

A Study of Louise Farrenc's Progressive Piano Études:
A Female Voice in Nineteenth Century Piano Studies

by

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ABSTRACT

This project combines a performance recording with musicological research on Louise Farrenc's four sets of piano études (Op. 26, 41, 42, 50). It highlights the remarkable piano works of the French female composer Louise Farrenc, exploring representative selections from Farrenc's four progressive sets of educational piano études. I intend to draw attention to these extraordinary compositions and elevate their position in modern-day piano repertoire. These are essential works from the nineteenth-century piano repertoire, which provide significant pedagogical value as they were composed based on Louise Farrenc's (1804-1875) own teaching experience of pupils. In addition, a growing appreciation for the aesthetic and educational merit of women composers' compositions is rapidly emerging in contemporary scholarship, while people tended to focus on prominent male composers' work in the past. This discussion centers around the technical goals of each set, musical expression and interpretation suggestions, and analysis of important influences to create a comprehensive pedagogical guide for performers and teachers. The lack of documentation and analysis of piano compositions by female pianists is a great loss to pedagogy and keyboard literature, and the purpose of this project is to contribute to change in promoting the works of female composers.

This pedagogical study is organized into four chapters. Chapter 1 offers a concise biography of composer Louise Farrenc, exploring her personal journey and the artistic landscape that shaped her work. I emphasize the societal expectations on different genders as musicians in the nineteenth century. The first part of Chapter 2 embarks on a chronological development of études, commencing with their seventeenth-century inception and culminating in their peak during the mid-nineteenth century. The second

part of Chapter 2 discusses Farrenc's études and her pedagogical values. Chapters 3 and 4 provide an overview of the relevance and progression between the four sets of études based on form, texture, and technique. Finally, a pedagogical guide to the études demonstrates the recommended teaching processes and goals for each set and the études as a collection.

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CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO LOUISE FARRENC

1. Historical Background

When the French Revolution erupted in 1789, it set off nearly a half-century of rapid social change. The forces of industrialization fueled urbanization, giving rise to cultural movements.¹ However, as the revolution was achieved almost exclusively by men, the position of women as subservient in society barely changed.² For example, in institutions such as the Paris Conservatory (which was established in 1795), women were allowed to study, but there were still restrictions on the courses they could take.³ In early nineteenth century France, due to the Civil Code established by Napoleon I in 1804, women were expected to be in the domestic sphere and had fewer rights. Men dominated in most public spheres such as politics, economy, technology and music.⁴ Though women in the middle and upper classes were encouraged to acquire musical education and commonly learned keyboard instruments, their skills were mostly treated as forms of domestic recreation. Formal musical training was often less accessible to women, and the prevailing purpose of this education was frequently linked to societal expectations of

¹ Thomas Carlyle and Ruth Scurr, *The French Revolution*. London: Continuum, 2010: 151.

² Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe*. Paris: Gallimard, 1986: 148.

³ Gyeseon Choe, "The Thirty Etudes of Louise Farrenc (1804-1875)," (DMA diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2018), 3.

⁴ Ute Gerhard, "Civil Law and Gender in Nineteenth-Century Europe," *Clio (English Edition)* 43 (winter 2016): 250-275, 261.

becoming an accomplished housewife and mother.⁵ Men from middle-class and upper-class backgrounds, on the other hand, were often encouraged to take professional music lessons in composing, instrumental playing and conducting. Additionally, women and men in the nineteenth century composed in different genres. Since men could perform for large audiences in major venues, they had more resources to compose large musical works. By contrast, women usually performed their music privately in smaller spaces. Therefore, the majority of female-composed music was chamber music and short pieces referred to as “merely salon music.”⁶ Societal expectations of the era also created a paradoxical situation for women composers. They were often praised for emulating the compositional styles of prominent male composers, yet simultaneously criticized for creating their own “feminine” expression. This discouragement of expressing their nature and true thoughts forced women composers to distance themselves from their female contemporaries and challenge traditional gender roles. Consequently, they endured a psychological burden – the ongoing struggle to establish their artistic identities within a system that offered limited recognition for female voices. This was a challenge uniquely faced by women composers, contrasting sharply with the relative freedom enjoyed by their male counterparts.⁷

⁵ Huang Pei-Jung, “Selected Piano Music for Children by Nineteenth-Century Female Composers: Cécile Chaminade and Amy Beach,” (DMA Diss., University of Washington, 2019), 1.

⁶ Anna Loprete, “Review of *Women at the Piano: Solo Works by Female Composers of the Nineteenth Century* ed. By Nicolas Hopkins,” 271.

⁷ Marcia J. Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000: 68.

There were still notable women composers, such as Fanny Mendelssohn (1805-1847) and Clara Schumann (1819-1896), who made significant contributions to music education. However, societal constraints often overshadowed the work of these composers during their lifetimes. Works of women composers, brimming with musicality and innovation, were frequently underappreciated or even lost. This underrepresentation means we have a less than complete picture of nineteenth-century music, missing out on the unique voices and perspectives of these talented women composers.

2. Biography

Composer, pianist and editor of early keyboard music, Jeanne-Louise Dumont was born into an artistic family in Paris on May 31, 1804.⁸ Dumont significantly benefited from having her grandmother as her first music teacher during her childhood.⁹ She continued her formal studies formally with pianist Ignaz Moscheles (1778-1837). Denied admission to the Paris Conservatoire's traditional composition course due to her gender, Dumont nonetheless pursued her musical development through private instruction with Anton Reicha (1770-1836). Under Reicha's tutelage, she honed her skills in counterpoint, fugue, orchestration and composition.¹⁰ In 1827, seventeenth-year-old Jeanne-Louise Dumont married Aristide Farrenc (1794-1865), the second flutist at the

⁸ Bea Friedland, "Louise Farrenc 1804-1875: Composer, Performer, Scholar," 3

⁹ Ibid, 11.

¹⁰ Maria Stratigou, "Performance Aspects of Louise Farrenc's Études for Piano," (Ph.D. diss., Manchester Metropolitan University, 2021), 26.

Théâtre Italien and the owner of a music-publishing firm. Soon after, Farrenc debuted as a concert pianist together with her husband in France, captivating audiences across Europe with her technical mastery and emotional depth. Her performance was hailed as “extraordinary” and “electrifying” by Hector Berlioz (1803-1869), cementing her reputation as one of the finest pianists of her time.¹¹ In 1825, the Farrenc publishing house garnered significant prestige when Aristide secured the French rights to all future works by Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837), a highly esteemed musician of his generation. This acquisition consequently provided Louise Farrenc with access to additional resources from Hummel himself, ultimately coaching her on her piano technique.¹²

Farrenc's musical aspirations extended beyond the stage. She possessed an innate gift for composition, pouring her emotions and creativity into a rich body of work that encompassed, not only socially appropriate chamber pieces, but also symphonies, piano solos and songs. Her compositions were characterized by their elegance, clarity and expressive power, reflecting her mastery of form and her ability to evoke a wide range of emotions. Throughout her illustrious career, Farrenc composed over 150 works, a testament to her unwavering dedication to her craft. Her compositions garnered critical

¹¹ Bea Friedland, “Louise Farrenc 1804-1875: Composer, Performer, Scholar,” 12.

¹² Ibid, 13.

acclaim from her contemporaries. Robert Schumann, in his own magazine publication *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* praised the originality and imagination of her piano pieces.¹³

Amidst her burgeoning success as a performer and composer, Farrenc also broke barriers in the field of music education. In 1842, Louise Farrenc was appointed as the first female professor at the Paris Conservatory, a position she held for three decades.¹⁴

In the early 1860s, Farrenc transitioned her primary focus from composition to the development of a meticulously edited, historically informed, multi-volume anthology of keyboard music. Entitled *Le Trésor des Pianistes*, the anthology was a collaboration with her husband and spanned 20 volumes. Encompassing a broad selection of works for harpsichord and pianoforte, it was a pioneer of its kind within France.¹⁵ This anthology served a crucial function in the revival of early keyboard repertoire, recognizing the necessity for not only renewed interest, but scholarly interpretation.¹⁶

Faced with unfairness, Farrenc always rose to the challenge. When she began her career as a professor at the Paris Conservatory, Farrenc's salary remained around 1000 francs for almost ten years, while a newly appointed male professor received 1300 francs

¹³ Benjamin Pesetsky, "Louise Farrenc: A French Romantic Composer Ahead Of Her Time," (Handel and Haydn Society, 2021): <https://handelandhaydn.org/louise-farrenc-a-french-romantic-composer-ahead-of-her-time>

¹⁴ Ibid, 31.

¹⁵ Ibid, 59.

¹⁶ Ibid, 61.

in his first year of teaching.¹⁷ In a letter to Daniel-François-Esprit Auber, the director of the Paris Conservatoire, she expressed her anger and disappointment:

Because putting aside any motive of interest, if I did not receive this encouragement like them (other male professors), one could believe that I did not put all the zeal and assiduity necessary to properly fulfill the task imposed on me.¹⁸

As a result, between 1855 and 1860, Farrenc received a salary raise to match the benefits and salary of her male colleague.¹⁹ Throughout her career at the Conservatory, Farrenc faced another persistent gender-based inequity: the administration demonstrated a pattern of assigning the most promising students to her male colleagues, Henri Herz (1803-1888) and Félix Le Couppey (1811-1887). In a letter to M. de Beauchesne, second in command at the Conservatoire, she protested her treatment:

Now, dear Sir, I pray you urge the Director to give me another pupil, because you realize that I absolutely must have one... Just as other male professors are anxious to keep their pupils, so am I. It wouldn't be any more difficult to assign Mlle. Marx to me than it was, last year, to grant admission to a weak applicant rejected by the committee and – as usual – given to me.²⁰

However, this issue never got addressed and Farrenc retired from her position on the Conservatoire faculty after three decades of service. Her retirement, effective January 1, 1873, coincided with the completion of her major publication *Le Trésor des Pianistes*.

¹⁷ Maria Stratigou, "Performance Aspects of Louise Farrenc's Études for Piano," (Ph.D. diss., Manchester Metropolitan University, 2021), 37.

¹⁸ Bea Friedland, "Louise Farrenc 1804-1875: Composer, Performer, Scholar," 42.

¹⁹ Maria Stratigou, "Performance Aspects of Louise Farrenc's Études for Piano," (Ph.D. diss., Manchester Metropolitan University, 2021), 37.

²⁰ Bea Friedland, "Louise Farrenc 1804-1875: Composer, Performer, Scholar," 76.

Louise Farrenc died in Paris on September 15, 1875. She was buried in the Dumont plot at Montparnasse cemetery. Obituaries on Farrenc called attention to the imbalance between the merit she provided and reward she received.²¹ Louise Farrenc's talent and dedication earned her a place in the male-dominated musical landscape of nineteenth-century France. Yet, one wonders how much greater her legacy might have been if afforded the same opportunities as her male peers.

²¹ Ibid, 76.

CHAPTER 2

ÉTUDES IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The term “*étude*”, French equivalent for “*study*”, is commonly used to refer to relatively short compositions which focus on the development or utilization of specific aspects of performance technique. The definition of *étude* as a form also evolved later, in the twentieth century, when composers extended the exercise to a study of orchestral and compositional techniques as in Debussy’s *Études* L 136 (1915), Rachmaninoff *Études-Tableaux*, Op. 39 (1917) and Stravinsky’s *Four Études for Orchestra* (1928-9).²²

Studies emerged in pedagogical practice as early as the seventeenth-century in middle Europe, where “studies” and “exercises” were employed to enhance students’ technical proficiency and musical interpretation.²³ However, these were often viewed as primarily mechanical and devoid of artistic merit. For example, J. S. Bach (1685-1750) composed his first collection of studies *Klavierbüchlein* in 1720 for his elder son Wilhelm Friedmann Bach (1710-1784). In this collection, Bach introduced foundational piano terms like keys, clefs, notes (Example 1) and ornamental tables (Example 2).²⁴

²² *Grove Music Online*, “Etude (Fr.),” accessed 2 Feb. 2024.

²³ Ching-Ling Yang, “The Development of the Piano Etude from Muzio Clementi to Anton Rubinstein: A Study of Selected Works from 1801 to 1870,” (Ph.D. diss., The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1998), 3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

composers and fueled interest in music study, driving the demand for pedagogical pieces like the piano étude. In addition, the influence of composers, such as Chopin who was living in France and wrote virtuosic études for both pedagogical and performing purposes, solidified “*étude*” as the favored term.²⁸

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the transformation and development of études led to a new era for the genre. Progressing from the compositional exercises of Matthew Locke’s (1630-1677) *Melothesia* (1673) and François Couperin’s (1668-1733) *L’art de toucher le clavecin* (1716), the études of the early nineteenth-century codified techniques necessary in increasingly demanding concert repertoire for the piano. Some well-known composers still tended to write repetitive, mechanical exercises like Muzio Clementi’s (1752-1832) *Preparatory Exercises for the Piano* Op. 16 (1820), Carl Czerny’s (1791-1857) *Pianoforte-Schule* Op. 500 (1839), and Aloys Schmitt’s (1788-1866) *Preparatory Exercise for the Piano* Op. 16 (1820). Other composers, however, started to compose études beyond mere mechanical constraints, including more musical and expressive content.²⁹

Johann Baptist Cramer (1771-1858) is considered one of the first composers and teachers with the most profound influence on études in the early nineteenth century.³⁰ As

²⁸ Claudia MacDonald, “Schumann’s Piano Practice: Technical Mastery and Artistic Ideal,” *The Journal of Musicology* 19, no. 4 (2022): 559.

²⁹ Ka Hou Chan, “Rediscovering the Unsung Piano Études: A Pedagogical Analysis of Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel’s Eight Übungsstücke and Agathe Backer Grøndahl’s Six Concert De Études Op. 11,” (DMA diss., Arizona State University, 2023), 7.

³⁰ Angelina Ngan-chu Au, “The piano etude in the nineteenth century: From the acquisition of facility to demonstration of virtuosity,” (DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 1999), 8.

Theodore Baker described in Cramer's biography, Cramer was "a later intermediate link from beyond Bach to the present that cannot well be dropped from the chain of evolution."³¹ His main contributions were *Études pour le pianoforte* (1803-1804) and *Suite de l'étude pour le pianoforte* (1810), also known as *84 Etudes, Opp.30 & 40*. Cramer's études serve a purpose beyond technical exercises for pupils, and Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) recognized their value as preparatory material for musicians. He even annotated Cramer's études for his nephew Karl van Beethoven's (1806-1858) studies, showing the esteem he held for Cramer's work.³² Cramer's études were not arranged in progressive difficulty, and the length of each Etude varied from twenty-two measures (No.1) to ninety-five measures (No.700), depending on the technique involved. In addition, Cramer's études covered most aspects of technical problems, even expanding into those that were not commonly used during his life.

The mid-nineteenth century witnessed the flourishing of the étude as a genre. Driven by renowned composers like Frédéric Chopin (1810-1846), Franz Liszt (1811-1886), Robert Schumann (1810-1856), and Louise Farrenc (1804-1875), études transcended the technical exercises of the past centuries, achieving both practical and artistic significance. Sets like Chopin's Op. 10 Etudes (1829-1832), Liszt's *Grandes études de Paganini* (1838-1851) and Farrenc's Op. 26 (1835-1838) represent pivotal milestones in the evolution of the étude. Intended for public performance, showcasing

³¹ Theodore Baker, "Johann Baptist Cramer, Eighty-Four Studies for the Piano,"

³² Peter Felix Ganz, "The Development of the Etude for Pianoforte," (PhDdiss.,Northwestern University, 1960), 77.

both virtuosic skill and profound musicality, they marked a significant departure from the traditional pedagogical focus of the form.³³

Louise Farrenc composed four sets of études with a gradual progression of technique, expression and textures. Farrenc composed the first set of Etudes Op. 26 in 1838 before she began teaching at the Paris Conservatoire. This is the most difficult set in terms of both technique and musicianship.³⁴ In 1840, the critic Maurice Bourges wrote a detailed review in which he reinforced both the pedagogical and aesthetic value of these études, saying they are “not alone to develop technique but also to mold taste.”³⁵ Similar to Chopin's Op. 10 Etudes, published in 1829-32, Farrenc's Op. 26 exhibits musical sophistication through irregular phrasing, improvisatory melodies, and unexpected harmonies. In addition, it's important to note that there is no evidence she had encountered Chopin's music prior to composing her Op. 26.³⁶ It underscores that Farrenc's études possess undeniable musical merit, independently matching the value of those written by her renowned male contemporaries.

Farrenc's other three collections of études Op. 41, Op. 42 and Op. 50 were based on her teaching experience and were not intended for professionally proficient pianists, but rather for the average student with a focus on their musical growth. The études'

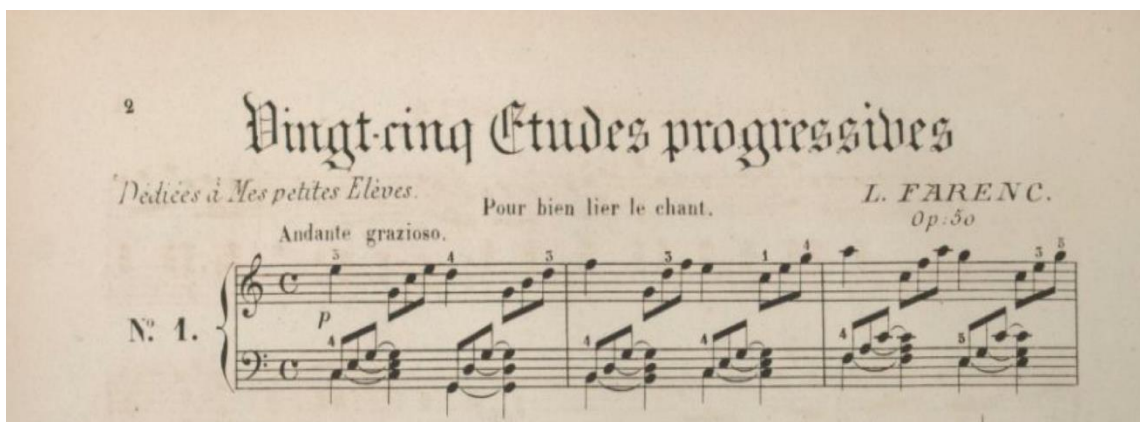
³³ Angelina Ngan-chu Au, “The piano etude in the nineteenth century: From the acquisition of facility to demonstration of virtuosity,”(DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 1999), 25.

³⁴ Maria Stratigou, “Performance Aspects of Louise Farrenc's Études for Piano,” (Ph.D. diss., Manchester Metropolitan University, 2021), 35.

³⁵ Bea Friedland, “Louise Farrenc 1804-1875: Composer, Performer, Scholar,” 20.

³⁶ Ibid, 112.

texture and technique are simpler than those of her first Op. 26 set.³⁷ In Op. 50, Farrenc offers not only musical pieces but structured lessons wherein each étude is accompanied by a descriptive title delineating its technical objective, echoing similar works like Czerny's *Practical Exercises for Beginners, Op.599* and Hanon's *The Virtuoso Pianist in Sixty Exercises for The Piano*. As shown in Example 3, Op. 50 No. 1's "Pour bien lier le chant" (to connect the song well) stresses the significance of fluid *legato* technique.



Example 3: Op. 50 No. 1 mm.1-3.³⁸

³⁷ Maria Stratigou, "Performance Aspects of Louise Farrenc's Études for Piano," (Ph.D. diss., Manchester Metropolitan University, 2021), 35.

³⁸ Louise Farrenc, "No. 1," *25 Etudes Progressives, Op. 50*. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1876), 2, [https://imslp.org/wiki/25_Etudes_faciles,_Op.50_\(Farrenc,_Louise\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/25_Etudes_faciles,_Op.50_(Farrenc,_Louise))

CHAPTER 3

COMPARISON OF TECHNICAL AND STYLISTIC CHALLENGES OF THE ÉTUDES

Farrenc's études offer great pedagogical value to piano teachers and students, alike, as they address various technical challenges and are suitable for use as supplemental materials. I list and categorize the études according to similar technical elements, focusing on the following criteria: balance and layering, double notes and chords, octaves, arpeggios and broken chords, large leaps, evenness, independence of fingers, and ornaments. I also rate the difficulty of each étude on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the easiest and 10 being the most challenging and recommend practice methods for a few of these études.

1. Balance and layering

A fundamental challenge in single-hand piano technique resides in the separation of two layers, requiring the pianist to control not only volume, but also timbre. Cultivating this skill enhances a student's expressive capabilities in voicing and tonal control. Table 1 presents selected études and their analysis regarding balance and layering.

Table 1

Études	Key	Analysis	Difficulty
Op. 26 No. 7	B minor	The focus for this étude is controlling multiple voices in one hand in a <i>legato</i> style. This is complicated with double notes, which can be practiced by transferring the finger weight with a pivot movement of the wrists.	8
Op. 26 No. 9	A major	The left hand plays repetitive triplet arpeggios in two layers and the right hand plays <i>legato</i> octaves.	8
Op. 26 No. 10	F [#] minor	The left hand plays broken arpeggios in two layers and is required to use the fifth finger to hold down the bass note; the right hand also plays two layers and is required to bring out the outer voice.	10
Op. 26 No. 16	F [#] major	The étude is polyphonic and requires students to differentiate layers and play <i>legato</i> .	10
Op. 26 No. 18	D ^b minor	One hand plays two layers against either a single note, an octave or double notes in the other hand. The outer layer contains two repeated notes in a dotted rhythm which involve balance and independence of the fingers.	9
Op. 41 No. 5	D ^b major	The étude is very melodic, with the melody alternating between two layers in each hand. Students should work on balancing their fingers to highlight the melody while playing.	8
Op. 42 No. 18	E major	Both hands play broken chords in two layers and need to bring out the outer voices, the left hand is required to use the fifth finger to hold down the bass note,	4

		while the right hand is required to use the fifth finger to hold down the top voice.	
Op. 42 No. 19	F# major	Blocked chords are played by two hands together, and balance is essential in this étude so that the outer voice remains highlighted.	4
Op. 50 No. 4	E minor	This étude contains two layers in one hand against a single note in the other hand. The top voice of the two layers needs to create a long phrase.	2
Op. 50 No. 10	A major	There are two layers in the right hand. Students need to emphasize the upper voice while playing <i>legato</i> by touching the key deeply for a <i>cantabile</i> quality. The left hand mainly plays single notes or octaves.	3

I discuss Etude Op. 26 No. 10 in more detail below as an example of the balancing and layering used throughout the four sets. This lyrical *adagio* étude features two melodic layers within each hand.

N. 10.

Example 4: Op. 26 No. 10 mm.1-8.³⁹

Students should build a strong foundation by holding the bass while silently depressing the arpeggiated middle voice. Doing this without activating the keys will help the students achieve maximum control over the balance and timbre of the two voices. Then, they can practice holding the bass while playing the arpeggiated notes staccato.

Next, students should focus on the two voices in the right hand. Begin by assigning the lower voice to the left hand and the upper voice to the right, facilitating the development of balance in both volume and touch. Once this is achieved, students can progress to balancing these layers exclusively within the right hand, drawing upon the control established in the previous exercise. The pianist should listen carefully to avoid creating agogic accents which compromise the phrasing.

The right-hand melody includes ornamental thirty-second notes which require extremely delicate playing. It is challenging to play smoothly at such a fast tempo (Example 5), so the student should practice first at a slower tempo. In m. 50, gestures in

³⁹ Louise Farrenc, “No. 10,” *30 Etudes: dans tous les Tons Majeurs et Mineurs pour Piano, Op.26*. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1876), 26, [https://imslp.org/wiki/30_Etudes,_Op.26_\(Farrenc,_Louise\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/30_Etudes,_Op.26_(Farrenc,_Louise)).

the red frame are intended to enhance the independence and flexibility of fingers 3, 4, and 5. Throughout, the balance between hands remains important, such as when the left hand plays a triplet accompaniment pattern underneath right-hand melodic passages. Overall, the combination of technical and musical details renders this exercise a useful pedagogical piece.

Example 5: Op. 26 No. 10 mm.50-54.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Louise Farrenc, “No. 10,” *30 Etudes: dans tous les Tons Majeurs et Mineurs pour Piano, Op.26*. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1876), 28, [https://imslp.org/wiki/30_Etudes,_Op.26_\(Farrenc,_Louise\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/30_Etudes,_Op.26_(Farrenc,_Louise)).

2. Double notes and chords

Table 2

Etude	Key	Analysis	Difficulty
Op. 26 No. 3	A minor	The right hand plays double thirds and harmonic intervals. The left hand contains broken chords with leaps of octaves and tenths, which requires horizontal movement of the left hand and a relaxed wrist movement to cover intervallic leaps.	9
Op. 26 No. 6	D major	This piece is made up of double thirds in one hand against chords in the other hand. Double notes are played in slurs. Since there are leaps between each slur, students are required to shift hand positions quickly.	9
Op. 26 No. 8	D major	A prominent element of this étude is the technical challenge of executing dotted-rhythm double notes in one hand while simultaneously playing a trill in the other.	9
Op. 26 No. 15	G [#] minor	Double notes and broken chords are combined, necessitating big leaps in four layers, with special concentration needed on the balance between each hand.	10
Op. 26 No. 19	B ^b minor	The focus in this étude is playing chords with a light and <i>staccato</i> touch. The right hand includes chords which require bringing out the upper voice against the left hand which has repetitive chords.	10
Op. 26 No. 24	E ^b major	Octaves and chords in dotted rhythms are the main elements in this étude. As this is a march-style étude, it demands a firm and straightforward touch.	9
Op. 26 No. 26	B ^b major	Both hands play <i>legato</i> double notes and <i>staccato</i> chords.	9

Op. 26 No. 27	G minor	The right hand is in two voices and includes double notes against slurs in the left hand. Since there are leaps between each slur, left-hand positions need to be shifted quickly	9
Op. 26 No. 28	F major	The technique of playing double notes with a quick and light <i>staccato</i> touch is the priority in this étude. Both hands contain large leaps.	10
Op. 41 No. 2	G major	This étude focuses on <i>legato</i> double notes played by both hands. They are in the form of a G major scale in contrary motion.	5
Op. 41 No. 11	F major	Both hands in this étude play double notes. There are slurs in the right hand and <i>staccatos</i> in the left hand. This Etude also has fragmented rhythms broken in two parts. For example, one note in the left hand and two notes in the right hand form a triplet.	5
Op. 42 No. 8	B minor	This étude focuses on the succession of double notes with the technique of crossing fingers. For double notes in each measure, they are grouped by circular pivots of the wrist (two for each measure).	6
Op. 42 No. 11	E ^b major	Practicing <i>legato</i> interval progressions with equally important moving lines in each hand is essential to this étude. Double notes in dotted rhythms add further rhythmic complexity to the challenge.	4

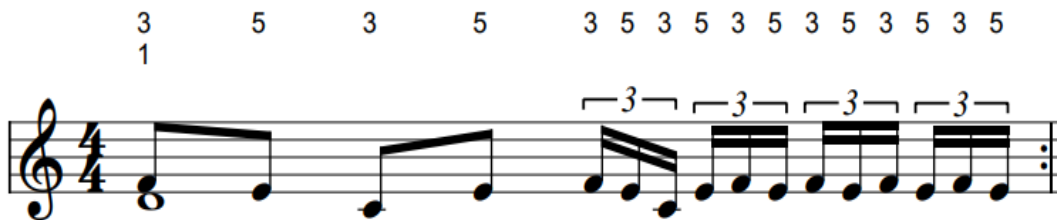
Op. 50 No. 5	D major	The focus of this <i>étude</i> is playing varied successions of intervals in both hands. Both hands play in a non- <i>legato</i> style and alternate, which necessitates active fingertips and rapidly changing hand positions in order to locate keys accurately.	2
Op. 50 No. 16	C major	Successions of <i>legato</i> double notes without passing the thumb under the hand are practiced in this <i>étude</i> . The top voice needs to be highlighted.	3
Op. 50 No. 21	G minor	This <i>étude</i> focuses on double notes and every two notes are repeated. The whole piece is <i>staccato</i> which requires firm fingers.	3
Op. 50 No. 24	A major	Right hand <i>legato</i> double thirds in different rhythms are emphasized in this <i>étude</i> . The top voice is the most important.	4

To discuss Farrenc's treatment of intervals, I will focus on Op. 41 No. 2 which features *legato* double thirds. This *étude* includes short passages which don't require the thumb to pass under the hand and longer phrases which do require passing the thumb under. The challenge is to connect consecutive double notes where the third finger swiftly moves from the lower note of one third to the upper note of the next. There are many possible ways to practice this, but I suggest two possible exercises which enhance connectivity and fluidity within the hand.



Example 6: Op. 41 No. 2 mm.1-4.⁴¹

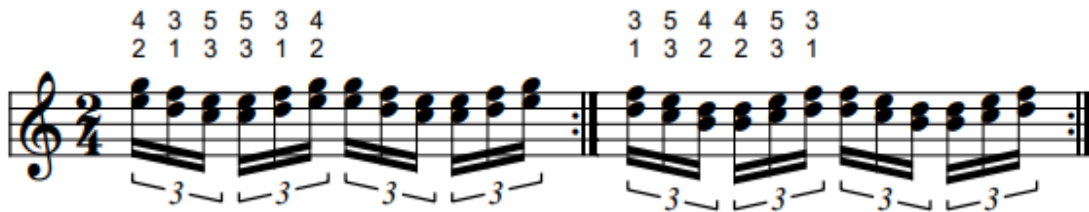
Exercise 6a aims to connect the two consecutive intervals shown in the inner frame, where the rapid displacement of the third finger passes from the upper note of the first interval to the lower note of the second. This exercise practices the shift of the third and fifth fingers while holding the thumb. The third and fifth finger should play *legato* and be close to the keys.



Exercise 6a.

Exercise 6b isolates the technique in the outer frame to practice changing direction while playing double notes. The first measure includes the transition between fingers, which is used in Example 6.

⁴¹ Louise Farrenc, “No. 2,” *12 Etudes de dextérité, Op. 41*. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1876), 4, [https://imslp.org/wiki/12_Etudes_de_dext%C3%A9rit%C3%A9,_Op.41_\(Farrenc,_Louise\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/12_Etudes_de_dext%C3%A9rit%C3%A9,_Op.41_(Farrenc,_Louise)).



Exercise 6b.



Example 7: Op. 41 No.2 mm.45-49.⁴²

The same technical challenges also appear in the left hand as shown in Example 7. Exercise 7a practices the shifting of the left hand third and fifth finger in different rhythms while holding the thumb. In the inner frame, consecutive ascending intervals are connected through rapid displacement of the third finger. Again, this finger needs to shift smoothly from the lower note of the first interval to the upper note of the second interval, while the fifth finger moves to the lower note of the second interval.



Exercise 7a.

Exercise 7b repeats intervals from the third measure of example II with ascending and descending motion.

⁴² Ibid, 5.

4 3 5 5 3 4 3 4 3 3 4 3
 2 1 3 3 1 2 1 2 1 1 2 1

Exercise 7b.

Example 8: Op. 41 No.2 mm.40-44⁴³

Exercise 8a is similar to Exercise 6a and 7a, but focuses on different finger displacement. In this case, the lower note from the first interval and upper note in the second interval are displaced and the fourth finger is held.

tenuto 3 2 3 2 3 4 3 3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3

4

Exercise 8a.

⁴³ Ibid, 5.

3. Octaves

Table 3

Etude	Key	Analysis	Difficulty
Op. 26 No. 4	D major	This étude contains three parts. In the first part, the right hand plays alternating octaves and double notes against chords in the left hand. In the second part, the roles of each hand are reversed. In the last part, both hands play these patterns together.	9
Op. 26 No. 5	E minor	This étude consists mostly of octaves and chords in a fast tempo. Octaves are either repeated or in parallel motion with a light touch, requiring the supple and lateral displacement of the wrist. The middle part, which is the only multi-layer part, switches tempo from <i>vivace</i> to <i>lento</i> .	10
Op. 26 No. 9	A major	Playing <i>legato</i> octaves in the right hand while bringing out the outer voice is the priority in this étude. Triplet arpeggios are played by the left hand, while its fifth finger holds quarter notes, allowing for the development of finger independence.	8
Op. 41 No. 10	A major	The focus for this étude is consecutive chromatic octaves against chords in the other hand. The fingers must be in close contact with the keyboard so that the octaves can be played fast and lightly.	7

I will use Etude Op. 26 No. 5 to demonstrate Farrenc's use of repeated or parallel octaves. Op. 26 No.5 explores the proper movements of the wrist, elbow and arm. Example 9 opens with groups of repeated octaves in an alternating stepwise motion. It is important to loosen the wrist and remove tension to play successive octaves with

minimum fatigue. It is also essential for the fingers to remain close to the keys while alternating between raising and lowering the wrist. The left image depicts the act of lowering the wrist, whereas the second image illustrates the process of raising the wrist.



Image 1: Warm-up exercise.

Before starting the formal exercises below, I would instruct students on the importance of performing the following warm-up exercise to loosen the wrist. It focuses on performing the movements on a held single octave, with the wrist lowered on the first beat and raised on the second beat.



Example 9: Op. 26 No.5 mm. 58-67.⁴⁴

Successive repetition of octaves presents a challenge to pianists, as the potential for wrist fatigue can prevent the playing from being even. A forward motion can offer significant relief, allowing for greater ease of playing. Divide the passage into groups of three repetitions. Place the fingers at the bottom of the keys for the first attack; then, for the subsequent two octaves, execute a smooth, forward movement of both the fingers and the wrist. This intentional shift in finger position fosters a flexible and relaxed wrist, minimizing the strain typically associated with successive octave work.

Exercises 9a and 9b show groups of octaves in a rhythmic formula where each group is played in one motion. The long note of each group helps the player to regroup and loosen the wrist.

⁴⁴ Louise Farrenc, "No. 5," *30 Etudes: dans tous les Tons Majeurs et Mineurs pour Piano*, Op.26. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1876), 11, [https://imslp.org/wiki/30_Etudes,_Op.26_\(Farrenc,_Louise\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/30_Etudes,_Op.26_(Farrenc,_Louise)).



Exercise 9a.



Exercise 9b.

Example 10 shows the chromatic octaves, which should be played with a backward and forward movement between the white and black keys. This chromatic motion presents a technical challenge for all pianists, especially those with smaller hands since they are more likely to feel fatigue and tension when playing continuous octaves.



Example 10: Op. 26 No.5 mm. 18-27.⁴⁵

Most students with an average hand span will use a variety of fourth and fifth fingers for the upper voices of an octave. These are weaker fingers, but they still must clearly articulate the melody. For smaller-handed pianists, it is hard to play *legato* when

⁴⁵ Ibid, 12.

only using fingers one and five. Exercises 10a and 10b demonstrate how to practice the outer voices of the octave separately, keeping the finger close to the keyboard and shifting hand positions subtly, thus making the best effort to ensure *legato* in both voices.

5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5

Exercise 10a.

1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1

Exercise 10b.

Exercise 10c stresses the importance of balance by holding the upper note and repeating notes in the lower voice.

5 5 5

1 1 1 1 1 1

Exercise 10c.

4. Arpeggios and broken chords

Table 4

Etude	Key	Analysis	Difficulty
Op. 26 No. 1	C major	Traditional fingering of broken chords is highlighted in this étude. The non-chordal hand plays octaves. The goal is to become familiar with broken chords and understand the importance of the position of the thumb and fifth finger.	8
Op. 26 No. 2	C major	This étude primarily contains arpeggiated figurations. A challenge is independence of the fourth and fifth fingers.	8
Op. 26 No. 11	E major	Two simple melodic lines demand a pivot motion of the wrist with broken chords, double notes and scalar passages. This is particularly helpful for practicing the balance of the hands and strengthening weak fingers.	9
Op. 41 No. 6	F minor	The left hand plays arpeggios with a supple wrist, while the right hand plays sixteenth notes in broken chords and scalar passages.	6
Op. 41 No. 7	E ^b major	One hand plays arpeggios while the other hand plays large chordal leaps.	6
Op. 41 No. 12	B minor	This étude focuses on the technique of playing triplet broken chords alternately with two hands in contrary motion. The student needs to develop independent fingers combined with a wrist rotation to make the sound smooth.	5
Op. 42 No. 4	A minor	This étude contains arpeggios alternating in the hands against blocked chords. It requires mobility and rapid movement of the thumb under the hand.	5

Op. 42 No. 10	G minor	The right hand plays sixteenth notes in broken chords against double notes in the left hand.	4
Op. 42 No. 12	B ^b major	The technique is similar to Op. 42 No.10, where the left hand plays double notes in two layers. The right hand plays broken chords.	5
Op. 50 No. 1	C major	Broken chords are divided between the hands, with each hand responsible for a separate layer. The left hand is required to hold the notes of the broken chords successively while the right hand holds the fifth finger.	2
Op. 50 No. 18	E ^b major	This piece is written in a waltz style with broken arpeggios. The primary technical challenge lies in simultaneously executing the arpeggios in one hand while the other hand manages a two-layered melodic line.	3

Etude Op. 50 No. 18 in E^b is a waltz which features running sixteenth-note arpeggios. Farrenc indicates that the third or fourth finger should start each new pattern, which strengthens the independence of weak fingers.

Mouvement de Valse dans le genre lié.

All^o moderato.

N^o 18. *mol*

Example 11: Etude Op. 50 No. 18 mm.1-20.⁴⁶

This étude shows the importance of pivoting the wrist in broken arpeggios. Here it is advantageous to use circular motions: two for each measure, a short rotation for the first two notes, and a longer one for the last four notes (Image 2).

⁴⁶ Louise Farrenc, "No. 18," *25 Etudes Progressives, Op. 50*. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1876), 20, [https://imslp.org/wiki/25_Etudes_faciles,_Op.50_\(Farrenc,_Louise\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/25_Etudes_faciles,_Op.50_(Farrenc,_Louise))



Image 2: L. motion for first two notes, R. motion for last four notes.

The first picture is the motion of playing the first two notes G and E flat, where the wrist moves from right to left, and the second one is the motion of playing the rest of four notes where the wrist moves from E flat to B flat.

To remain attentive to the gesture or rotation of the wrist in this etude, I recommend students isolate this movement in a series of short exercises that help students quickly find the position of the left and right hand respectively.

Exercise 11a, Part 1.

In the first part, students try this with different articulations: three times *legato* at an *andante* tempo, followed by three times *staccato* at a moderate tempo. In addition, every three notes should be treated as a full circular motion with two gestures per measure - a short one for the first and second notes, and a longer pivot for the second and third notes.

Exercise 11a, Part 2.

In the second part of the exercise, students play blocked chords to practice shifting their hands quickly and precisely to the next blocked chord.

Once this has been solidified, they can start practicing Exercise 11b with the right hand in parallel motion and the left hand plays single and double notes in Example 11. The goal here is to ensure that the right hand is playing evenly.

4 2 4 2 5 4 5 4 2 1 2 1

Exercise 11b.

This exercise requires students to repeat two note patterns, accenting the first note of each grouping. As in Exercise 11a, the fingers need to be active and independent.

In Exercise 11c, the first note in each measure is held longer to make students aware of the importance of each group's down beat, while the rest of the note values remain the same.

4 2 5 4 2 1 4 2 5 4 2 1 4 2 5 4 2 1

Exercise 11c.

Exercise 11d is for four fingers with one finger held. The goal is for students to use their wrists and fingers flexibly while holding fingers. When playing the down beat in the first measure, students should stress it and keep their fingers firm. For the other notes, the fingers should be close to the key. In the following measures, the pianist will need to hold other notes sequentially in each group.



Exercise 11d.

5. Large leaps

Table 5

Etude	Key	Analysis	Difficulty
Op. 26 No. 26	B ^b major	This étude consists of chords with large leaps in the right hand against double thirds in the left hand.	9
Op. 26 No. 27	G minor	The left hand plays <i>staccato</i> extended arpeggios and leaps, while the right hand balances two voices.	9

Etude Op. 26 No. 27 is in G minor and marked with a brisk *Allegro agitato*. The pattern of the left hand in this Etude maintains a consistent range of over an octave. The challenge is to reach the notes of these large leaps accurately at a fast tempo, which can be facilitated with appropriate relaxation and rotation of the wrist. In the opening of Example 12, the wrist should rotate from left to right when playing the first two notes and then circle back to the left side when playing F sharp, then rotate the wrist from the left to right when playing the last three notes. The rest of the phrases all follow the same rotation pattern. Additionally, finger independence is equally important.

The pedagogical value of this étude allows students to naturally explore an extended hand shape and flexible hand structure, as opposed to the conventional curved hand structure.⁴⁷

N° 27. All.^o agitato. ♩ = 80. dol. 8. mf cresc.

Example 12: Op. 26 No. 27 mm.1-12.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Ka Hou Chan, “Rediscovering the Unsung Piano Études: A Pedagogical Analysis of Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel’s Eight Übungsstücke and Agathe Backer Grøndahl’s Six Concert De Études Op. 11,” (DMA diss., Arizona State University, 2023), 31.

⁴⁸ Louise Farrenc, “No. 27,” *30 Etudes: dans tous les Tons Majeurs et Mineurs pour Piano, Op.26*. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1876), 80, [https://imslp.org/wiki/30_Etudes,_Op.26_\(Farrenc,_Louise\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/30_Etudes,_Op.26_(Farrenc,_Louise)).

6. Evenness and independence

Table 6

Etude	Key	Analysis	Difficulty
Op. 26 No. 14	B major	The entire étude is in perpetual motion, with both hands playing sixteenth notes continuously. In addition, students need to project the hidden melody under the moving notes.	9
Op. 26. No. 17	E ^b minor	E ^b minor scales are played alternately in two hands. Independence of the fingers is paramount to keep the three voices distinct.	9
Op. 26 No. 25	C minor	Both hands include triplets in scales and arpeggios. Both hands are required to play evenly.	8
Op. 26 No. 30	F major	The technique of repeated single notes with two fingers demands light, rapid finger changes. This étude includes simultaneously playing short slurs in scales.	9
Op. 41 No. 1	C minor	This étude focuses on eighth-note triplets in the right hand against octaves and chords in the left hand, which enhances finger independence.	5
Op. 41 No. 3	F major	The right hand plays triplets in sixteenth notes, while the left hand plays double thirds in two layers. The sound is required to be even and smooth.	6
Op. 41 No. 6	F minor	The right hand navigates a variety of intervals and scales, improving finger flexibility. The left hand plays <i>legato</i> arpeggios and chords, fostering smooth hand movement and coordination.	5

Op. 41 No. 7	E ^b major	In the beginning of the étude, the right hand plays large chords while the left hand plays sextuplets. The two hands' roles are then reversed.	7
Op. 41 No. 8	C minor	This étude focuses on groups of sextuplet sixteenth notes in scales and broken chords.	6
Op. 41 No. 9	C major	In this etude, the right hand plays varying groups of four sixteenth notes while the left hand plays double thirds and fourths.	5
Op. 42 No. 1	E minor	This étude requires both hands to play triplets alternately and smoothly.	5
Op. 42 No. 7	D major	The right hand plays groups of sixteenth notes that share similar patterns to practice finger independence and rotation.	4
Op. 50 No. 11	D minor	This étude focuses on sixteenth-note triplets. The left hand plays the first note in the triplet while the right hand plays the second and third.	3
Op. 50 No. 12	C major	These two hands share similar patterns of repeated broken chords in sixteenth notes. This allows students to locate all of the weak fingers in their practice.	2
Op. 50 No. 13	A ^b major	The focus for this étude is playing left-hand scales evenly against right-hand chords.	3
Op. 50 No. 19	B ^b major	Both hands play sixteenth notes and repeat every two notes, which reinforces finger independence.	3
Op. 50 No. 20	F major	The hands alternate sixteenth notes. The requirement is to play smoothly and evenly.	1

Op. 50 No. 22	G major	The left hand plays short slurs in sixteenth against double thirds in the right hand. The left hand requires finger independence to play evenly.	3
Op. 50 No. 23	A minor	Practicing repetitive figures is the priority in this étude. While one hand plays single notes or chords, the other hand plays sixteenth notes which requires independent fingers and a relaxed wrist.	3
Op. 50 No. 25	E major	The right hand plays triplets while the left hand plays double notes. Both hands are required to be even and active.	3

I will use Op. 41 No. 1 to illustrate the technique of evenness and independence.

Dédiées à Mad^{elle} Juliette DORUS

L. FARENCE

All' con fuoco $\text{♩} = 104$

N° 1

Op. 41

Example 13: Op. 41 No. 1 mm.1-8.⁴⁹

The following exercises show different methods to practice independence within the right hand.

⁴⁹ Louise Farrenc, “No. 1”, *12 Etudes de dextérité, Op. 41*. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1876), 1, [https://imslp.org/wiki/12_Etudes_de_dext%C3%A9rit%C3%A9,_Op.41_\(Farrenc,_Louise\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/12_Etudes_de_dext%C3%A9rit%C3%A9,_Op.41_(Farrenc,_Louise)).



Exercise 13a.

Exercise 13a doubles triplet groups to get familiar with the notes and positions of each group. The second step is to repeat each double group twice. Eventually, working with full measures of these groupings increases the independence of each finger within the hand while maintaining longer melodic lines.



Exercise 13b, Part 1.



Exercise 13b, Part 2.

Exercise 13b breaks down each group into quintuplets. The mixture of rhythmic figurations keeps the hands adapting to different groupings.



Exercise 13c.

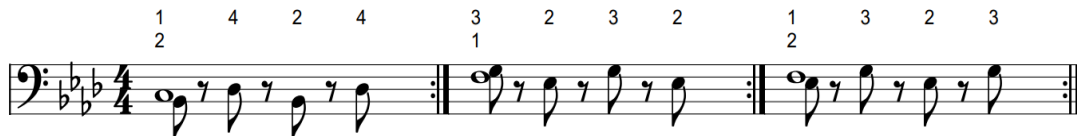
Exercise 13c aims to strengthen weak fingers, like the third, fourth and fifth fingers, through broken rhythms. The long-short note value combination (and then the inversion of this dotted figure) helps weaker fingers develop the facility to quickly touch and release the keys.

Op. 50 No. 13 is an example of fluid running figures to strengthen independent fingers. This technique is vital for later advanced exercises that involve consecutive double notes. The challenge is to play these scalar passages evenly and flexibly when crossing the thumb.



Example 14: Op. 50 No. 13 mm.1-10.⁵⁰

Exercise 14a isolates the technical challenge of passing fingers over the thumb. The students should practice first with a slow and controlled movement, then gradually build speed and fluency using the metronome.



Exercise 14a.

Once students have successfully located the notes with a loose wrist, they can proceed to Exercise 14b, which emphasizes playing *legato* with the thumb held. During this exercise, maintaining a relaxed wrist is crucial. Technically, this facilitates greater

⁵⁰ Louise Farrenc, “No. 13,” *25 Etudes Progressives, Op. 50*. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1876), 14, [https://imslp.org/wiki/25_Etudes_faciles,_Op.50_\(Farrenc,_Louise\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/25_Etudes_faciles,_Op.50_(Farrenc,_Louise))

ease of movement and enhances wrist flexibility. Musically, it affords musical control and the ability to create phrases with greater expressivity.



Exercise 14b.

7. Staccato touch

Staccato articulation encompasses three distinct touch techniques: wrist staccato, finger staccato, and forearm staccato. The appropriate articulation usually depends on the length of the note. Finger staccato necessitates agile and rapid finger movements with flexible knuckles. Wrist staccato employs the wrist as a pivot, maintaining a relaxed state. Forearm staccato is used when power and depth are necessary, frequently observed in bass note staccato where a heavy touch is required. Table 7 shows études that contain these techniques.

Table 7

Etude	Key	Analysis	Difficulty
Op. 26 No. 5	E minor	This étude incorporates wrist <i>staccato</i> in various harmonic intervals. Students are required to play <i>staccato</i> lightly and fast.	10
Op. 26 No. 28	F major	Wrist and forearm <i>staccato</i> executions of various intervals in both hands are included in this étude.	10
Op. 41 No. 11	F major	The left hand plays <i>staccatos</i> in either single notes or intervals against short slurs of two eighth notes played by the right hand.	4

Op. 50 No. 3	G major	The focus for this <i>étude</i> is finger <i>staccato</i> in eighth notes played by one hand against chords played by the other hand.	2
Op. 50 No. 21	G minor	This <i>étude</i> focuses on <i>staccato</i> in double thirds. Both hands play <i>staccato</i> alternately and repeat every two double notes in most measures.	4

The practicing method of *staccato* is to firm fingertip and relax wrist and arm while maintaining a stable hand structure, so that students can play the sound concentratedly.

8. Ornaments

Table 8

Etude	Key	Analysis	Difficulty
Op. 26 No. 8	B minor	This <i>étude</i> includes trills in double-dotted rhythms.	9
Op. 26 No. 10	F# minor	The right hand plays ornamental sixty-fourth notes, which require light and quick touches in a fast tempo.	10
Op. 26 No. 16	F# major	The right hand plays <i>legato</i> ornamental turns with a delicate touch.	10

The requirement of ornaments is to play them evenly, which has been addressed in Evenness and independence. Teachers and students can follow the instructions in Example 13 and its exercises to practice Ornaments.

9. Form and structure

Table 9

Etude	Key	Form/Structure	Difficulty
Op. 26 No. 12	E major	Fuga (Fugue)	8
Op. 26 No. 13	C [#] minor	Canone (Canon)	8
Op. 26 No. 20	C minor	Canone (Canon)	8
Op. 26 No. 23	B ^b minor	Fuga (Fugue)	7
Op. 26 No. 29	D minor	Fuga (Fugue)	8

The variety of structures and forms in the études illustrates Farrenc's goal to broaden young pianists' understanding of different styles of music. As Bea Friedland, the author of Farrenc's biography, commented on Op. 26:

But the composer plainly aspires to something beyond the usual didactic goal of perfecting technique; she aims equally at cultivating a sense of history by introducing the pianist to a wide range of keyboard styles from Bach's time to her own.⁵¹

The fugue that Farrenc wrote is not a strict fugue form, but has fugal elements. In Example 15, the fugue's dense texture—evidenced by the subject's appearance five times within 25 measures—underscores the étude's value as a demonstration of aesthetic principles, transcending purely pedagogical objectives.

⁵¹ Bea Friedland, "Louise Farrenc 1804-1875: Composer, Performer, Scholar," 19

N° 23. *mf* $\text{♩} = 76$. Fuga.

Response

Subject

Counter Subject

Example 15: Op. 26 No. 23 mm.1-5.⁵²

⁵² Louise Farrenc, "No. 23," *30 Etudes: dans tous les Tons Majeurs et Mineurs pour Piano, Op.26*. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1876), 70, [https://imslp.org/wiki/30_Etudes,_Op.26_\(Farrenc,_Louise\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/30_Etudes,_Op.26_(Farrenc,_Louise)).

CHAPTER 4

THE RELEVANCE AND PROGRESSION BETWEEN THE ÉTUDES

The four sets of études by Farrenc were written in reverse chronological order of difficulty (Op. 50, Op. 42, Op. 41, and Op. 26). This complexity is reflected in their length and technical focuses. The études in Op. 50 average approximately thirty-five measures, while those in Op. 42 and Op. 41 extend to around fifty measures, and Op. 26 études are the longest at an average of eighty measures each. Op. 50 has a narrower technical focus, with titles indicating the primary technique addressed, such as finger independence and evenness, and a rhythmic simplicity consisting mainly of eighth and sixteenth notes. In contrast, the later sets incorporate a wider range of techniques within individual études and feature more complex rhythmic patterns, particularly in Op. 26.

The Op. 50 études feature a single melodic layer within each hand, typically employing broken chords or scales with fixed hand positions and maintaining a consistent key signature. The technical demands increase in Op. 42 and Op. 41, with one hand performing two melodic voices against a single, rhythmically simple voice in the other. Op. 26 further amplifies this complexity, as each hand executes independent two-voice melodies and incorporates more key modulations. For example, some études within Op. 26 employ complex contrapuntal forms, such as fugue and canon.

As an example, I will make a comparison between the length, technique, rhythm, and harmony used in the elementary Etudes Op. 50 and the more advanced Etudes Op. 26. Despite sharing similar dotted rhythms in an eighth note time signature and a focus on finger independence, these two études exhibit significant differences in other musical

long lines despite the rests. In Op. 50 No. 6, the right hand plays eighth notes and sixteenth notes which are separated by sixteenth rests, while in Op. 26 No. 3, the right hand plays thirds and the notes are all even sixteenth notes separated by sixteenth rests.

Pour détacher légèrement de deux en deux avec d'inégales valeurs.

Allegretto.

N° 6. *Leggiero.*

Example 18: Op. 50 No. 6 mm.1-4.⁵⁵

N° 3.

dol.

Example 19: Op. 26 No. 3 mm.1-3.⁵⁶

In addition, the long lines in Etudes Op. 50 No. 20 (Example 20), Op. 42 No. 1 (Example 21) and Op. 41 No. 12 (Example 22) are created by alternating hands but the pianist must play smoothly as if using one hand. In Op. 50 No. 20, each hand alternately plays two sixteenth notes. This becomes more complicated in Op. 42 No. 1 and Op. 41 No. 12 where each hand plays triplets alternately and the evenness becomes more challenging. Op.41 No.12 is made up of fast arpeggios across a wide register and

⁵⁵ Louise Farrenc, “No. 6,” *25 Etudes Progressives, Op. 50*. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1876), 6, [https://imslp.org/wiki/25_Etudes_faciles,_Op.50_\(Farrenc,_Louise\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/25_Etudes_faciles,_Op.50_(Farrenc,_Louise))

⁵⁶ Louise Farrenc, “No. 3,” *30 Etudes: dans tousles Tons Majeurs et Mineurs pour Piano, Op.26*. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1876), 6, [https://imslp.org/wiki/30_Etudes,_Op.26_\(Farrenc,_Louise\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/30_Etudes,_Op.26_(Farrenc,_Louise)).

evenness is required to connect the third and first note of each group. The student should practice these triplet passages in different metric groups, such as playing three groups of four, instead of four groups of three.

Pour alterner également deux par deux avec chaque main.

All^o moderato.

N^o 20.

Example 20: Op. 50 No. 20 mm.1-2.⁵⁷

N^o 1.

All^o moderato. ♩ = 92.

Example 21: Op. 42 No. 1 mm.1-3.⁵⁸

N^o 12.

Mod^o ♩ = 80

Example 22: Op. 41 No. 12 mm.1-4.⁵⁹

Etude Op. 50 No. 4 (Example 23) and Op. 42 No. 18 (Example 24) use similar layering techniques. In Op. 50 No. 4, the pattern of two layers in one hand with broken

⁵⁷ Louise Farrenc, “No. 1,” *25 Etudes Progressives, Op. 50*. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1876), 22, [https://imslp.org/wiki/25_Etudes_faciles,_Op.50_\(Farrenc,_Louise\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/25_Etudes_faciles,_Op.50_(Farrenc,_Louise))

⁵⁸ Louise Farrenc, “No. 1,” *20 Etudes: De Genre et de Mekanisme pour Piano, Op.42*. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1876), 1, [https://imslp.org/wiki/20_Etudes_de_Moyenne_Difficult%C3%A9_pour_Piano,_Op.42_\(Farrenc,_Louise\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/20_Etudes_de_Moyenne_Difficult%C3%A9_pour_Piano,_Op.42_(Farrenc,_Louise)).

⁵⁹ Louise Farrenc, “No. 12,” *12 Etudes de dextérité, Op. 41*. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1876), 32, [https://imslp.org/wiki/12_Etudes_de_dext%C3%A9rit%C3%A9,_Op.41_\(Farrenc,_Louise\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/12_Etudes_de_dext%C3%A9rit%C3%A9,_Op.41_(Farrenc,_Louise)).

chords against a single note in the other hand is expanded in Op. 42 No. 18, with each hand playing two layers within broken chords. In addition, the key in Op. 50 No. 4 is in E minor, while the key of E major in Op. 42 No. 18 makes the fingering more difficult.



Example 23: Op. 50 No. 4 mm.1-4.⁶⁰



Example 24: Op. 42 No. 18 mm.1-6.⁶¹

These comparisons illuminate a clear progression in Farrenc's collections. Op. 50 primarily targets the development of fundamental finger independence and flexibility, serving as a valuable foundation for beginner pianists. Op. 42, Op. 41, and Op. 26 systematically introduce more technique and richer musical elements, demonstrating their suitability for intermediate and advanced students. The most difficult set Op. 26 is undoubtedly concert recital level repertoire.

⁶⁰ Louise Farrenc, "No. 4," *25 Etudes Progressives, Op. 50*. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1876), 5, [https://imslp.org/wiki/25_Etudes_faciles,_Op.50_\(Farrenc,_Louise\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/25_Etudes_faciles,_Op.50_(Farrenc,_Louise))

⁶¹ Louise Farrenc, "No. 1," *20 Etudes: De Genre et de Mekanisme pour Piano, Op.42*. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1876), 51, [https://imslp.org/wiki/20_Etudes_de_Moyenne_Difficult%C3%A9_pour_Piano,_Op.42_\(Farrenc,_Louise\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/20_Etudes_de_Moyenne_Difficult%C3%A9_pour_Piano,_Op.42_(Farrenc,_Louise)).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This research project explores the four sets of études by the underrepresented nineteenth-century female composer Louise Farrenc. These meticulously crafted pedagogical tools, born from Farrenc's extensive teaching experience, encompass various technical challenges and progressive difficulty levels. The combination of pedagogical and artistic aesthetic establishes Farrenc's études as a valuable asset within the realm of piano pedagogy, offering compelling supplements to the established repertoire. The value of these études is beginning to be recognized for their progressive difficulty levels. For example, Op. 50 No. 15 is featured in the Associated Board of the 2023-2024 Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) Grade Four examination and Op. 41, No. 5 appears in the Grade Eight examination. Compared with other études that are not progressive, each étude within an individual opus in Farrenc's four sets presents a similar difficulty level. By working through these sets, students can gradually progress from didactic finger techniques to études that combine finger techniques and musicality.

The nineteenth century's political, social and artistic landscape posed significant challenges for women composers, even if they were from the middle and upper classes. Susan McClary, feminist music critic, argues that the lack of a "traditional woman's voice" reflects the limitations imposed on women by societal expectations. They were historically confined to stereotypical representations, either "docile and passive or aggressively masculine", denying them the ability to express their individuality and

talents.⁶² For example, despite Fanny Mendelssohn being from the upper class, she faced significant societal barriers in publishing her compositions. In contrast, Louise Farrenc was from a similar background, but her access to her husband's publishing house offered a distinct advantage in bringing her works to the public. Farrenc's remarkable talent and virtuosity earned her the historic distinction of becoming the first female professor at the Paris Conservatoire. However, the deeply ingrained gender biases of the time remained firmly in place, where the administration preferred assigning students to her male colleagues. Additionally, some parents remained hesitant to entrust their children's musical education to a woman, further limiting her opportunities.⁶³ Documenting Farrenc's life and analyzing her pedagogical contributions further strengthen the recognition of her achievements. This research further establishes her position as a skilled composer and pedagogue, making her accomplishments all the more remarkable in light of the challenges she faced.

The genre of études was often considered didactic and lacked musicality before the nineteenth century but later underwent a significant transformation at the hands of composers including Cramer, Czerny, and Farrenc, who set a precedence for the virtuosic études of the late 1800s and imbued études with musical depth and sophistication. This elevation of the form's artistic appeal and increased virtuosity redefined the genre. Consequently, études offered students technical development and aesthetic satisfaction

⁶² Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002: 114.

⁶³ Bea Friedland, "Louise Farrenc 1804-1875: Composer, Performer, Scholar," 76.

and emerged as legitimate concert pieces. By providing a trace of the development of études and showcasing the alignment of Farrenc's études with the études composed by male composers, I challenge the historical marginalization of female composers like Farrenc, whose work deserves recognition alongside their recognized male contemporaries.

Through an overview of Farrenc's four sets of études, I summarized the technical focus of each of these well-crafted études, as well as provided practice instructions and advice based on my own teaching experience. For students working on the beginner-level set Op. 50, practicing dotted rhythms, note groupings, and repetitions will enhance fundamental fingering techniques, specifically finger independence. In the intermediate-level sets Op. 41 and Op. 42, students should prioritize the balance between melody and accompaniment and the balance of textural layers within each hand. This focus will address the increased textural and technical complexities of these études. As students progress to the advanced-level Op. 26, technique remains essential, but developing musicality and its interpretation should be emphasized. In addition, comparing these études side-by-side is valuable for teachers and students to develop a strategic approach to practicing and learning new repertoire as it equips educators with a deeper understanding of the pedagogical progression within Farrenc's work, enabling them to tailor their teaching strategies accordingly. Students, in turn, gain a more precise grasp of the evolving challenges and skills they encounter as they progress through the études. Ultimately, this comparative analysis further solidifies Farrenc's significant contributions to music pedagogy.

Beyond its pedagogical significance, this exploration of Louise Farrenc's études seeks to unveil the hidden treasure trove of women composers in the nineteenth century. Throughout history, societal constraints and prejudices severely limited the opportunities and recognition afforded to female composers. This resulted in underrepresentation and, tragically, the loss of a vast amount of their musical output. By bringing Louise Farrenc's work to light, I aim to illuminate the artistry and ingenuity of these overlooked talents. Farrenc's achievement as a composer, pianist, and pedagogue is a testament to her exceptional skills and dedication during this era. I believe that more profound research into the works of Farrenc and her female contemporaries will not only enrich our understanding of piano pedagogy but also compel a broader re-evaluation of nineteenth-century music history. A more inclusive exploration that acknowledges the contributions of these marginalized women composers is essential for a comprehensive and accurate portrayal of music's past.

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