking similarity between motive a of op. 4, no. 3 (Ex. 1c), and the melody of the Etude, op. 8, no. 11 (also in B-flat minor), by Skryabin (Ex. 2). Szymanowski's subsequent arch, however, carries his phrase upward

Example 2. Skryabin, Etude, op. 8, no. 11, in B-flat minor

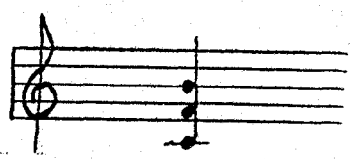


whereas Skryabin's descends by half-step. There is also frequent use of appoggiaturas in the melody of op. 4, no. 4, which imparts a sense of intense romantic longing to this work. Finally, the vague similarity between motive a of op. 4, no. 1 (Ex. 1a), and motive b of op. 4, no. 4 (Ex. 1d), lends a sense of unity to the entire set.

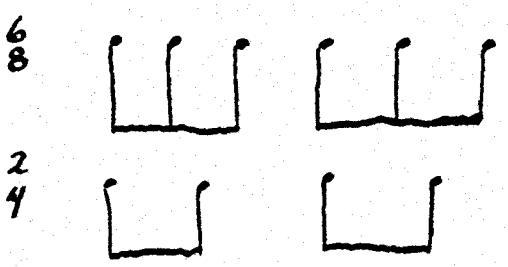
The harmonic practice of the Four Etudes, op. 4, is conservative, particularly in the first three etudes.

The primarily diatonic chord progressions are enriched through liberal use of nonharmonic tones. The Etude, op. 4, no. 4, on the other hand, is quite chromatic. The arresting quartal sonority at the outset (Ex. 3) serves as the trademark of the piece and the preoccupation with appoggiaturas suggests the influence of Richard Wagner's Tristan und Isolde.

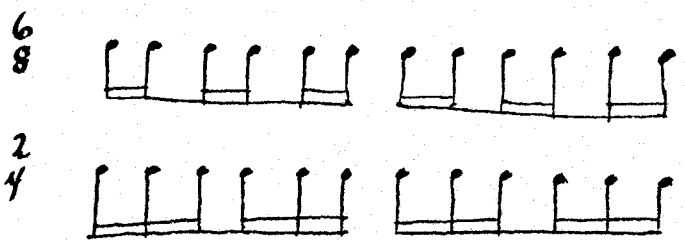
Example 3. Etude, op. 4, no. 4, m. 1



The Four Etudes, op. 4, display particular mastery of the rhythmic device of two-against-three. Each etude features it to some extent, but it is in the second Etude that it is explored most thorougly through the use of polymeter. The right hand is in constant three-against-two with the left hand, thus:



This basic design is then disguised by breaking the eighth notes in the right hand into duplet sixteenth notes and by breaking the eighth notes in the left hand into triplet sixteenth notes thus:

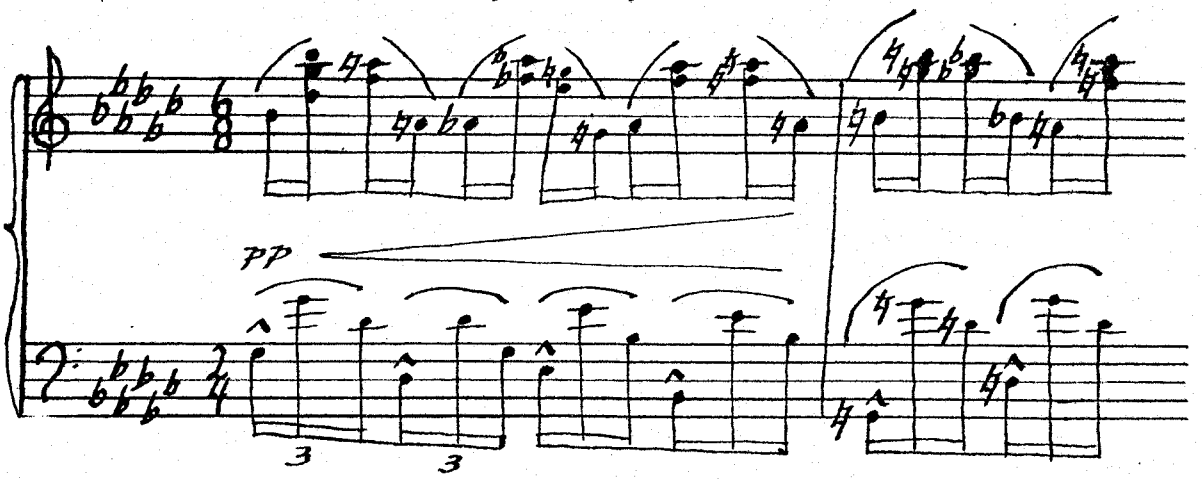


resulting in six pulses in the right hand against four pulses in the left.

The textures found in the Four Etudes, op. 4, are generally quite thick. No. 1 occasionally features a thin two-voice texture, but this is exceptional. No. 2 is the most transparent of the four, but still features right-hand octave doublings throughout, along with widely spaced left-hand figuration (Ex. 4). The thunderous left-hand scale passages of no. 3 resemble those in Chopin's Etude, op. 25, no. 7 (Ex. 5). No. 4 is conceived on an orchestral scale. Very thick in texture, its drive to climax features an interior melody surrounded by widely spaced chords and fast double notes (Ex. 6).

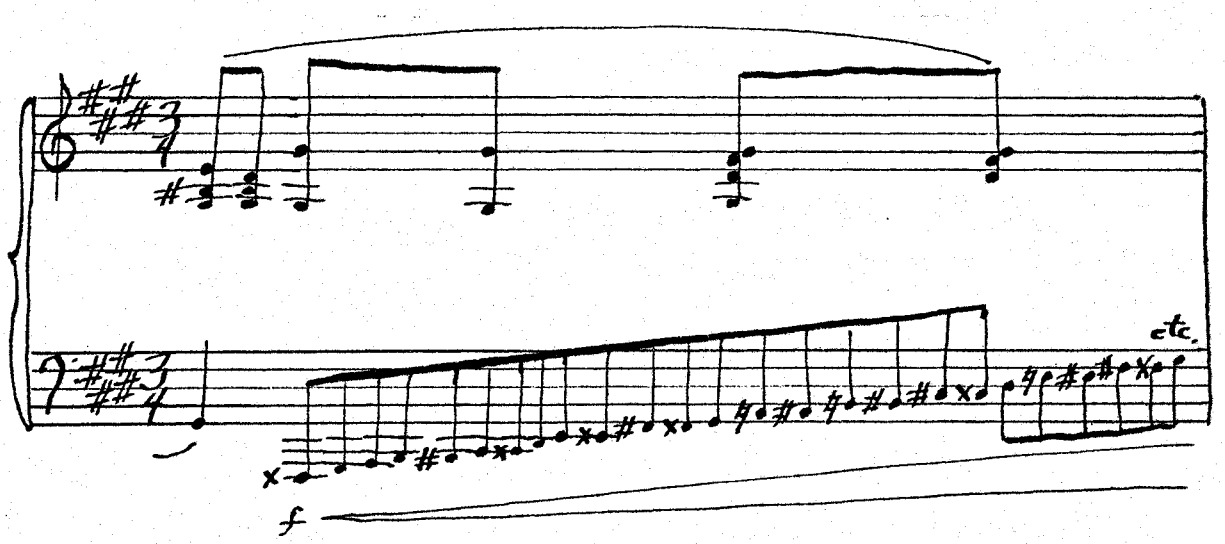
From a purely technical standpoint, op. 4, no. 2, is the most difficult of the set, primarily because of its

Example 4. Etude, op. 4, no. 2, m. 1

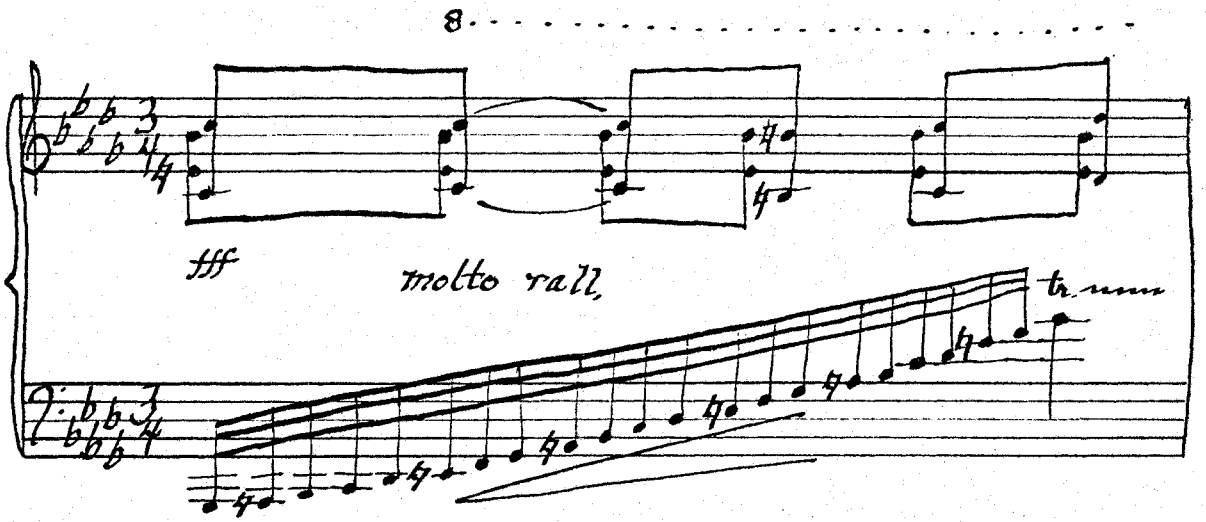


Example 5. Similar passages in Chopin and Szymanowski

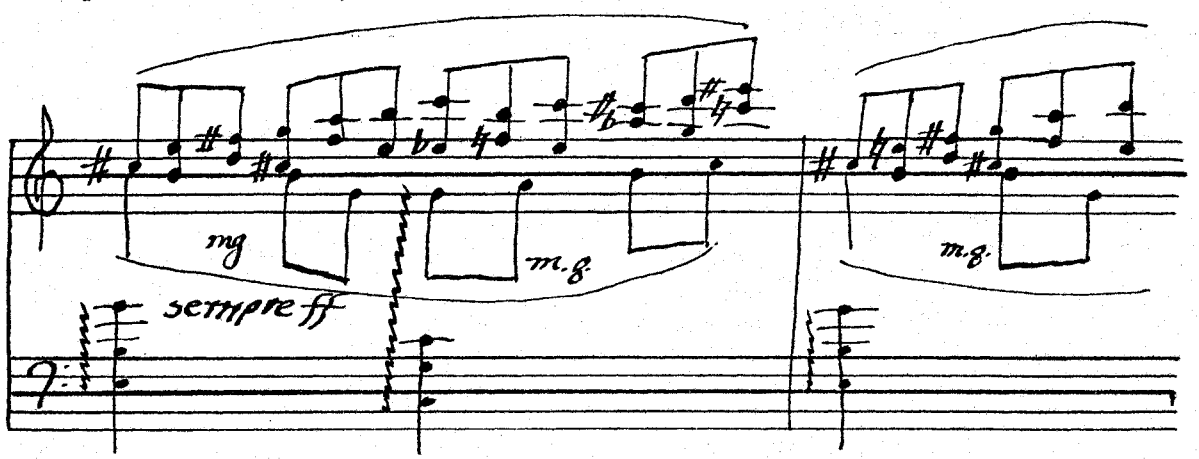
a. Chopin, Etude, op. 25, no. 7, m. 53



b. Szymanowski, Etude, op. 4, no. 3, m. 40



Example 6. Etude, op. 4, no. 4, m. 34



rapid tempo and the leaping accompanimental figuration. Next in order of difficulty are nos. 4, 1, and 3. Full, widely spaced chords, rapid passages in double notes, and wide leaps in both hands are the primary difficulties found in these etudes.

Far from being mere technical studies, however, the Four Etudes, op. 4, make great expressive demands upon the interpreter. The works are excellent examples of Szymanowski's visionary, sensitive art. "His nature is that of dreaming, of lofty soarings, of magnificence, and of intimacy."[33] These words aptly convey the artistic impression left by all four of these works.

Among Szymanowski's piano works, however, perhaps none is so widely known or appreciated as the Etude, op. 4, no. 3. It exhibits all the successful attributes of a romantic character piece, prompting an early reviewer to exclaim that "even Chopin would have endorsed it."[34] Maciejewski discusses this composition at some length:

> The poignant and passionate study in B-flat minor became world famous. Paderewski introduced it to the world, and later Rubinstein, Smeterlin, and Małcuzynski included it in their recital programs. The late Ernest Newman, for so many years doyen of the English music critics, would probably call this study "IT" as he did in the case of Rachmaninoff's C-sharp minor Prelude, which made the name of the Russian composer internationally famous.
>
> Paderewski, on meeting Szymanowski's sister Stasia, praised the Study, op. 4, no. 3, highly, stressing mature keyboard writing and unusual powers of invention. Karol was very pleased with Paderewski's praise but, in a letter to his sister,

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[33] André Coeuroy, quoted in Maciejewski, Karol Szymanowski, p. 80.

[34] Aleksandr Polinski, quoted in Maciejewski, Karol Szymanowski, p. 28.

> wrote with a touch of humor: "It is a very bad thing to write one's Ninth Symphony at such an early age."[35]

Although it is possible to program any of the Four Etudes, op. 4, individually, they also form a satisfying and diverse set. The tonal levels of the first three etudes are closely related (E-flat minor, G-flat major, B-flat minor), but no. 4 is in the rather distant key of C major. The tempi (allegro moderato, allegro molto, andante, and allegro) are diverse enough to encourage rendition as a set. Also the successive moods range from dreamy and exalted (no. 1), piquant and witty (no. 2), melancholy and passionate (no. 3), to exalted and yearning (no. 4).

Szymanowski's production of the Four Etudes, op. 4, at a relatively young age, and in the midst of a country not at all in the forefront of the artistic currents of his day, is remarkable. These refined, elegant reminders of an age in decline are excellent examples of the late romantic character piece.

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[35]Ibid., p. 29

CHAPTER III

TWELVE ETUDES, OP. 33

The circumstances surrounding Szymanowski's composition of the Twelve Etudes, op. 33 (1916), were vastly different from those that had helped to mold the Four Etudes of op. 4. Europe was convulsed by a massive war, the pangs of which were to lead to the birth of the Second Polish Republic on November 11, 1918. The losses for Poland, however, would be substantial, including "800,000 dead as well as the destruction of the majority of industrial plants, communications, and the serious disruption of the Polish monetary system and economy."[36]

Almost as frightening, and just as unpredictable, were the musical events which were transpiring. Impressionism, that short-lived sunrise of the new century, was about spent. Igor Stravinsky had just shocked the musical establishment with the violent rhythms and discords of his Rite of Spring (1913). In piano music, Claude Debussy had produced a number of sets of impressionistic pieces, including the Estampes (1903); Masques (1904); Images, Books I (1905) and II (1907); and Préludes, Books I and II (1910-13). During the years 1915-16, Debussy produced

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[36] Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Poland, History of."

a set of Twelve Etudes dedicated to Chopin's memory, but it is doubtful that Szymanowski was aware of Debussy's set at the time he was working on his own. Maurice Ravel had produced his own version of impressionism with his Jeux d'eau (1901), Miroirs (1905), and Gaspard de la nuit (1908). Meanwhile, Arnold Schoenberg was groping towards an entirely new concept of musical organization in Drei Klavierstücke, op. 11 (1910), and Sechs kleine Klavierstücke, op. 19 (1913). Béla Bartók had already begun his adventures into folk music and had produced the famous Allegro barbaro (1911). Stravinsky's Four Etudes, op. 7 (1908), embraced the post-romantic models of Skryabin.

Serge Prokofiev burst rather rudely upon the scene with such works as the Toccata, op. 11 (1912), and Sarcasms, op. 17 (1912). Most important to Szymanowski, of course, was the artistic metamorphosis of Skryabin. That Russian composer, by the time of his death in 1915, had evolved a complex, personal, freely atonal style which has since been dubbed expressionistic.[37] Along with the works of Debussy, those of Skryabin were of prime importance to Szymanowski during this period.

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[37] New Grove, "Szymanowski."

Prior to the war, Szymanowski had left Vienna and had spent the winter of 1913-14 in Zakopane. In the spring of 1914 he had visited Sicily and North Africa:

> Direct contacts with ancient Arab and early Christian cultures formed a strong stimulus to his psychological transformation, or rather to the crystallization of a new poetics and a new musical idiom. Some more purely musical experiences were also to be decisive: During this period he saw Pelleas et Mélisande and most significantly, The Firebird and Petrushka.[38]

In London Szymanowski met Stravinsky, whose music had greatly interested him. Szymanowski had planned to return to Tymoszówka via Vienna, but the outbreak of the war changed all that:

> I was afraid of getting stuck somewhere in Austria--so I went by way of Berlin instead. . . . I managed to get home by the last normal train that was running. . . . I am supposed to work: I wanted to write a piano concerto--but I don't know what will come of it under such conditions.[39]

No piano concerto was forthcoming. Until the Bolshevik Revolution the Szymanowski family spent their summers in Tymoszówka and their winters in Kiev. From these circumstances sprang the Twelve Etudes, op. 33. Chylinska

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[38]Ibid.

[39]Karol Szymanowski, quoted in translation in Chylinska, Szymanowski, p. 73.

describes the results of Szymanowski's metamorphosis from romanticism to impressionism:

> The seeds of Szymanowski's individual idiom, which had been present from the first, had by now developed into a style of great originality. Established forms are much less important, tonal harmony is relinquished in favor of polar centers, emphatic dynamics are exchanged for a more differentiated and generally softer treatment, and new means of articulation are used. These changes were all at the service of the new coloristic approach to sound. Szymanowski's music of this time combines the techniques of Debussian impressionism with those of Skryabinesque expressionism. Another special quality of Szymanowski's synthesis is the retention of the expressive function of melody, though its character and structure are changed. Almost all of the works written at this time share qualities of ecstasy and fervor, maintaining the utmost intensity of expression.

The reasons for Szymanowski's return to the etude genre are nowhere specifically stated, but some may be deduced from the facts surrounding his artistic creation. Among these are the ever-present influences of both Chopin and Skryabin. Both composers had produced sets of twelve etudes, so it probably seemed natural for Szymanowski to do so as well. Moreover, Skryabin had produced twelve more etudes after his set of Twelve Etudes, op. 8. These include the Eight Etudes, op. 42 (1903), Etude, op.

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[40] New Grove, "Szymanowski."

49, no. 1 (1905), and Three Etudes, op. 65 (1912). The composition of the Twelve Etudes, op. 33, of Szymanowski may have been spurred by the Three Etudes, op. 65, since there are related compositional techniques. No doubt the new sonorities of impressionism suggested the necessity for an etude set which would explore technical problems associated with the new sounds. Although whether or not Szymanowski knew of Debussy's Twelve Etudes is not documented, there are certain similarities, no doubt accidental, between the two sets. Other possible influences include the Chopin Preludes, op. 28, with which the aphoristic Twelve Etudes, op. 33, of Szymanowski bear some similarities. Of particular importance are Debussy's Préludes. The sonorities and techniques of these works seem to have influenced Szymanowski at this time. The idea of writing a set of etudes meant to be played in its entirety may have been suggested by the Symphonic Etudes, op. 13, by Schumann. In any case, the Twelve Etudes, op. 33, represent a synthesis of elements, the combination of which is unique.

The Twelve Etudes were intended to be played in their entirety, each etude carrying the direction "attacca" to the next. The form of the whole is similar to that used by Schumann in his extended sets such as Papillons.

The pieces are linked together through similarities of style and sonority, rather than through an overall architectonic design or motivic similarities. Each etude has its own form. Etudes nos. 5, 8, 9, and 11 use the familiar Preparation, Drive to Climax, Climax, and Relaxation. The remainder are cast in either AA', binary, ternary, or freely sectional schemes (Tables 3-7).

TABLE 3

UNIPARTITE FORM IN THE TWELVE ETUDES, OP. 33

Etude	A			A'	
no. 2	mm. 1-13			mm. 14-27	
no. 4	a mm. 1-7	b mm. 7-11	retrans. mm. 12-15	a' mm. 16-22	b' mm. 22-27
no. 7	a mm. 1-5	b mm. 5-12		a' mm. 13-19	b' mm. 19-28
no. 10	mm. 1-35			mm. 36-68	

TABLE 4

BIPARTITE FORM IN THE TWELVE ETUDES, OP. 33

Etude	A	B	Coda
no. 6	mm. 1-14	mm. 15-23	mm. 23-34

TABLE 5

TRIPARTITE FORM IN THE TWELVE ETUDES, OP. 33

Etude	A	B	A'
no. 1	mm. 1-14	mm. 15-30	mm. 31-37
no. 3	mm. 1-8 (trans. mm. 9-10)	mm. 11-14	mm. 15-21
no. 9	mm. 1-21	mm. 22-45	mm. 45-56

TABLE 6

FREE SECTIONAL FORM IN THE TWELVE ETUDES, OP. 33

Etude	A	B	C	B	D
no. 12	mm. 1-25 trans. mm. 26-33	mm. 33-47 trans. mm. 48-54	mm. 55-66	mm. 66-81	mm. 82-99

The melodic practice of the Twelve Etudes, op. 33, is highly refined and complex, although phrase lengths usually fall into two- or four-measure units. The pentatonic, whole-tone, and chromatic scales are prominent as melodic generators (Ex. 7).

Vertical sonorities are complex, and a variety of techniques is used. Bitonality is exploited in several of

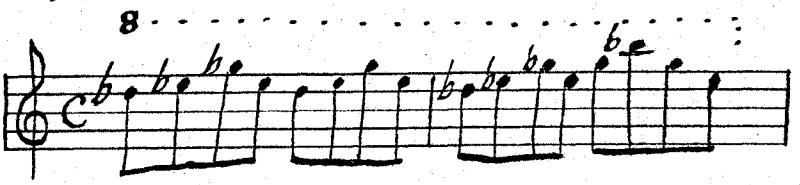
TABLE 7

PREPARATION, DRIVE-TO-CLIMAX, CLIMAX, RELAXATION FORMAT IN THE TWELVE ETUDES, OP. 33

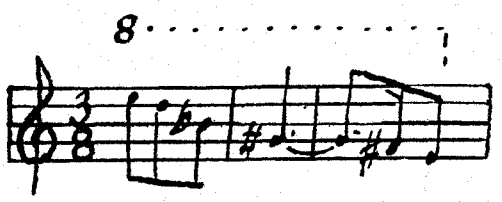
Etude	Preparation	Drive to Climax	Climax	Relaxation
no. 3	mm. 1-12	mm. 13-20	m. 21	none
no. 5	mm. 1-4	mm. 5-10	m. 10	mm. 10-13
no. 6	mm. 1-14	mm. 15-34	m. 34	none
no. 8	mm. 1-9	mm. 10-14	m. 15	mm. 16-20
no. 9	mm. 1-32	mm. 33-45	m. 45	mm. 45-56
no. 11	mm. 1-2	mm. 3-6	m. 7	mm. 8-9

Example 7. Etudes, op. 33

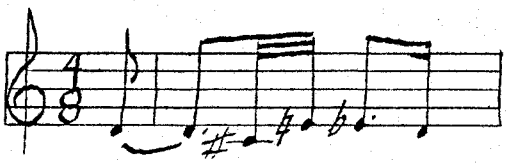
a. No. 3, mm. 15-16 (pentatonic)



b. No. 9, mm. 33-35 (whole tone)

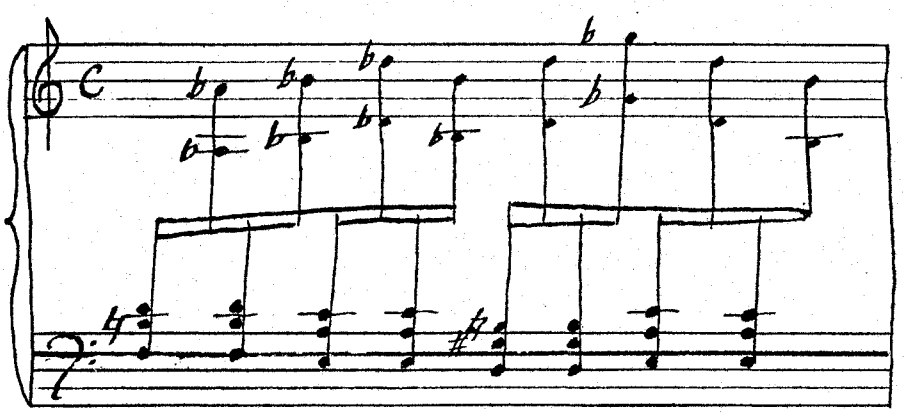


c. No. 8, m. 1 (chromatic)



the etudes. Szymanowski's use of this technique is very similar to Debussy's in Brouillards from the Préludes, Book II. In Etude no. 3 the right hand plays a pentatonic, "black-key" melody against "white-key" sixth chords in the left hand (Ex. 8). Whole-tone sonorities are found throughout the set. Etude no. 7 features a complex and interesting exploration of this and other sonorities (Ex. 9).

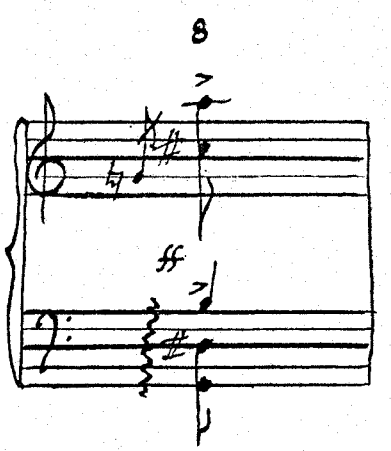
Example 8. Etude, op. 33, no. 3, m. 4



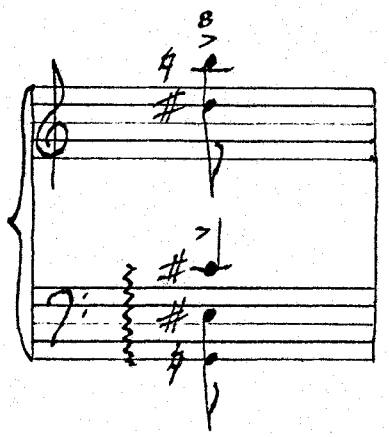
The late-romantic Regerian chromaticism of Szymanowski's earlier period is still present as well (Ex. 10). A prominent harmonic technique in the Twelve Etudes, op. 33, is the use of a particular interval as a

Example 9. Etude, op. 33, no. 7

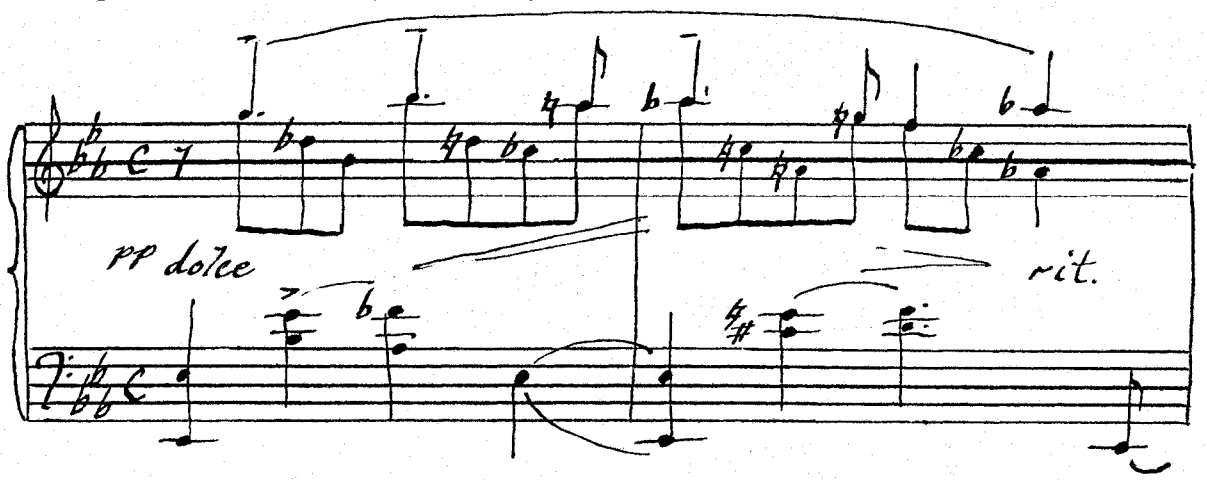
a. M. 1, beat 1



b. M. 3, beat 1



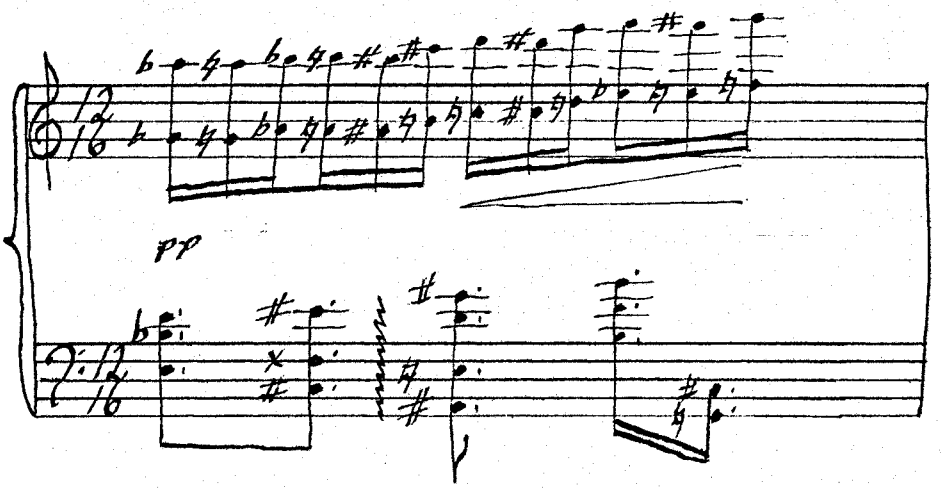
Example 10. Etude, op. 33, no. 5, mm. 1-2



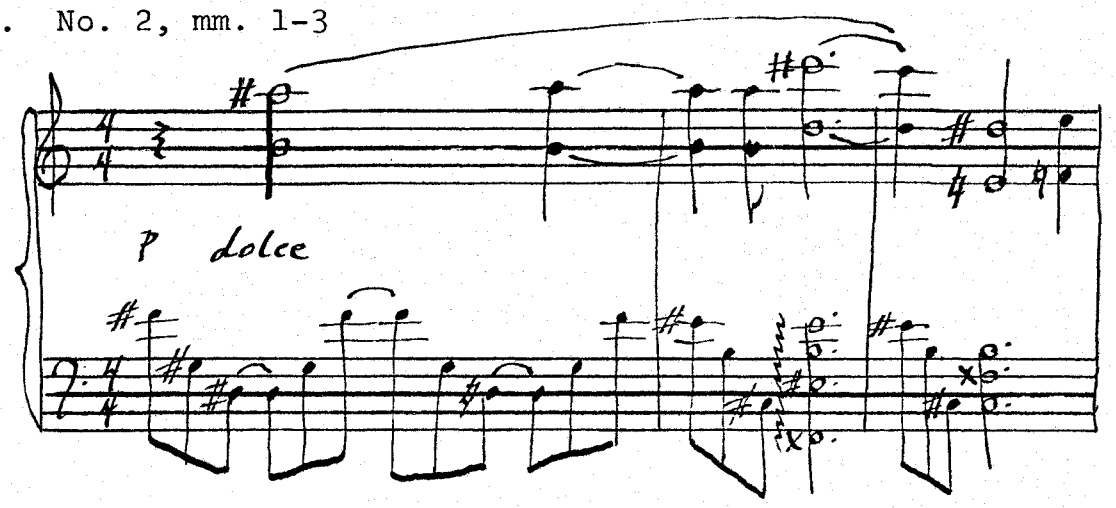
harmonic constant. Skryabin's Three Etudes, op. 65 (1912), exploit this technique thoroughly. They are based on the sonorities of the major ninth, major seventh, and perfect fifth, respectively (Ex. 11a, b, and c). It is also interesting to note Debussy's preoccupation with this

Example 11. Skryabin, Three Etudes, op. 65

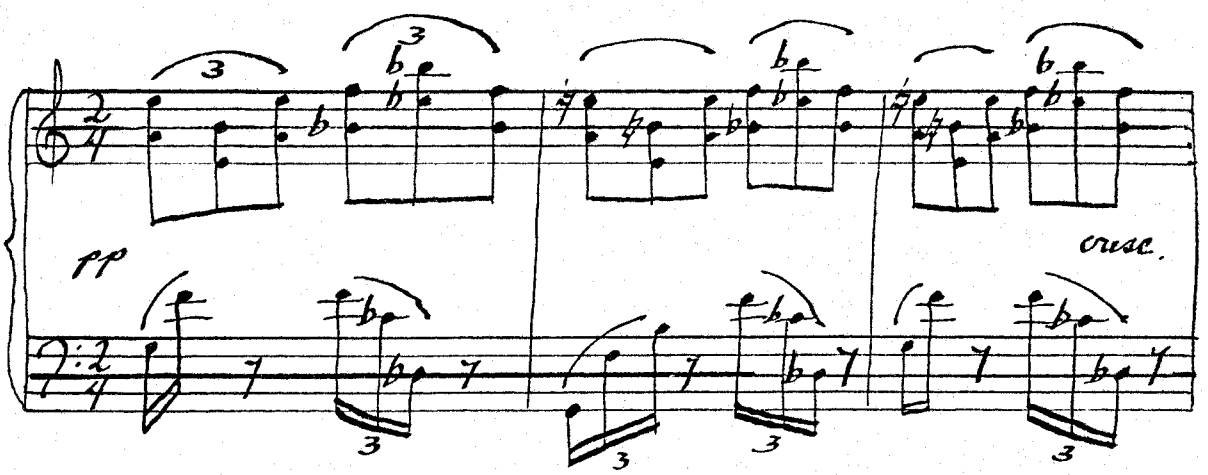
a. No. 1, m. 1



b. No. 2, mm. 1-3



c. No. 3, mm. 1-3

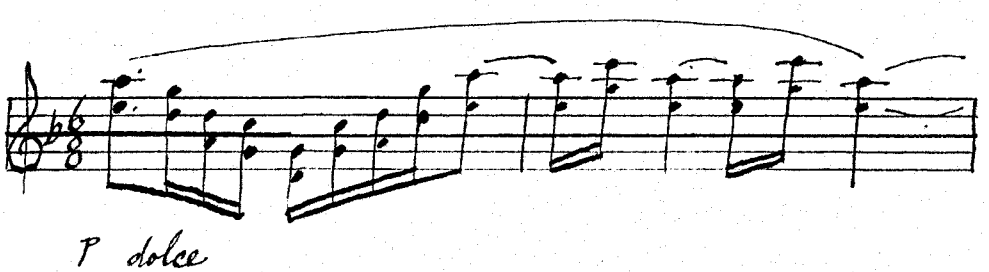


device in his Twelve Etudes. He even assigns the titles according to the interval explored, Pour les tierces (thirds), Pour les quartes (fourths), Pour les sixtes (sixths), Pour les octaves (Ex. 12a, b, c, and d). Szymanowski uses this

Example 12. Debussy, Twelve Etudes

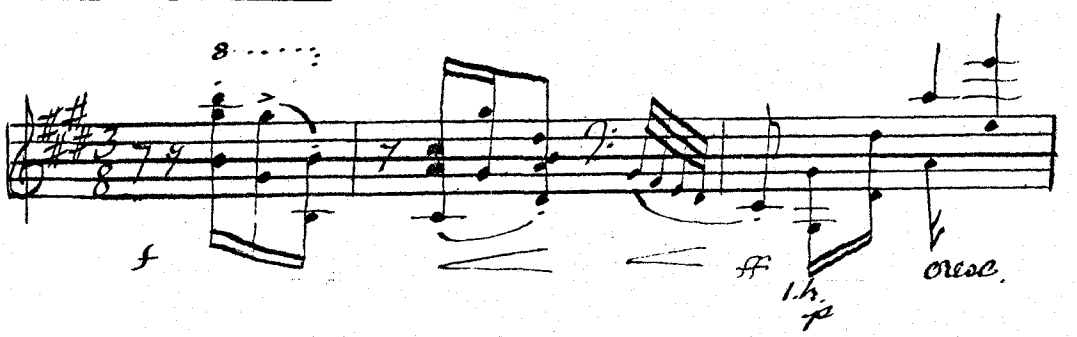
a. Pour les tierces, m. 1

b. Pour les quartes, mm. 1-2



c. Pour les sixtes, mm. 1-3

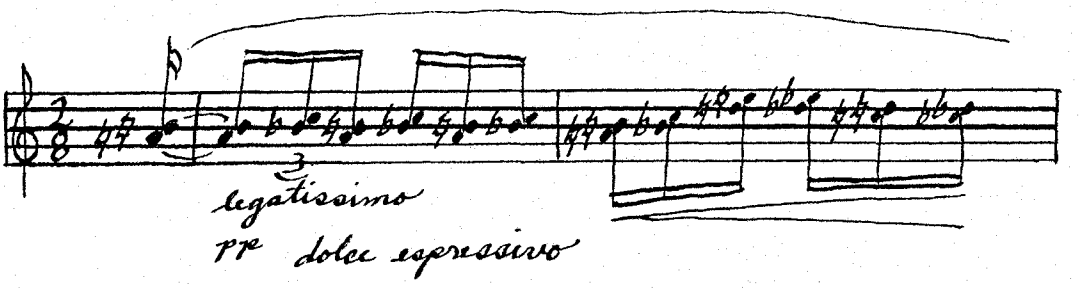
d. Pour les octaves, mm. 1-3



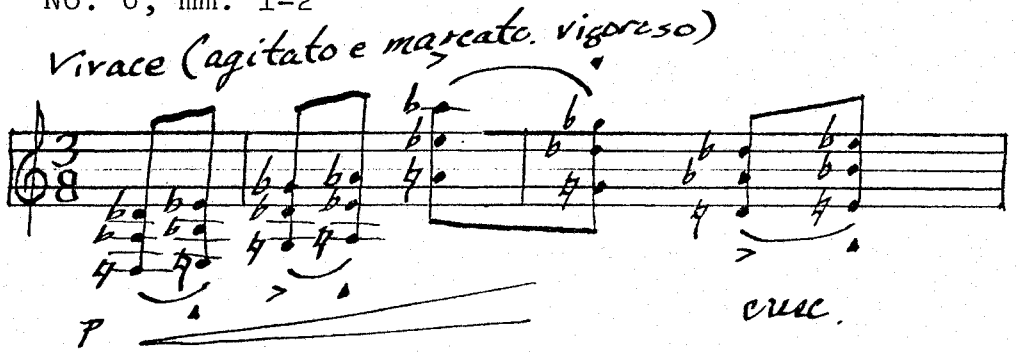
technique in Etudes nos. 2 (Ex. 13a, major seconds) and 6 (Ex. 13b, diminished octaves) and in portions of other etudes.

Example 13. Etudes, op. 33

a. No. 2, mm. 1-2

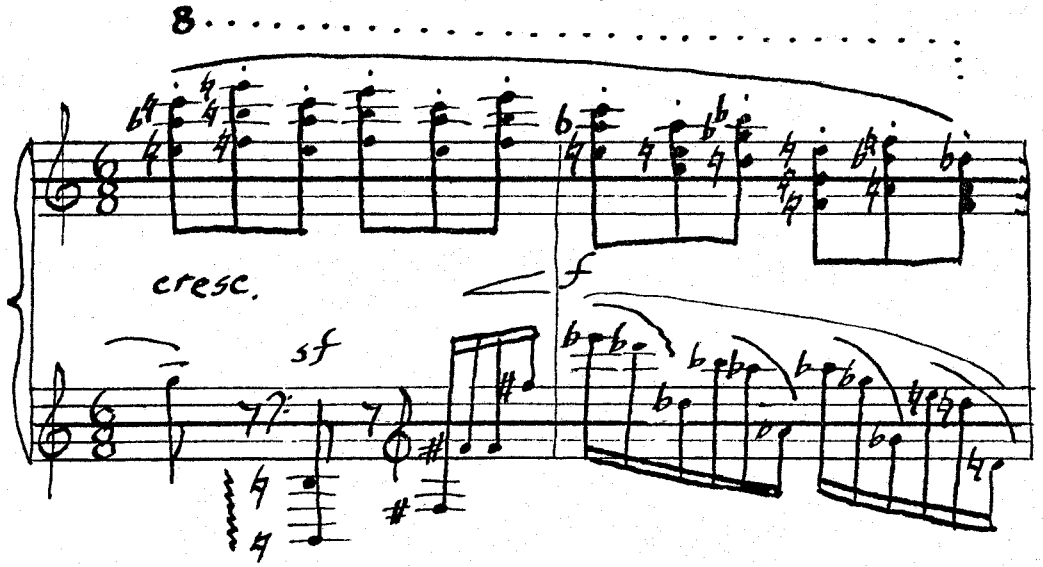


b. No. 6, mm. 1-2



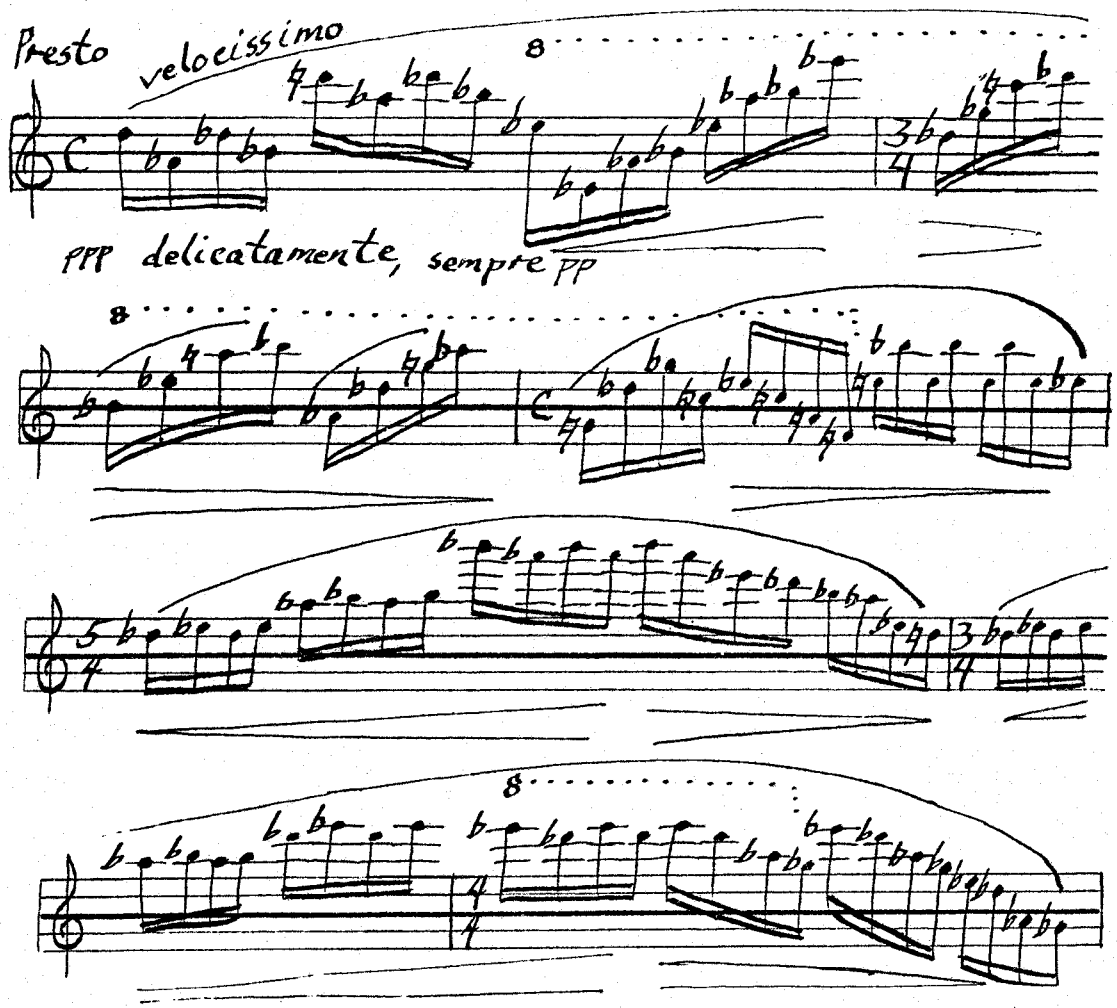
Szymanowski's harmonic practice is quite elusive since there is a tendency to "modulate" freely from one "system" to another. In this sense, the techniques are used in a highly integrated, complex manner rather than through the thorough exploration of one technique. In Etude no. 7, for example, whole-tone, quartal, and pentatonic sonorities are freely mingled (Ex. 14).

Example 14. Etude, op. 33, no. 7, mm. 8-9



There is free use of meter change throughout the Twelve Etudes, usually to accommodate a longer melodic phrase, as in Etude no. 4 (Ex. 15). Overall, however

Example 15. Etude, op. 33, no. 4, mm. 1-6



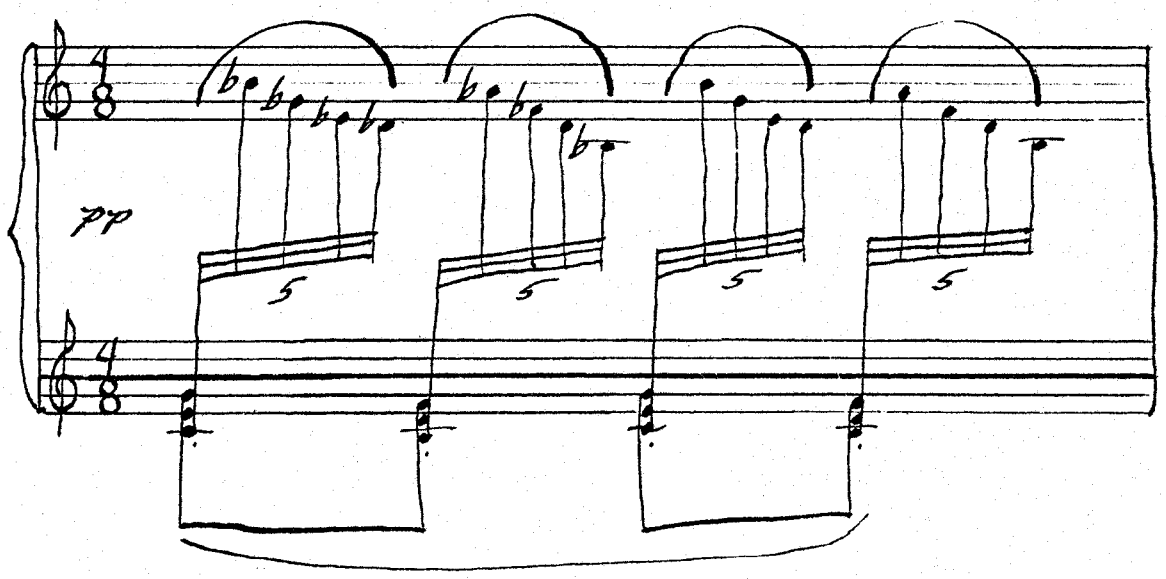
the rhythmic practice is not far removed from that of the common practice, in that rhythms are grouped in relation to the barline, rather than being syncopated or written in an

irregular fashion which challenges the "tyranny" of the barline.

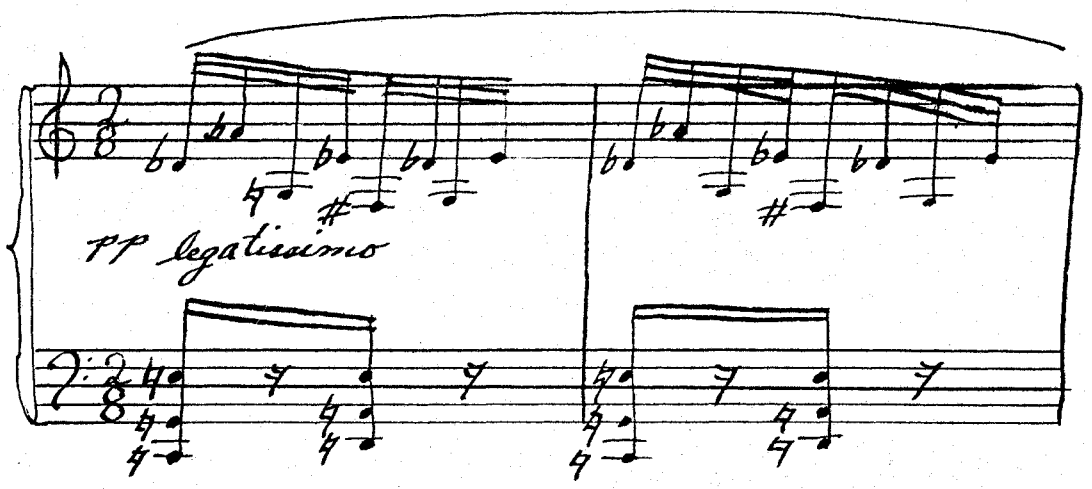
The texture of the Twelve Etudes, op. 33, varies greatly from piece to piece, and it is here that Debussy's influence is perhaps most keenly felt. Etude no. 1, for example, is very closely akin in sonority to Debussy's Brouillards. Indeed, the similarity between the opening measures of each is remarkable (Ex. 16).

Example 16. Comparison of sonorities in Debussy and Szymanowski

a. Debussy, Préludes, Book II, Brouillards, m. 1



b. Szymanowski, Etude, op. 33, no. 1, mm. 1-2

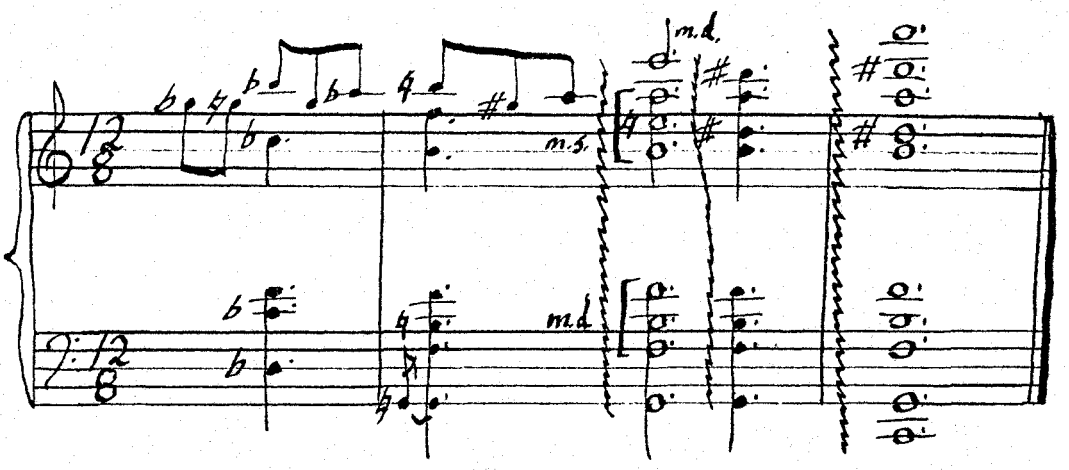


Skryabin's later expressionistic style, however, is close to that of these works in that the melody is highly expressive and the vertical sonorities are often quite complex (Ex. 17). The mixture, then, of Debussy's impressionistic sonorities and textures with Skryabin's expressionistic melodic and harmonic practices is a prominent aspect of the Twelve Etudes.

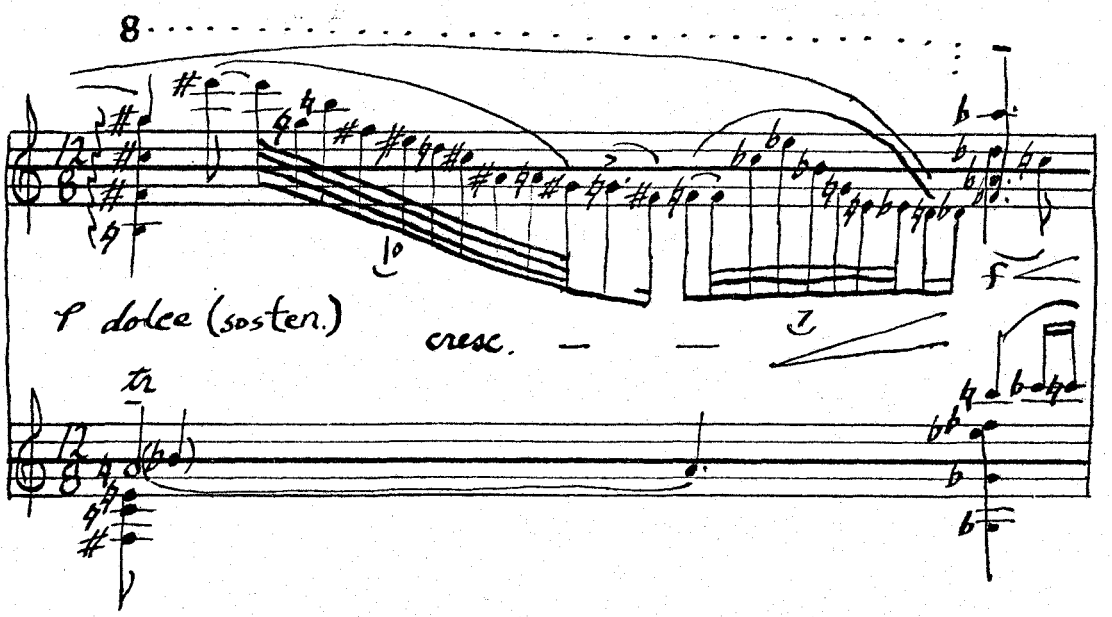
The mood varies from piece to piece. Etude no. 2 is marked "dolce espressivo" and is followed immediately by the "agitato" of no. 3 and the "presto delicatamente" of no. 4. This constant alternation of mood imbues the Twelve Etudes with a kaleidoscopic effect, one of great musical interest and emotional appeal. The changes in tempo, meter, expression, and dynamics are detailed in Table 8, as well as the length, in number of measures, of

Example 17. Comparison of sonorities in Skryabin and Szymanowski

a. Skryabin, Deux morceaux, Désir, op. 57, no. 1, mm. 12-14



b. Szymanowski, Etude, op. 33, no. 11, m. 6



each etude. The abrupt changes increase the demands made upon the interpreter, who is faced with a full battery of impressionistic pedal effects and sonorities, the projection of melodies surrounded by dense textures, widely

TABLE 8

CHANGES OF EXPRESSION IN THE TWELVE ETUDES, OP. 33

Etude	Tempo	Expressive Direction	Length	Meter	Dynamics
1	Presto	(none)	37 mm.	2/8	very soft
2	Andantino	soave	27 mm.	2/8	very soft
3	Vivace assai	agitato	21 mm.	4/4	very soft to very loud
4	Presto	delicatamente	27 mm.	4/4	very soft
5	Andante	espressivo	13 mm.	4/4	begins pp, builds to mf climax, ends ppp
6	Vivace	agitato e marcato, vigoroso	34 mm.	3/8	mostly loud
7	Allegro molto	con brio; burlesco	28 mm.	6/8	alternately loud and soft
8	Lento assai	mesto	20 mm.	4/8	begins pp, builds to ff climax, ends ppp
9	Animato	capriccioso e fantastico	56 mm.	3/8	begins pp, builds to ff climax, ends ppp
10	Presto	molto agitato; tempestoso	68 mm.	$\frac{4-5-3}{8}$	mostly soft; very loud at end
11	Andante	soave	9 mm.	12/8	begins pp, builds to fff climax, ends ppp
12	Presto	energico	99 mm.	3/8	moderately soft; very loud at end

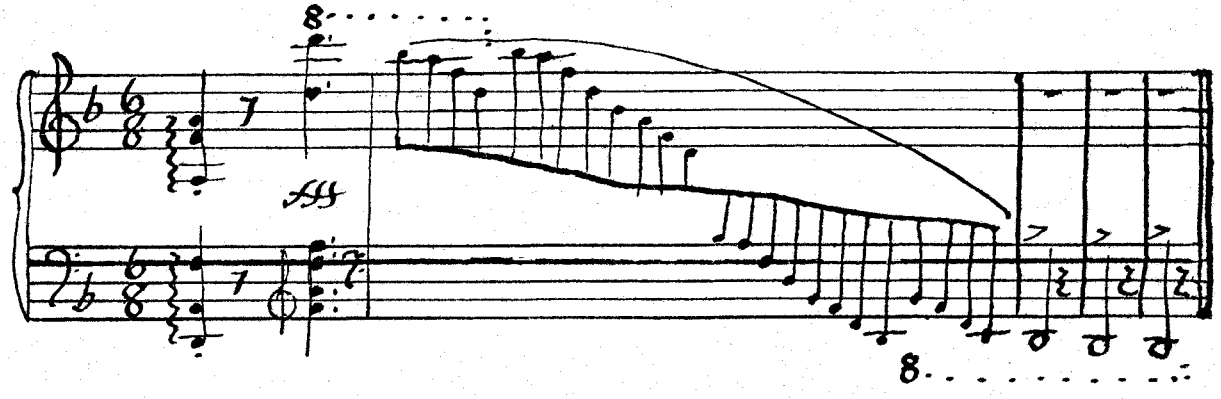
spaced chords, and difficult passages in double notes. Some of the etudes are quite short, even aphoristic, in the manner of some of Chopin's or Debussy's Preludes. This proclivity for terseness was probably inherited from Chopin, Skryabin, and Debussy, each of whom often telescoped musical ideas into a few brief measures.

Etude no. 1 is a brief, atmospheric work which combines Debussy's sonorities with Szymanowski's broad, melodic arch. The colors evoked are definitely the fine pastels of impressionism. Etude no. 2, on the other hand, is closer to Skryabin, the intense melody soaring above chromatic, expressive harmonies. Etude no. 3 intrudes with toccata figuration that builds to a crashing climax. Etude no. 4 returns to the mood of the first two etudes, interspersing a few recitative-like passages. The lovely, evocative Etude no. 5 is the first firmly tonal piece of the set. The stormy Etude no. 6 bursts upon the scene with a flurry of perfect and diminished octaves and heavily accented two-note slurs. Quartal and whole-tone sonorities, along with the pentatonic scale, contribute a great deal of "bite" to Etude no. 7. Etude no. 8 builds to a large climax before fading gently at its close. The opening measures of Etude no. 9 are capricious, grace notes and slurs dominating the light texture. The middle

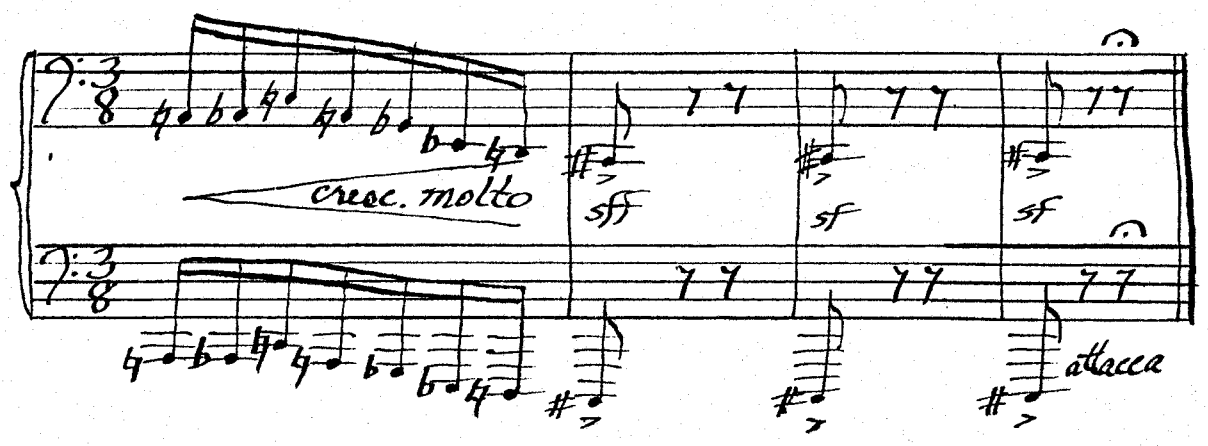
section is sweetly calm and yet builds to an impressive climax. The opening scherzo returns and the piece ends in Mendelssohnian lightness. Etude no. 10 is tumultuous, the left hand rumbling along in constant sixteenth notes. Its daemonic quality is reminiscent of the most tempestuous passages in Chopin; indeed the ending recalls the final notes of Chopin's Prelude, op. 28, no. 24 (Ex. 18).

Example 18. Comparison of endings in Chopin and Szymanowski

a. Chopin, Prelude, op. 28, no. 24, mm. 73-77

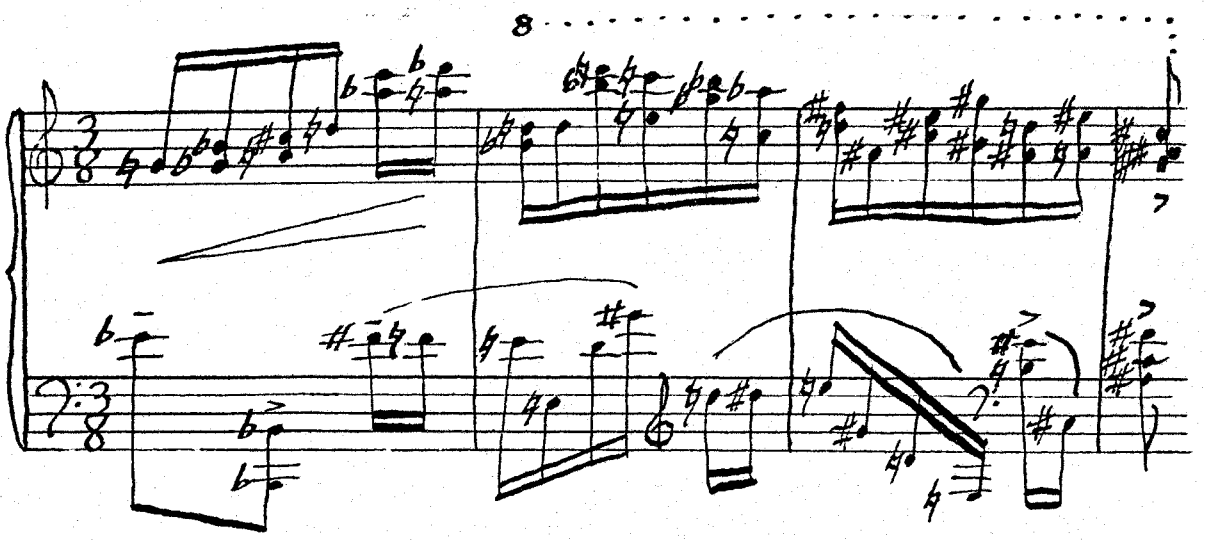


b. Szymanowski, Etude, op. 33, no. 10, mm. 65-68



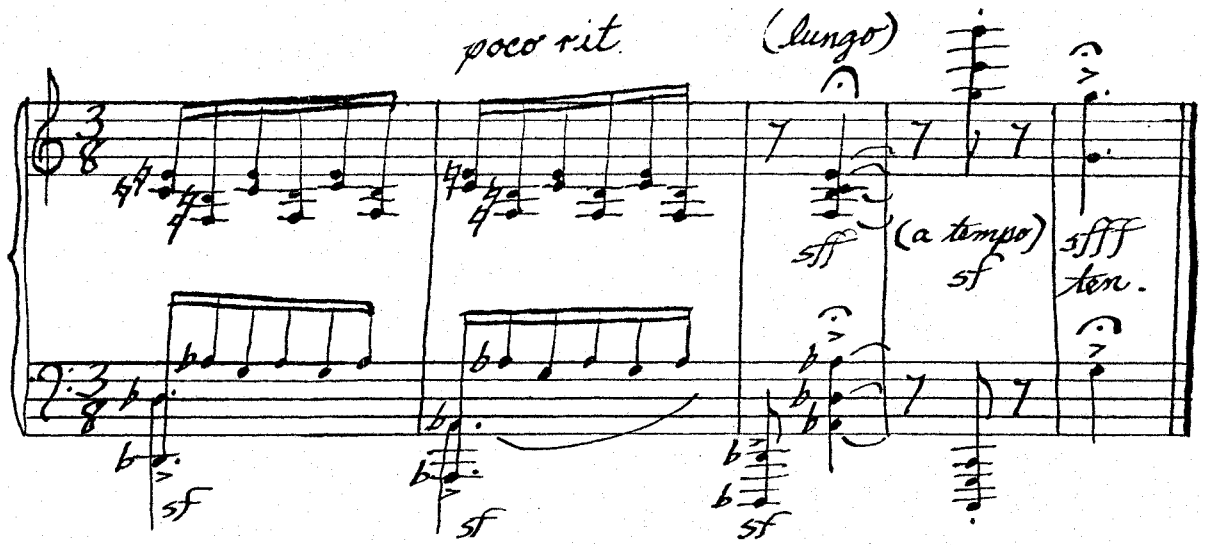
The penultimate etude, no. 11, is the most ethereal, yet intense of the set, its nine measures a monument to Skryabinesque expressionism. Complex chords dominate the texture (Ex. 17b). The final paragraph of this essay, Etude no. 12, is a brilliant conclusion to the set. Technically the most difficult, it is replete with complicated double-note passages for the right hand accompanied by widely spaced arpeggiated figures in the left hand (Ex. 19). The closing C-major triad followed

Example 19. Etude, op. 33, no. 12, mm. 30-33



by a G leaves the piece in a state of suspension, as though it needed but one more note, a C, to be complete (Ex. 20). The effect is perfect, a fitting conclusion not only for the piece but for the entire set.

Example 20. Etude, op. 33, no. 12, mm. 95-99



Szymanowski's importance as a synthesizer of styles is very apparent in the Twelve Etudes, op. 33. Never merely an imitator, however, his unique gift was to utilize a variety of techniques and mold them into his own characteristic, highly personal style. That this synthesis took place during the dark years of World War I on a country estate in the Ukraine is remarkable. No less remarkable is the comparative neglect this etude set has suffered since its genesis. The careers and music of Schoenberg, Bartók, Stravinsky, and a host of lesser composers were destined to eclipse the accomplishment of Szymanowski.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

The Four Etudes, op. 4, and Twelve Etudes, op. 33, offer a valuable opportunity to explore and describe Szymanowski's stylistic metamorphosis with respect to a single genre. Between the composition of the two sets fourteen years had elapsed and the world had changed greatly. There had not been an independent Polish state for over one hundred years, and this state of affairs showed no sign of change in 1902. But in 1916 the Second Polish Republic was about to emerge. Musical tastes and conventions were undergoing their first serious challenge since the music dramas of Wagner. Szymanowski himself had matured. From being the most talented student at the age of twenty in the Warsaw Conservatory, he had developed into a cosmopolitan, experienced musician of thirty-four years, conversant with the greatest musicians and thinkers of his time, yet clinging tenaciously to his own artistic ideals.

His thinking about formal processes had developed and matured. No longer content with the approach of his younger years in which musical ideas were contained within a preordained form, he now favored a broader, more comprehensive approach, one in which diverse elements

were nevertheless subjected to overall considerations. As evidence of this, the Twelve Etudes, op. 33, are much briefer individually than are the Four Etudes, op. 4. And whereas any of the Four Etudes, op. 4, may be performed individually (although it would be preferable to perform them as a set), those of op. 33 must be considered in relation to the whole, rather than as separate entities.

The importance that Szymanowski places on melody remained unchanged. It still retains its qualities of intense expression and broadly arching design. But due to the influences of Debussy and Skryabin, the scalar content of the Twelve Etudes, op. 33, includes pentatonic, whole-tone, and chromatic elements, rather than the diatonic scales of the Four Etudes, op. 4.

Most immediately obvious is the evolution of the harmonic language. The suave, chromatic, functional harmonies of the Four Etudes, op. 4, are abandoned in the Twelve Etudes, op. 33, in favor of a synthesis of Skryabin's quartal sonorities with Debussy's whole-tone, pentatonic, and bitonal sonorities. Rhythmic practice remains essentially unchanged, the rhythm continuing to serve a role subsidiary to the melodic and harmonic processes.

Both sets of etudes explore many of the same technical problems--melodic projection, dynamic control, widely spaced chords, rapid arpeggiated figuration, double notes, and chords. But these are subsidiary to the role of overall sonority. The textures of the two etude sets are surprisingly similar, the basic differences being in harmonic content rather than sonority. Nevertheless, the Twelve Etudes, op. 33, are less direct and somewhat more veiled in sonority than are the Four Etudes, op. 4. The influence of Debussy was no doubt important to this stylistic development.

It is in the area of expression, however, that Szymanowski's style remains most clearly unchanged. Maciejewski eloquently describes this inherent stability:

> He was entirely unsystematic and aided by natural inexhaustible powers of invention and impeccable musicianship followed only the devices of his own exciting, essentially ecstatic fantasy. This aristocratic, delicate, exalted "ecstatism" is probably the only permanent feature present throughout his entire musical creation.[41]

If one considers Szymanowski's output from a harmonic standpoint, it clearly divides into two broad periods--functional (1898-1914) and nonfunctional (1915-32). If one then considers the place of the Four Etudes, op. 4

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[41]Maciejewski, Karol Szymanowski, p. 30.

(1902), and the Twelve Etudes, op. 33 (1916), within each of these two periods, the role of the piano etude in Szymanowski's compositions becomes apparent. Each set serves as a sort of proving ground for new devices and sonorities. The quality of brevity seems to qualify the etude for this role. Within a relatively short time frame, the composer is faced with the challenge of developing a piece of singular difficulty of execution without sacrificing musical and expressive goals. These goals accomplished, Szymanowski then proceeded to incorporate the lessons learned in the etudes into a larger, more demanding genre. The Four Etudes, op. 4, were followed immediately by the Sonata no. 1, op. 8, in C minor; the Twelve Etudes, op. 33, by the Sonata no. 3, op. 36.

That the etude genre also challenged Szymanowski from a formal standpoint is obvious. The need to write a set of unified, formally coherent, interdependent pieces is met in the Twelve Etudes, op. 33, whereas in the Four Etudes, op. 4, this need is but vaguely hinted at. Both sets of etudes also offered him a vehicle in which the process of synthesis, so important to his artistic creation, was explored and developed. In the Four Etudes, op. 4, the synthesis involves the keyboard styles of

Chopin and Skryabin, along with the harmonic processes of Wagner and Strauss. In the Twelve Etudes, op. 33, it involves Regerian chromaticism, Debussian impressionism, and Skryabinesque expressionism. This synthesis is an amazing display of Szymanowski's best qualities and craftsmanship. The etudes also represent a conscious desire on the composer's part to continue the expansion not only of the etude genre, but also of the available piano repertory. Moreover, by choosing to write sonatas, variations, preludes, character pieces, and etudes, Szymanowski consciously allied himself with the great traditions of western musical thought and incorporated German, French, and Polish traditions into one expressive style.

The importance of Szymanowski's two sets of etudes is undeniable. Not only do they illustrate the composer's remarkable stylistic metamorphosis and offer the performer numerous musical and technical challenges, but they also expand the repertory with finely crafted, beautifully integrated works. The Four Etudes, op. 4, are at least as satisfying as the Twelve Etudes, op. 8, of Skryabin and in many cases seem to be the product of greater compositional craft and care. Szymanowski's Twelve Etudes, op. 33, along with the Twelve Etudes of Debussy and the Three

Etudes, op. 65, of Skryabin form a compendium of impressionistic and expressionistic sonorous and technical devices.

Further research into the adventurous music of Szymanowski will no doubt continue. This research is well under way in Poland, where Szymanowski is viewed as the father of twentieth-century Polish music. His selfless decision to remain in Poland at a time when his own health and career would have been better served by a move to warmer climes helped rescue the musical establishment there from provincialism and stagnation. Seen in this light, Szymanowski's contribution to Poland's continuous one-thousand-year culture cannot be overestimated. The enduring presence of Polish culture owes its life, at least in part, to courageous and dedicated Poles, who like Szymanowski, amidst the greatest adversities, continue to bless the world with an artistic vision of unexcelled intellectual endowment and emotional warmth. In the light of such selfless dedication, the legacy of Chopin, Szymanowski, Polish music, Polish culture, and indeed, Poland itself seems secure.

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