« Leopold Godowsky’s Fifty-Three Studies on Chopin’s Études »

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of « Doctor of Musical Arts »

« Graduate Department of Music »
University of Toronto

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2017

Abstract

Leopold Godowsky (1870-1937) composed works that require pianistic fluency of an exceptional order, including fifty-three Studies based on twenty-six of Frédéric Chopin’s twenty-seven Études. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the significance of these Studies and to reveal the compositional techniques that Godowsky used to create them.

This dissertation consists of a foreword and seven chapters. The foreword describes the unique position that Godowsky’s Studies occupy in the piano literature and argues that they deserve further scholarly research. Chapter one discusses Godowsky’s life and the composition of the Studies, and it provides a review of relevant literature. Chapter two is divided into
two sections. The first section proposes five compositional techniques that are used to create the Studies: switch, condensation, superimposition/addition, reconstruction and merging. The second section examines Godowsky’s classification of the Studies into five categories: Strict Transcriptions, Free Transcriptions, Cantus Firmus Versions, Versions in Form of Variations and Metamorphoses. Chapters three, four and five are case studies of selected Studies, arranged by the compositional techniques presented in Chapter two. Chapter three deals with Studies that are composed using switch, superimposition/addition and merging technique. Chapter four analyzes Studies that are written using reconstruction and superimposition/addition technique; the two works examined in detail stand out as two-hand Studies where switch technique is not used. Chapter five focuses on the left-hand Studies, in which condensation technique is predominant. Chapter six explores the increased difficulty caused by the compositional techniques and offers solutions to overcome them. Chapter seven surveys critical reactions not only to the Studies but also to officially released recordings of them. The chapter then concludes the dissertation with a review of earlier chapters and by engaging Godowsky’s stated objectives in writing the Studies, which were not to promote empty virtuosity but to create a new kind of piano texture based on modern counterpoint and harmonic language.
Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Ryan McClelland, who supervised me with expertise in the research and writing process. I would also like to thank Dr. Midori Koga, who was closely involved as my committee member, for her insightful advices. Thanks also go to Professor Lydia Wong and Dr. Leslie Kinton who kindly agreed to be on my examination panel and devoted much time and effort.

My sincere appreciation and gratitude to Professor Marietta Orlov, who was not only my teacher since 2005 but also someone whose advice and opinion I could always trust.

I would also like to convey thanks to my parents, to whom I owe my happy childhood and the life thereafter. My sister Shirley also deserves my gratitude, who was always my best ally.

Lastly, I would like to thank my wife Andrea, without whose support, love and trust I could not have been where I am now. I love you.
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Foreword

From the first time Leopold Godowsky’s *Studies on Études of Frédéric Chopin* appeared in the concert hall performed by the composer himself in the last decade of the nineteenth century, they have been the object of much admiration from both common concertgoers and professional musicians, especially Godowsky’s fellow pianists. Unfortunately, because of the very nature of the *Studies*, in that they are works based on pre-existing works, there were also many who criticized them for daring to tamper with the original. They wondered what Godowsky was doing to a work of a genius when there was nothing to be added, especially when the talent of the arranger was considered to be one inferior to Chopin’s. The animosity was enough to discourage Godowsky from writing more *Studies* after 1914. But such a judgment is unfounded and unnecessary; Godowsky’s Fifty-three *Studies* are his new creations using Chopin’s *Études* as a starting point, and they deserve much more positive attention than they received in the past.

The *Studies* hold a unique position in the classical piano repertoire. Due to the nature of the *Studies*, Frédéric Chopin’s *Études* must be first mentioned before getting into Godowsky’s works. Chopin revolutionized piano technique
with his Études, published in two sets in 1833 and 1837. They were the first of the kind to gain an established place in the concert repertoire. Before his Études, piano studies as a genre were never considered to be a part of concert repertoire, nor were they always titled ‘studies’. For the musical education of his sons and pupils, Johann Sebastian Bach wrote many works for keyboard instruments including his two monumental books called the Well-Tempered Clavier, which were not originally intended to be performed in public. In 1738, Bach’s exact contemporary Domenico Scarlatti published an engraved volume of thirty sonatas titled Essercizi per Gravicembalo, which were the first of several hundred keyboard sonatas that followed. No one, including Chopin himself, thought of playing them in public until the twentieth century when pianists and audiences rediscovered his music. Carl Czerny was a celebrated pianist and pedagogue who was taught by Beethoven and who taught Franz Liszt. He published a large number of piano studies which were not intended to have much artistic value but were meant to enhance the learning experience of piano students at different levels.

Chopin’s Études were intended to be concert works from the beginning. Thanks to the flourishing of the new instrument and new concept of public concerts for the bourgeois class, they gained popularity immediately after their appearance and publication. Chopin himself played them quite often, and
with the new idea of playing other composers’ music, other pianists, most notably Franz Liszt, joined and played them in their concerts. The Études, in their structure, are relatively simple; most of them follow the A-B-A form. Each étude concentrates on one specific technique, just like Czerny’s studies. For example, Op. 25 No. 6 is the study for double thirds and Op. 25 No. 10 is for legato octaves. However, Chopin extended traditional keyboard technique and sometimes invented new ones. No pianist before him used the fingers as innovatively as Chopin did; a quick look at Op. 10 No. 2 is enough to prove that he was not bound by the prejudice that the weaker fingers cannot gain dexterity above a certain level. He truly revolutionized piano playing by opening a new dimension for future composers and made a whole set of new pianistic tools available for them.

Chopin discovered an expanded dimension for the capabilities of the right hand; Godowsky discovered one for the left hand. Since the death of J. S. Bach, composers simply did not treat both hands equally. Most often the right hand would take on the important melody when the left hand accompanied it. There were special techniques such as the famous ‘three hand effect’ by Thalberg and Liszt’s phenomenal octaves, but there was no real equality between the two hands. Even Chopin’s Études are not free from right-hand dominance. Op. 10 No. 12 focuses on left-hand dexterity, but it is still
not on the same level as the right hand in terms of technical demands and musical importance because the left hand remains as the accompaniment and as a tool to paint the canvas for the right-hand melody. In Op. 25 No. 7, the left hand does have the main musical material but the etude is more lyrical than virtuosic. However, there are many works by Godowsky in which the left hand is the dominant one, such as Study No. 36 which is a transcription of Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 6; in many others the two hands are treated at least equally and are given similarly important and demanding parts.

Godowsky composed more than one version of almost every Chopin étude: two for Op. 10 No. 1, two for Op. 10 No. 2, and so on. And Op. 10 No. 5, generally known as the ‘black key étude’ because in the original the right hand plays nothing but the black keys, has the most number of different versions – Godowsky wrote seven studies on this étude alone, not counting the Badinage Study where he combines Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 5 and Op. 25 No. 9. It is interesting to look into each version of this series of studies: the first one simply reverses the right and left hands in the original key of G flat major; the second version is transposed to C major and is appropriately titled ‘Study on the white keys’; the third, Tarantella, is in A minor; the fourth, Capriccio, is for both black and white keys where he adds additional voices and harmonies; the fifth and the sixth are the inversions for the left and right hand
respectively; the final version is for the left hand alone. It takes only one glimpse to discover how original the different versions are. Some versions, especially the *Tarantella* and the *Capriccio*, are hardly recognizable as an arrangement of the original *étude*, yet if one analyzes them carefully, one can clearly see that Godowsky never fails to follow the original structure. He groups the fifty-three *Studies* into five categories: Strict Transcriptions, Free Transcriptions, Cantus Firmus Versions, Versions in form of Variations and Metamorphoses. A detailed discussion of these categories will be provided in Chapter 2.

Although Godowsky had musical concerns at the top of his mind, he clearly was aware of the great originality of his left-hand pieces because he devotes to them an entire page of his preface to the complete volume of the *Studies*.¹ Godowsky was by no means the first composer to explore the territory; there are plenty of other examples, most notably Brahms, with his famous left-hand arrangement of the *Chaconne* by J. S. Bach. However there was none who extended the possibility of the left hand as Godowsky did, who

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basically elevated the left hand from a mere accompanying role to one that can play an entirely independent voice, or often, several voices. He writes:

> If it is possible to assign to the left hand alone the work done usually by both hands simultaneously, what vistas are opened to future composers, were this attainment to be extended[sic] to both hands!\(^2\)

There are twenty-two studies for the left hand alone in the set. Some are literal transcriptions of the original études on which they are based, but most fall in the free transcription category and are transposed to a different tonality perhaps to facilitate the execution. For example, the two C minor Études (Op. 10 No. 12 and Op. 25 No. 12) are both transposed to C sharp minor. Having the tonic on a black key facilitates leaps and passagework due to the easier access to the black keys from their raised location on the keyboard and wider spacing compared to the white keys. Some of the Studies are quite differently arranged, such as the second version of Op. 10 No. 1 where the original is hardly recognizable in the first half, but they never drift away too much from the original. The only version of the Study on Op. 10 No. 6 is a great achievement in this category; Godowsky basically adopts an impressionistic piano technique to paint the original with a whole new palette of colours. He replaces the original sixteenth notes with new and delicately placed thirty-

\(^2\) Ibid., 9.
second-note filigree. The result is a stunning range of colours hitherto unknown for a work for the left hand alone.

Whether one agrees with his aesthetics or not, it is safe to argue that Godowsky’s *Studies* are an interesting object for research. The following chapters of this dissertation will discuss Godowsky’s life, the genesis of the *Studies*, previous research and compositional technique, leading to analysis of select *Studies* and reactions towards them, both positive and negative.
Chapter 1: Godowsky’s Life, Composition of the *Studies* and Literature Review

**Biography**

Leopold Godowsky (1870-1938) was once known as the ‘Pianists’ Pianist’. Every musician knew him and his compositions were celebrated for their originality and revolutionary piano writing. But as of 2016, there is only one published biography, written by Jeremy Nicholas fifty years after the composer’s death. Some important details of his life can only be traced by unpublished letters and manuscripts, including his unfinished and unpublished autobiography titled *Retrospect*, of which only the first chapter is finished; Nicholas collected information from various sources and a considerable portion of his research is based on these documents. Other details are sporadically mentioned in other musicians’ writings, such as Arthur Rubinstein’s autobiographies. As a result of this lack of information, few know much about his life, and it is therefore valuable to begin with a summary of his life.

Godowsky was born in 1870 in a town called Sozly near Vilna, then in Poland but currently in Lithuania. Louis Passinock, a former pupil of Henryk
Wieniawski and Ferdinand David, taught the young Godowsky violin to the degree that he could play Mendelssohn’s *Violin Concerto in E minor*. But the boy taught piano to himself and eventually had to be excused from violin studies to pursue a serious career at the piano. After successful tours as a *Wunderkind*, a banker by the name Feinberg became concerned about the apparent abuse and decided to take matters into his hands. With his help Godowsky auditioned for the *Koenigliche Hochschule für Musik*, where he started studying with a Professor Schultze before quickly moving on to Ernst Rudorff. Systemized schooling was not for Godowsky and after only three months in the school he abandoned his studies to look for opportunities in the New World, sailing to the United States of America in 1884.

After an unfortunate tour with a violinist named Ovide Musin and a few other concerts in the USA, Godowsky returned to Europe to study with Franz Liszt in Weimar. Liszt died shortly after he arrived in France and Godowsky stayed there, where he became a protégé of Camille Saint-Saëns. It appears that the relationship was not that of teacher-pupil but more of a mentor-mentee relationship. Nicholas writes:

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4 Ibid., 15.
5 Ibid., 18.
Sundays were devoted entirely to themselves and their music. Godowsky arrived early and left late. With the exception of a mid-day meal and an afternoon walk, the whole day would be spent round the piano with Godowsky playing in the morning what he had prepared, Saint-Saëns sipping copious cups of breakfast chocolate the while, applauding or lending polite encouragement from his bed. This would be followed by a performance of whatever Godowsky had composed that week, which invariably received the same warm praise and suggestions for improving a passage here, a little phrase there. In the afternoon it would be the turn of Saint-Saëns to play from his scores: symphonies, chamber-music, overtures, ballets, operas, concertos – anything from his prodigious output that took his fancy.6

Eventually the mentor presented the mentee in a concert of *La Trompette*, a Parisian musical society of which the president was Saint-Saëns.7 After having played in salons in France and London, Godowsky went back to America in 1890. The following year, he married Frieda Saxe, whom he had known since his first stay in the country. He toured around North America and secured his American success both as performer and pedagogue. With this achievement behind him, he went back to Europe.

His Berlin debut in 1900 was a very important event in his life and the success of the concert sealed his fame as a performing artist. Godowsky wrote to his friend:

The Beethoven Hall was crowded with a representative musical audience. All Berlin pianists were at the concert. ...The success was greater than anything I have ever witnessed, not excepting a Paderewski enthusiasm. ...All are so

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6 Ibid., 23.  
7 Ibid., 24-25.
wonderful that I am told nobody ever got such notices. My success is the most sensational within the recollection of all musicians.  

Critics were unanimous in their praise and such was the success of the debut concert that Godowsky now became one of the leading musicians of the era. Engagements poured in and he was constantly hopping from one country to another. And it was not just the fame as a virtuoso that Godowsky enjoyed, having played at the Berlin recital some of his *Studies on Études of Frédéric Chopin*, he was now one of the prominent composers of the time as well. In fact, he had started composing when he was five years old. Once he was caught playing the piano when he was expected to be practicing the violin. When asked what he was playing, he merely replied that he was playing the piano, but he had composed a minuet with trio, a perfect canon, which he used later on in another composition twenty-three years later.  

From 1909 to 1914, Godowsky was the Imperial Royal Professor of the *Klaviermeisterschule* of the *Akademie der Tonkunst* in Vienna. Heinrich Neuhaus, the famous pianist-pedagogue who taught Sviatoslav Richter and Emil Gilels, was among his pupils. Godowsky’s home in Vienna, as before and  

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8 Ibid., 49-50.
9 Ibid., 5. The identity of this composition is unknown.
after, was the meeting place of all the important musicians and people. Arthur Rubinstein, who was a frequent guest, writes:

The Godowsky household became our second home. The great master loved to play his recent compositions for us in his inimitable way, handling their hair-raising difficulties with nonchalance. His wife, a lively brunette, treated us like close family, and so did their four children, two boys and two girls, all still teenagers. The younger daughter, Dagmar, was quite beautiful. ...She liked to tell about her “friendship” with Franz Lehár, the famous composer of operettas, and with Josef Hofmann, the great pianist, whom she called “Uncle Franz and Uncle Josef.”

On top of his already demanding schedule as a travelling virtuoso on two continents and as a master teacher, Godowsky was quite devoted to editorial works as well. The Art Publication Society of St. Louis successfully persuaded him to become editor-in-chief of a series of progressive piano lessons. He maintained the relationship until the late 1920s. But the political circumstances right before the First World War forced him to leave Vienna in a hurry. He sailed back to America, which was to be his home for the rest of his life.

Godowsky’s life now was more stable than before, although he was busier than ever with the multiple roles of father and husband, performer, composer and editor. He was on tour of the Far East in 1922 and 1923, and

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11 Nicholas, 82.
in 1925 he was touring North Africa and Europe. This did not stop Godowsky from producing many original works and transcriptions, so the fifth decade of Godowsky’s life can only be described as hectic and fruitful. In 1929 he and his family were hit hard by the Wall Street Crash. He had never been poor, and the financial loss was never to be recovered.

In 1930 Godowsky suffered a stroke while recording a Chopin Scherzo in London, England. Then and there his performing career was over. He could eventually resume normal lifestyle, but the dexterity of the right hand never came back despite extensive cures he sought out. In 1932 his son Gordon committed suicide in extreme poverty; in 1933 his wife Frieda suffered a fatal heart attack. Disappointed and broken, he concentrated on editing his previous works and teaching. The situation in Europe could not have been more depressing in the 1930s, and the last two years of his life were dedicated to attempts in helping mankind through music. He drew up plans for ‘The World Synod of Music and Musicians’ and an ‘International Council of Music and Musicians’. In 1938, during an operation for stomach cancer, he died. He was buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, Long Island, New York.13

12 Ibid., 160.
13 Ibid., 161.
Composition of the *Studies*

It was in 1894, more than half a century after Chopin composed his Études, that Godowsky did an experiment on Chopin’s famous etude for double thirds. It was to be the beginning of all the Studies. He recollects:

I had been practising at that time the Double-Thirds Étude of Chopin. [Op. 25 No. 6] In trying to divert my thoughts so that I would not brood over this tragic event [a train accident near Battle Creek, Michigan, which killed his brother-in-law and his wife], I concentrated on evolving a more practical fingering for the double-notes of this Étude. After numerous experiments, I succeeded in finding an entirely new succession of fingers which appeared to me most practical. I then transposed the Study to the left hand to see whether the same fingering could be applied to it; to my great surprise I found that the left hand was more amenable than the right to my experiments. Once I realized that fact, I experimented with other Études which had special mechanical problems as their object. Thus I transcribed the Black-Key Study, the Study in Sixths, the Study in Wide Arpeggios (Op. 10 No. 1), etc., etc. The more I transcribed, the more I found that the left hand was as adaptable to the mechanical and technical difficulties as the right hand.\(^\text{14}\)

In fact, Godowsky was not the first pianist to think of transcribing works of Chopin. Composers who had their own ideas to add to Chopin’s Études include Johannes Brahms, Rudolf Bial, Carlyle Petersilea, Rafael Joseffy, Max Reger, Adolf Henselt, Gustav Leo, Friedrich Wührer, Georges Mathias and Géza Zichy.\(^\text{15}\) Of such works, Isidor Philipp’s Second Study of his Concert


Studies after Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 6 deserves to be quoted here owing to its similarity to Godowsky’s famous experiment:

Ex. 1-1 Isidor Philipp’s take on Chopin, Étude Op. 25 No. 6

Compare Philipp’s version with Godowsky’s, which is the fruition of the aforementioned experiment:
The similarity is striking. Nevertheless Godowsky’s imagination and artistic rather than mechanical intentions set him apart from Philipp and those mentioned above. Philipp’s effort is a simple switch of two hands of which the focus is to develop the fluency of the left-hand thirds; he never deviates much from Chopin’s writing. Godowsky’s reworking of the same Chopin étude commences at the same point as Philipp’s, but Godowsky’s version is much more interesting, colourful and richer in texture because of different registers which he explores in both hands and occasionally doubled lines.

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16 This will be discussed in detail in the following chapters of my dissertation.
Millan Sachania, a British music scholar, correctly admits that the construction of “a chronology of the composition of the Studies is problematic,”\(^\text{17}\) due to the lack of surviving manuscripts or other records in many cases. However, one can sort them into three broad phases according to their characters and publication dates. Most of the strict transcriptions came in the first phase (before or in 1899); the second phase is between 1900 and 1903, which saw the production of many cantus firmus versions as well as the metamorphoses. The third and last period (1909-1914) is responsible for the majority of the works for the left hand alone.\(^\text{18}\)

It appears that more Studies other than the fifty-three published Studies could have existed according to Leonard Saxe, including the one based on Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 7 for the left hand alone, but no one knows the whereabouts of these unpublished studies or even whether they were written in the first place.\(^\text{19}\) It is possible that at least some of them could have been composed but the manuscript was destroyed during Godowsky’s frequent moves between continents or after his death. No record with either

\(^{17}\) Sachania, Ph. D. diss., 35.
indication has been found, and the result is the current list of fifty-three published *Studies*.

**Literature Review**

There are only a limited number of academic studies on Godowsky's works, and still fewer exclusively on his complete *Studies on Chopin's Études*. In fact, there is only one such work: a 1975 DMA dissertation by James McKeever. If one expands the search criteria, there is Millan Sachania's substantial dissertation on all of Godowsky's arrangements; he gives us great insight to the *Studies* in the two of the thirteen chapters in which they are discussed. Gregory Scott Taylor wrote a brief lecture-recital paper on the seven *Studies* based on Chopin's Op. 10 No. 5. However, it is more a performance guide rather than academic research, and it will not be discussed further below. Other than the three mentioned above, Godowsky's name only appears as a small part of a discussion of transcriptions and

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21 Sachania, Ph. D. diss.
22 Gregory Scott Taylor, “The Eight Transcriptions of Chopin's "Black Key" Etude Op 10 No 5 by Leopold Godowsky” (Lecture recital essay, University of Miami, 2010).
arrangements by other composers, and the discussion of the *Studies* does not appear in any meaningful portion.

McKeever’s work is valuable in that it gives an overview of all of the *Studies* and clarifies Godowsky’s categorization of them. It also devotes a chapter to Godowsky’s reasons for creating the *Studies*. In addition, many elements such as structure, composition and transcription technique and character of pieces are examined and explained. By studying McKeever’s dissertation, one gets a fairly clear picture of what the *Studies* are and of the way they were assembled over the years. McKeever also does justice to a very interesting and important part of the set: studies for the left hand alone. The two appendixes are also valuable. The first appendix is the table of basic information of all the *Studies*; the second appendix provides a thematic index of Chopin’s original and Godowsky’s versions sorted in the order of Chopin’s originals.  

The biggest limitation with McKeever’s dissertation is that it does not appear to be informed by knowledge gleaned from playing or practicing the *Studies*. As a result, Chapter 7 (*Technical and Performance Aspects of the*)  

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23 McKeever, 73-79.
24 Ibid., 80-94.
Studies) suffers as a weak link in this otherwise informative dissertation. In
this chapter, McKeever’s attitude towards the Studies is nothing but
practical; he often treats them just as any mechanical drill like a Hanon
exercise, and ignores the complicated and beautiful elements of Godowsky’s
counterpoint play. He makes perplexing comments, such as:

I have selected a number of studies which I believe to be of particularly great
benefit in developing technique. They do not need to be practiced in their
entirety to be effective, and some can be used for the left hand or right hand
alone.\textsuperscript{25} ... For efficient practice, it is only necessary to learn one page of the
study. ...the first section of this study can be practiced simultaneously with
the right hand of the corresponding Chopin etude, thus doubling the benefit.
[on using Study No. 3]\textsuperscript{26}

It is true that Study No. 3\textsuperscript{27} is a strict transcription of the original according
to Godowsky himself and perhaps not the most innovative in terms of
compositional technique except for a few interesting harmonic progressions
and jumps in the middle section. But it is quite absurd to treat it just as a
vehicle designed to enhance one’s mechanical facility at the keyboard. It is
important to remember that Godowsky went through the trouble of
providing us with prerequisite drills in the pages preceding the Studies when
he felt such mechanical preparations were needed. Also, the true difficulty of
this Study does not reveal itself until one has to develop the stamina that is

\begin{footnotes}
\item[25] Ibid., 63.
\item[26] Ibid., 66.
\item[27] Godowsky’s first version of Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 2 for the left hand alone.
\end{footnotes}
required for this particular kind of technique, with so much work on the weak fingers without any break. McKeever does not stop there:

No. 12 has an inversion of the figuration in the left hand, resulting in two-against-three rhythms. This study is excellent for technical practice as well as rhythmic coordination.28

It is wise to avoid most of Godowsky’s works if a pianist struggles with a simple two-against-three rhythm.29 Lastly, it is statements such as the following which suggest that McKeever may not have had an extensive experience with performing the Studies, if any:

No. 22, a transcription of the "Revolutionary Etude," is a good study in arpeggio figuration. It is in the key of C-sharp minor (requiring the use of the thumb on black keys), and once mastered in this key it will facilitate the playing of the original in C minor.30

Study No. 22 is not merely a good study in arpeggio figuration. First of all, it demands tremendous endurance to simply get through the piece due to many big and hazardous leaps; secondly, the need of clear counterpoint playing requires an active participation of the weaker fingers. Lastly, the subtlety of pedalling that enables the execution of different layers in different registers is an entirely other issue that has to be dealt with

28 McKeever, 67.
29 McKeever’s argument could have been stronger if he had mentioned Study No. 45, which is a study of very complex rhythmic patterns.
30 McKeever, 68.
And Godowsky had a very good reason to transpose the whole thing one half-step up, contrary to McKeever’s opinion: it would have been a veritable test of accuracy to execute the jumps since the tonic and the dominant notes fall on the white keys in C minor. For most pianists, it is considerably easier to jump to and land on a black key than on a white key, due to the physical design of piano keys. Perhaps McKeever’s logic is based on the traditional method of practicing difficult works a half tone higher\(^{32}\) to challenge the pianist’s brain and fingers, but in this case transposition facilitates the execution of this Study rather than the other way around.

Currently, the most sizeable and important work on the Studies is the first two chapters of Millan Sachania’s Ph. D dissertation, *The arrangements of Leopold Godowsky: an aesthetic, historical, and analytical study*. This dissertation misses no work by Godowsky in the genre it discusses, and Sachania succeeds in organizing, analyzing and evaluating Godowsky’s compositions that are arrangements of other composers’ works. Sachania begins by discussing the context, genesis and chronology of the Studies in his Chapter 1. First he discusses the context from which Godowsky’s works appeared; by mentioning the works by Johannes Brahms, Rafael Joseffy,

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\(^{31}\) Such challenges will be discussed in depth in Chapter 6 of my dissertation.

\(^{32}\) For example, transposing Chopin’s ‘Black Key’ etude into G major or the Op. 10 No. 1 into D flat major.
Isidor Phillip, Max Reger, Moriz Rosenthal, Guiseppe Ferrata and Josef Hofmann, he correctly argues that reworking of Chopin’s *Études* or other works was no novelty by the time Godowsky’s *Studies* appeared, and that the least original concept of all was the works for the left hand alone. But Sachania quickly credits Godowsky, since his *Studies* “diverge from the tradition. They fight shy of cosmetic doubled figurations, such as those that hold rein in Brahms’s study…” and he argues:

Godowsky’s *Studies* stand aloof [among other works based on pre-existing compositions by Chopin], not only by virtue of the unprecedented scale of the project which gave rise to them and the systematic activity by which it was completed, but also owing to their force of personality and vitality, qualities which elude many earlier or contemporary Chopin arrangements.

In the same chapter, Sachania discusses the genesis of the *Studies*. First he points out that while it was a technical impulse that motivated the *Studies*, Godowsky always emphasized the difference between “mechanical, technical and musical possibilities” of his works. He continues with a discussion of their privileged position and positive response from the audience during the earlier stage of the composer’s performing career before moving on to the chronology of their composition. He organizes and discusses the publication dates and the catalogues that were made available by the publishers of the *Studies* to come, although the completed list is not

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33 Sachania, Ph. D. diss., 32.
34 Ibid., 32.
35 Godowsky, 5. Quoted in Sachania, 32.
necessarily faithful to the publishers’ announcements. Lastly, Sachania concludes that the production of the *Studies* came in three different phases, as discussed earlier in the current chapter of this dissertation. He finishes his first chapter with a discussion and speculation about the unpublished *Studies*, a few of which apparently existed in manuscript form.

Chapter 2 unfolds Sachania’s observations and analysis of the construction of the *Studies* in five sections plus a conclusion: General Characteristics, Structure, Harmony and Counterpoint, Transpositions and Three Case-Studies. In General Characteristics, he points out that the cantus firmus technique, the term Godowsky himself used, is indeed the main method with which many of the *Studies* are constructed:

Godowsky fights shy of expanding Chopin’s texts laterally; his strategies are unlike those guiding the *Fantasia contrappuntistica* (1910-12) or *Sonatina brevis ‘in signo Joannis Sebastiani magni’* (1919)...Godowsky rarely expands Chopin’s etudes by interpolating into them derivative passages that unfold more fully or digress from a musical argument. Rather, he tends to build onto Chopin’s etudes. ...To risk some comparisons, lateral expansion holds an affinity with the way a sixteenth-century parody mass treats the seminal motet, whereas Godowsky’s vertically oriented technique compares to the workings of a cyclic mass, in that it calls upon Chopin’s etudes to assume the properties of *canti firmi* – albeit non-monophonic ones.
In the Structure section that follows, Sachania mentions that Godowsky’s structural modification of Chopin’s *Études* is based on three techniques: compressions, excisions and expansions. Sachania borrows two of Ernst Kurth’s terms to explain Godowsky’s harmonic language in the Studies in the Harmony and Counterpoint section. The first is the “chromatic modification of chord tones” and the second is the “neighbor-note insertion”:

Neighbor-note insertion is not based on creating a leading tone that chromatically modifies a chord tone but rather on creating an (upper or lower) neighbor note that strives toward a chord tone and is forced into the chord as a foreign tone... Neighbor-note insertion is thus the interpolation of foreign tones that strive into the chord, just as the chromatically altered tones of the first variety strive out of the chord.

Sachania provides the reader with a very detailed discussion of Godowsky’s harmonies and their chromatic nature, while jumping from one Study to the other to present examples of the arguments. Later in the same section, Sachania discusses the counterpoint, most of which “inevitably have profound contrapuntal implications.” To conclude the section, he observes that Godowsky often recycles Chopin’s materials to construct the contrapuntal writing.

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39 Ibid., 55-60.
40 Ernst Kurth, *Selected Writings* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 111.
41 Ibid., 111-112.
42 Sachania, Ph. D. diss., 66.
43 Ibid., 68-73.
Transpositions occupy the next section of the chapter. Sachania observes that when *Studies* for the left hand alone are transposed it is usually to a key with functional notes that fall on black keys. For the two-handed *Studies*, he convincingly argues that some of them are transposed from the original to their assigned keys to meet the “key association” to the genres Godowsky arranges them into. However, Sachania erroneously cites *Study* No. 15 in G flat major, *Nocturne*; Chopin wrote no nocturne in G flat major. His argument would have been strengthened had he cited No. 34 in C sharp minor, *Mazurka*, since Chopin did write a number of *Mazurkas* in C sharp minor. In the end, Sachania admits that the reason for the change of keys in most of the *Studies*, especially the ones for both hands, is mere speculation, and concludes:

...whatever the motivations behind the change of key...it is undeniable that by setting an arrangement in a different key from the étude it treats, Godowsky distances his reworking from the original. ...In the final analysis, this factor, albeit in combination with others, might well have been the most decisive in prompting the changes of key in the two-hand *Studien*.  

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44 Ibid., 77.  
45 Chopin’s *Nocturne* Op. 15 No. 2 is in F sharp major, but it is difficult to argue that Chopin felt the same sentiment for G flat major and F sharp major. It also does not explain why Godowsky, extremely knowledgeable of Chopin’s works without doubt, did not choose the identical F sharp major and decided to write his *Nocturne Study* in G flat major.  
46 Sachania, Ph. D. diss., 77-78.
Three Case-Studies on the *Studies* Nos. 32, 12 and 27 follow, in which Sachania supports his previous arguments with concrete examples.\(^{47}\) The analysis is divided into two sections: Sachania examines *Study* No. 32, which “regards the original étude in a polonaise fitting” first; *Studies* Nos. 12 and 27 follow, which are “two arrangements which intervallically invert aspects of the originals”.\(^{48}\) In the first analysis, Sachania addresses two methods that Godowsky used to convert the original into a polonaise, which are to endow the original with the stylistic features and to allude to specific passages from Chopin, notably his *Polonaise* Op. 44 in F sharp minor.\(^{49}\) The second analysis points out Godowsky’s diverse inversion techniques in the two examples that are employed to suit the character and harmonic requirements. In general, Sachania’s analysis focuses on motivic devices and the harmonic language of Godowsky. The Conclusion of this chapter claims that Godowsky adopted two independent policies towards Chopin’s texts:

> In the first place, they expand the role of the left hand. And secondly, they select various facets of the originals with a view to amplifying them...Primarily, the *Studien* enlarge on the études’ technical challenges.\(^{50}\)

\(^{47}\) Ibid., 78-88.  
\(^{48}\) Ibid., 78.  
\(^{49}\) Ibid., 79.  
\(^{50}\) Ibid., 88.
There are two obvious virtues of Sachania’s dissertation. First, he presents a genesis and a chronology of the *Studies* with the depth that had not been reached by other scholars. Secondly, Sachania’s methods and logic in analyzing the *Studies* from the point of view of observation of Godowsky’s harmonic language and structural modification are revealing and convincing. It is difficult to find an argument that invites a serious criticism in terms of its methodology and content in Sachania’s dissertation including the first two chapters about Godowsky’s *Studies*. However, Sachania does leave possibilities open for enhancements and amendments owing to the nature of his research which covers a broader subject than Godowsky’s *Studies*. The dissertation makes observations but does not provide the author’s opinion except for a few instances; the scope that the two chapters discuss desires an expansion. Another possibility that Sachania does not explore is an analysis based on pianistic and contextual juxtaposition of Chopin *Études* and Godowsky *Studies*. The following chapters of my dissertation will focus on these elements.
Chapter 2: Five Compositional Techniques and Godowsky’s categorization of the Studies

Compositional Techniques

A first glance of most of Godowsky’s Studies is often overwhelming owing to their complexity of texture and technical demands. However, I have discovered that there are five main techniques that I propose to use as a way of categorizing Godowsky’s Studies:

- Switch
- Condensation
- Superimposition/addition
- Reconstruction
- Merging

1. Switch. In a possible twenty-nine Studies (excluding twenty-two Studies for the left hand alone and Nos. 47 and 48 which are the two combination Studies from the complete set of fifty-three), Godowsky switches the left
and right hands in twenty of them. The Study No. 36, which was the first to be composed of the set, is a good example as shown in Ex. 2-1.

Ex. 2-1 Comparison between Chopin, Étude Op. 25 No. 6, mm. 1-2 and Godowsky, Study No. 36, mm. 1-2

2. Condensation. This technique is mainly used for Studies for the left hand alone, but many Studies for both hands are written with a condensed version of the original Chopin etude. The left-hand studies clearly require a considerable rewriting of Chopin’s original which are all for both hands, and Godowsky often omits accompanying patterns, replaces thick chords with

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51 Switch does not occur in the Studies Nos. 12, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34, 45 and 46. In the beginning of Study No. 18, of which the original is Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 9, the left hand plays the right hand pattern of Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 2 but Godowsky keeps the right hand of the Op. 10 No. 9 intact. The two hands frequently change roles throughout the Study. In Study No. 28, the right hand follows the left in a loose canon form; in Studies nos. 45 and 46, the right hand theme of the original appears in different voices in different variations.
single notes or places multiple voices in the same register of the keyboard whereas they are far apart in the original. His goal is to maintain the motion of the original. Below is a comparison of Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 4 and Godowsky’s *Study* No. 6:

Ex. 2-2 Comparison between Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 4, mm. 1-4 and Godowsky, Study No. 6, mm. 1-4

In the example above, four of the compositional devices Godowsky employs to condense the original are apparent. First, Godowsky makes the main line one octave lower to reduce the distance between voices realistic without unnecessary arpeggio; second, the left hand chords in bars 1 and 2 are reduced to single notes to provide the minimum means to establish the harmonies; third, Godowsky replaces harmonic notes in bar 3 of Chopin’s
original to meet the limitations of one hand playing; lastly, in bar 4, Godowsky rapidly leaps from one register to another to compensate for the lack of range so far.

3. Superimposition and addition. Cantus firmus Studies are constructed based on this technique by their definition: Godowsky places the right hand line of the Chopin Etude in the left hand of his Study as a fixed line upon which he builds his works, as in Ex. 2-3:

Ex. 2-3 Godowsky, Study No. 10, mm. 1

Study No. 10 is the fourth version of Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 5; the fixed line, while it is transposed from G flat major to A major and is moved two octaves lower, exactly follows the right hand of Chopin’s right hand otherwise.
In other Studies, Godowsky frequently stacks voices up on existing lines, especially when they are repeated. See Study No. 16, based on Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 8, for an example of this technique:

Ex. 2-4 Godowsky, Study No. 16, mm. 1-2 and mm. 17-18

In bars 17-18, Godowsky inserts a new line in the right hand when the main theme repeats itself. He gives the new melody a similar character to the fast passage; it adds to the brilliant character of the Study.

4. Reconstruction. Godowsky utilizes materials from the original to create a completely new work. The two Metamorphoses Studies are the obvious examples but they are by no means the only works in which this technique is
used. *Study* No. 27 (Waltz), based on Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 2, is one such example. See Ex. 2-5a:

Ex. 2-5a Godowsky, *Study* no. 27, mm. 1-6

Godowsky clarifies that the left-hand part of his *Study* is “an approximate inversion of the right hand of the original etude.” It is also easily grasped that the right hand melody is derived from the skeleton of the right hand part of Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 2, as circled in Ex. 2-5b:

Ex. 2-5b Chopin, *Étude* Op. 25 No. 2, mm. 1-2

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52 Godowsky, 195.
As shown in Ex. 2-5a and 2-5b, Godowsky reconstructs Chopin’s etude into a work that has a completely different character from the original.

5. Merging. Godowsky merges two different materials into a single work. The two ‘combination’ studies and *Study* No. 18 are the obvious examples. Merging also happens in other *Studies* where Godowsky quotes an earlier material in a later section to create a sense of unity and polyphony. See Ex. 2-6a, an excerpt from *Study* No. 34:

Ex. 2-6a Godowsky, *Study* No. 34, mm. 45-49

The upper circled voice is the theme of the trio section of the original *Étude*, whereas the lower circled voice is the opening motive of the *Study*. Ex. 2-6b shows the two materials by Chopin that Godowsky used here.
Ex. 2-6b Chopin, *Étude* Op. 25 No. 5 mm. 45-46 and mm. 1; two materials used to construct Ex. 2-6a

Despite their complicated and often dense writing, the fifty-three *Studies* show characteristics of one or more of the five techniques mentioned above. And these techniques are where Godowsky differs the most from the other composers who wrote transcriptions, arrangements and other works based on existing compositions. Among them, Ferruccio Busoni’s name is often mentioned as a prominent arranger of J. S. Bach’s music for the modern piano; it is said that Busoni, a contemporary of Godowsky’s, “…had no...qualms about changing the original work...The range of Busoni’s alterations of his own and other composers’ works extends from minor interpretive choices and fairly literal transcriptions of pieces for different instruments, and the rearrangement of works for the same instrument, to quotation or parody of other composers’ works in his own compositions and the creation of multiple versions of pieces.”\(^{53}\) One of his most known works in the genre is the solo piano arrangement of Bach’s *Chaconne*; the task of

\(^{53}\) Knyt, 241-242.
rewriting a work for solo violin in the Baroque era for a grand piano designed for modern concert halls not only challenges the composer/arranger but also opens many possibilities. Busoni took advantage of such possibilities to enhance the sonority and effect. Ex. 2-7a and 2-7b serve as a good example of Busoni’s reworking:

Ex. 2-7a J. S. Bach, *Chaconne*, mm. 81-82

Ex. 2-7b Busoni’s arrangement of J. S. Bach, *Chaconne*, mm. 81-82

In a way, Busoni’s work is similar to Godowsky’s in that Busoni fortifies and enhances the harmonic language of the original and does not hesitate to add new lines when they are deemed necessary. They also share the point of view that they do not regard their transcriptions as a vehicle to demonstrate their digital facility. But there are few if any occasions where he goes
further; Busoni never alters the original to the degree that Godowsky did, nor uses the original composition as a starting point for a new work. As one sees in his transcriptions of other works such as Bach’s organ works, Busoni modifies the writing mainly to adapt to the new instrument, not to introduce new compositional ideas; in other words, he stays largely in the realm of transcription.

Categorization of the Studies

Godowsky sorts his fifty-three Studies into five categories of his own. He provides brief descriptions and the list of the corresponding categories.54

1. Strict Transcriptions – studies in which the text of the original is as closely followed as an adaptation for the left hand would allow: Studies Nos. 1, 3, 7, 14, 36, 39, 43.

Of the seven Studies in this category, Nos. 3, 7, 36 and 39 are simple enough; one line closely follows the right hand of the original, while the other voices play freely composed material based on the less busy parts of

54 Godowsky, 10.
the original. The other three *Studies* need an explanation to be justified to be labelled as strict transcriptions. At first glance, *Study* No. 1 is rather different from the original it is based on (Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 1) due to a different time signature and much more dense writing. But a closer look reveals that the right hand merely mirrors the left hand and the 3/4 time signature is simply a necessity due to the limited range of the keyboard. Despite the fact that the left hand of *Study* No. 14 (first version of Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 7), which is the equivalent of the right hand of the original, has the repeated notes in the top voice rather than in the bottom, the underlying melody is identical to Chopin’s original and the architectural structure is not modified at all. *Study* No. 43, the only version of Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 12, is for the left hand alone and is the only one in this category where the tonality is changed. The new key is C sharp minor as opposed to the original C minor; the writing is much more condensed than in the original for obvious reasons of transcribing a two-handed piece into one for the left hand alone, but the structure and harmonic language remain the same. While this category is named *Strict Transcription* and there is no reason to say otherwise, in a few of the studies Godowsky still enjoyed a minimum amount of compositional freedom necessitated by the very process of switching the two hands. Therefore, the right hand of the original, or the upper voice in cases of works for the left hand alone, mirrors the left hand (No. 1), has a
different articulation and a character (No. 3), doubled in octaves (No. 14) or condensed into inner voice (No. 43).

2. **Free Transcriptions** – studies in which the text is either a) freely treated, b) inverted, c) combined with another study, d) is being imitated through the medium of another study

    This category has the most number of the *Studies* of all, and Godowsky divides it into four subsections.\(^{55}\) It is also not a coincidence that nineteen of the twenty-two studies for the left hand alone are sorted into subcategory a;\(^{56}\) condensing two hands into one would inevitably require a considerable amount of freedom on the composer’s part.

    Two things in this category seem to be an error on Godowsky’s part. First, Godowsky indicates that the *Study* No. 18 belongs to subcategory a, while he clearly indicates in the comment on the first page of the *Study* that it is an imitation of Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 2; No. 17 is in subcategory d instead, and this is erroneous. Therefore, No. 17 and No. 18 should switch places. Secondly, the inclusion of *Study* No. 30 in subcategory c makes little sense; it is based on Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 3, and in this study for the left hand alone, there is no trace of any other etude. Considering the free

\(^{55}\) a – twenty-four; b – four; c – two and d – one. Thirty-one of the fifty-three *Studies* in total in this category alone.

\(^{56}\) Of the three that are not in this category, two (Nos. 3 and 43) are in the Strict Transcription category and one is in a form of variations (No. 31).
treatment of the middle section and the lack of any inversion, imitation, cantus firmus or variation technique, this should be removed from section c and sorted under section a.

**Subcategory a** (freely treated): Studies Nos. 2, 5, 6, 12a, 13, 15a, 16a, 17, 18a, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 28, 28a, 30, 33, 35, 40, 41, 42, 44, 45a.

Godowsky employs various tools in this section. He adds additional voices in some of the studies (Nos. 15a, 20, 21, 28, 33, 42), or mirrors the left hand in the right (Nos. 24, 33). Still others are given a completely new character by Godowsky using different dynamics, meters and figurations (Nos. 2, 13, 16a, 17, 18a, 41). For most of the studies for the left hand alone, he condenses the contents of the original Chopin Étude and plays with different registrations (No. 5, 6, 12a, 22, 23, 28a, 35, 40, 44, 45a). However, Godowsky rarely limits himself to just one tool for one study, and it is impossible to come up with a clearer categorization than ‘free treatment’ for the Studies in this subsection.

**Subcategory b** (inverted): Studies Nos. 11, 12, 16, 27. In the four Studies in this subcategory, the right-hand parts of the original etudes are inverted. Studies Nos. 11 and 12 are strict inversions, whereas the inversions are approximate in Nos. 16 and 27. The treatment of the original left-hand parts varies in that the non-inverted hand (right hand in No. 11 and left hand in
No. 12) play an accompanying role and freely composed lines; in No. 16 the right hand mirrors the left hand or plays free melodies except in the beginning. In Study No. 27, which Godowsky categorizes also under “Metamorphoses”, the original character is completely changed into a waltz and while the left hand plays a loose inversion of the original, the right hand plays a skeleton of the original melody in a distinctive waltz rhythm, creating a character of the dance.

**Subcategory c** (combined with another study): Studies Nos. 47, 48. This category is self-explanatory. In each of the two Studies in this category, Godowsky combines two Chopin etudes: Op. 10 No. 5 plus Op. 25 No. 9 (Study No. 47) and Op. 10 No. 11 plus Op. 25 No. 3 (Study No. 48).

**Subcategory d** (imitated through the medium of another study): Study No. 18. In the only Study in this section, one hand plays a new melody that follows the same harmonic scheme as in Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 9 while the other hand is given a loose imitation of Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 2; the hands switch roles frequently. Sachania denies the relation between the triplet parts of this Study and Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 2 on the grounds that “Godowsky actually grafts the melody of Op. 10/9 onto the right-hand figuration of Op. 25/2”. While Sachania’s argument is valuable, there is

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57 In Study No. 11 Godowsky keeps the two hands switched, but the switch does not occur in Study No. 12.
58 Sachania, Ph. D. diss., 69.
also no reason not to consider the figuration in question as an imitation of Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 2. As shown in Ex. 2-8, the similarity of the first six notes of both works is easily grasped:

Ex. 2-8 Comparison between the first six notes of Chopin, Étude Op. 25 No. 2 and Godowsky, Study No. 18

One could also argue that this is a loose combination of the two Chopin études (Op. 10 No. 9 and Op. 25 No. 2), since they are clearly identifiable in this Study.

3. Cantus Firmus Versions – studies in which the text of the original study in the right hand is strictly adhered to in the left hand of the version while the right hand is freely treated in a contrapuntal way: Studies Nos. 4, 8, 9, 10, 15, 25, 26, 38
There is a very thin line between the two-hand versions in Strict Transcription category and the Cantus Firmus Versions, because the left hand remains the same as in the original in both categories. The deciding factor is the degree of freedom Godowsky gives to the right hand. One could argue that the right hand of Study No. 1 is treated freely as well, but a careful look proves that it is a mere mirroring of the left hand. As the name implies, the left hand of the Studies in this category is a faithful copy of the right hand of the original Chopin etude, serving the role of a cantus firmus. The freely written right-hand parts have different rhythm and character in Studies Nos. 4, 10, 15, 26, 38 or the same rhythm as the left hand in the others (Nos. 8, 9, 25).

4. Versions in form of Variations – studies in which the text of the original etude is used as a basis for free variations: Studies Nos. 19, 29, 31, 45, 46

In the five Studies in this category, three that are based on etudes in Op. 10 or Op. 25 (Nos. 19, 29, 31) are constructed without altering the structure of the original Chopin etude. Godowsky seemed to have had no need to modify the architecture, considering the innate repetitions in the original etudes. Godowsky heavily modifies the structure of two of Chopin’s Trois Nouvelles
Études, which are in a simple ternary form, to create his extensive variations (Studies Nos. 45, 46).

5. Metamorphoses – studies in which the character, design and rhythm of the original text are altered while the architectural structure remains intact although the melodic and harmonic outline is often considerably modified: Studies Nos. 32, 34.

Only two Studies are in this category, even though Godowsky writes that sixteen others may be also mentioned under this category in the auxiliary list.\(^{59}\) Strangely, Godowsky’s claim that the architectural structure is the same as the original is false; in both Studies No. 32 and No. 34, the structure of the corresponding Chopin etude is heavily modified. Godowsky introduces an extended ternary form in Study No. 32 to make the Polonaise; in Study No. 34, Godowsky inserts repetitions where Chopin omitted them.\(^{60}\) The reason for this confusion is unclear. Perhaps it is what he meant to say in regards to the Studies in the auxiliary list, in which the statement is true.

\(^{59}\) Studies Nos. 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 18a, 19, 25, 27, 38 and 46.

\(^{60}\) Study No. 34 will be analyzed closely in Chapter 4.
Godowsky’s categorization is not something to be taken too rigidly; it is easily deduced from Godowsky’s flexibility and a false claim in the Metamorphoses category that the composer himself was not always certain about how to sort them into strict genres. Another reason for Godowsky’s apparent difficulty and occasional confusion in sorting his own works is the fact that he often employs more than one of the five techniques mentioned earlier for a given category. For example, the categorization of Studies Nos. 19, 29 and 31 in Versions in form of Variations could easily be disputed on the grounds that Godowsky adds nothing to the structure of the original and they can be in Free Transcription category. Also problematic is a few Studies in the Strict Transcription category; in Study No. 1, the addition of the right hand in contrary motion could be argued to be a strict inversion of the left hand which is an approximate copy of the right-hand part of Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 1, but then it makes one wonder why Godowsky did not sort it under Cantus Firmus or Free Transcription category. However, it is unwise to ignore Godowsky’s categorization; overall, it serves as a good guideline to understand his own thoughts on the composition of the Studies. Explanations such as inversions, cantus firmus and variations are helpful in understanding the construction of the Studies that are not always clear at a first glance.
Chapter 3: Analysis of Studies Nos. 24, 25 and 47

The Studies to be examined in this chapter are constructed using the technique of superimposition/addition and merging. In Studies Nos. 24 and 25, Godowsky switches the two hands and superimposes additional voices to suit his artistic needs; even though they are composed using the same techniques, the results are strikingly different. In Study No. 47, he merges two of Chopin’s Études to create a playful Badinage. Such a trick may raise concerns for some in the sense of musical insincerity, but a close look at Godowsky’s effort proves that the work is in fact very carefully and cleverly composed, revealing a masterful skill of composition and knowledge of the instrument.

Studies based on Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 1: No. 24 (Free Transcription) and No. 25 (Cantus Firmus Version)

Studies Nos. 24 and 25, both based on Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 1, are the second and third versions on the Étude, respectively.\(^{61}\) Structurally speaking,

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\(^{61}\) *Study* No. 23 is the first version, and it is for the left hand alone.
they are identical to the original: A (mm. 1-8), A’ (mm. 9-16), B (mm. 17-35), and Coda (mm. 36-49).

Godowsky categorizes *Study* No. 24 as Free Transcription⁶², and the main compositional techniques used are superimposition and addition. Godowsky indicates that this *Study* is “intended to give the impression of a piece for four hands.”⁶³ He achieves this effect by using a wide range of the keyboard and the frequent doubling of the melody in both hands, which give the impression of four-hand writing. From the beginning, it is easy to notice the inverted movements of the accompanying sextuplet figuration, doubled melody line in quarter notes followed by an echo and a syncopated base line as shown in the Ex. 3-1a. It is also worth mentioning that the left-hand writing is very similar to *Study* No. 23, the beginning of which is shown in the Ex. 3-1b.

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⁶² Godowsky, 10.
⁶³ Godowsky, 179.
Ex. 3-1a Godowsky, *Study* No. 24, mm. 1-2. Circled is the ‘echo’ of the melody

Ex. 3-1b Godowsky, *Study* No. 23 for the left hand alone, mm. 1-2

Godowsky follows Chopin’s structure and melody line until the middle section, where he introduces a canonic imitation between the hands. The left hand presents the melody first and the right hand imitates it one bar later (Ex. 3-2):
Ex. 3-2 Godowsky, Study No. 24, mm. 17-18. Canonic imitation

The right hand then starts to form a new melody (Ex. 3-3); the left hand remains the same as in the original until the two hands switch roles (Ex. 3-4).
Ex. 3-3 Godowsky, *Study* No. 24, mm. 23-26. Right hand imitation turning into a new melody

Ex. 3-4 Godowsky, *Study* No. 24, mm. 30-32. Hands switch roles: right hand with original melody left hand with newly composed line
They continue with their respective switched roles until the coda.

In the coda, Godowsky continues with Chopin’s original melody. Godowsky uses the addition technique by adding an inner voice in the left hand, over which he writes the right hand in a freely improvised manner which is best described as superimposition, as shown in the Ex. 3-5. The Study ends in a similar fashion to the original, with a quiet arpeggio in A flat major.
Ex. 3-5 Godowsky, *Study* No. 24, mm. 37-40. Left hand with inner voice (circled) and right hand with free writing

Godowsky writes an introductory comment on the first page of *Study* No. 25:

A most sensitive and sympathetic touch, extreme delicacy and refinement, independent and even fingers, a perfect legato, a poetic soul – all these requisites are indispensable to a proper rendering of this study. The Chopin étude is represented in an inverted form in the left hand only. The right hand has a free counterpoint consisting of an expressive melody with undulating arabesques. ...The figurations in the left hand and the arabesques in the right should have an ethereal character.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Godowsky, 185.
The dense writing of this study justifies Godowsky’s advice about delicate and ethereal touch. *Study* No. 25 is in the Cantus Firmus category; as the composer indicates in the aforementioned comment, the left hand is a condensed copy of the original etude. Compared to the original, it is clearly grasped that Godowsky uses switch technique. The left hand is reduced to three elements, using the condensation technique, and it contains melody, bass and one layer of sextuplet figures. It is also moved to a lower register, occupying a narrower range of the keyboard compared to the original in order to give the right hand the freedom to play the improvisatory upper voices. Unlike the other two *Studies* based on the same Chopin Étude, the bass notes are always established on the strong beats. Ex. 3-6a is the left hand of *Study* No. 25; compare it with the original shown in Ex. 3-6b.

Ex. 3-6a Godowsky, *Study* No. 25, mm. 1-2, left hand
Ex. 3-6b Chopin, *Étude* Op. 25, No. 1, mm. 1-2

It is in the right hand that Godowsky unfolds his imagination by assigning it with a counter melody from the beginning. He enlarges note heads of the new melody to distinguish it from the arabesque figures in sextuplets, which are to be played in the background using an ethereal character.65

Ex. 3-7 Godowsky, *Study* No. 25, mm. 1-2, right hand. Right hand with a new melody and arabesque figures around it

In the A’ section, the delicate arabesque figuration is no longer a mere accompaniment. The arabesque is present throughout the *Study*; its frequent

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65 Godowsky, 185.
use of diatonic and chromatic pitches, the figuration gives a strong impression of another layer of melody, albeit in the background. After the first presentation of the theme in the A section where the sextuplets perform only as a harmonic and rhythmic support, Godowsky travels to a higher register through neighbor notes of the given harmony\(^{66}\), with which he weaves the arabesque figures. Once the right hand arrives in the new register, Godowsky frequently gives the passage a lyrical quality as other melody lines, creating a counterpoint. As a result, this section has a new colour and character despite being a repetition of the A section.

\(^{66}\) Kurth, 111-112.
A few bars later into the B section, he changes the pulse of the melody from duplets to triplets to give it a different character, the complexity of which is suitable for the frequent modulations. Godowsky employs superimposition technique again: he adds yet another layer by transforming the arabesque figures into a new melodic line that is syncopated by one sextuplet as shown in Ex. 3-9. The entire middle section is very chromatic and complicated, but the original melody in the left hand remains intact even though Godowsky occasionally rewrites the bass line.
Ex. 3-9 Godowsky, Study No. 25, mm. 23-24. Additional voice and a change in pulse in the right hand; rewritten bass line in the left

Godowsky’s first theme comes back in the right hand of the coda. While the left hand keeps the A flat pedal point as Chopin does in the original, the right hand continues with free writing. The study ends quietly with A flat major arpeggio, but Godowsky adds one more twist: he represents fragments of the theme within the arpeggio, which shows the technique of merging. Merging the main theme and other voices from the same work to replace the simple passage of the original is a technique that Godowsky liked to use, as in his concert paraphrase on Chopin’s Waltz Op. 64 No. 1. At the end of the trio section of the waltz Chopin writes a simple trill; Godowsky keeps the motion of the trill intact as written-out triplets, while incorporating the main theme and the trio melody of the waltz as shown in the Ex. 3-10a.
Ex. 3-10a Godowsky, *Study* No. 25, mm. 44-46. The original theme within the arpeggio.

Ex. 3-10b Chopin, *Waltz* Op. 64 No. 1, mm. 69-72 and Godowsky, *Concert Arrangement* of the same waltz, mm. 85-87
Studies No. 24 and No. 25 are both based on the Chopin *Étude* Op. 25 No. 1, but as discussed above they are constructed in different ways. Study No. 24 is in the Free Transcription category and No. 25 is in the of Cantus Firmus category.\(^6\) While the main technique Godowsky employs is superimposition and addition in both cases, the completed works are very different in their characters. In Study No. 24 Godowsky stacks up similarly written parts, using different sound and registration to imitate the effect of four-hand writing. In other words, the two hands do not depart from each other too much in regards to the texture and importance; it may be argued that Godowsky’s main technique here is addition rather than superimposition. In Study No. 25, he demonstrates his creativity in polyphonic writing by exploring his compositional freedom to the highest degree. Godowsky remains truthful to his categorization of the Study into Cantus Firmus. Basing the left hand on his own Study No. 23, Godowsky introduces then modern chromaticism and the resulting musical character, while keeping Chopin’s original harmonic progression intact. Inevitably, there are places where notes in the right hand collide harmonically with the left-hand foundation; however, Godowsky understands the nature of different registers of piano so well that such collisions never sound ugly.

\(^{6}\) Godowsky, 10.
Study No. 47 (Combination of Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 5 and Op. 25 No. 9)

Study No. 47 is one of the two combination studies. Despite the obvious compositional challenge of combining two of Chopin’s Études, the merging is done seamlessly. The nonchalance of the Study, which Godowsky appropriately names Badinage, betrays a completely natural approach. Moritz Rosenthal (1862-1946), a renowned pianist and composer, is known to have advised Godowsky against the publication of it because “...he[Godowsky] would have had for many years the whole world puzzled as to how he manages to play two studies at a time and how he makes such elaborate combinations.”

Merging is clearly the main compositional technique employed here, and one may argue that switch constantly happens because the left hand in Godowsky’s Study is always assigned the right hand of either Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 5 or Op. 25 No. 9. Godowsky very cleverly alternates between the structures of the two Études. Below is a structural comparison of the two

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68 The other is Study No. 48 where Godowsky combines Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 11 and Op. 25 No. 3. Godowsky also loosely combines Op. 10 No. 9 and No. 25 No. 2 in the Study No. 18, but he did not label it as such.

69 Nicholas, 58.
Chopin Études and the Study No. 47. All three works are composed in A-B-A’-Coda form:

Table 3-1 Structural comparison of Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 5, Étude Op. 25 No. 9 and Godowsky, Study No. 47

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Chopin Op. 10 No. 5</th>
<th>Chopin Op. 25 No. 9</th>
<th>Godowsky No. 47</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1-16</td>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>1-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>17-48</td>
<td>9-24</td>
<td>17-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A’</td>
<td>49-66</td>
<td>25-36</td>
<td>33-44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>67-85</td>
<td>37-51</td>
<td>45-62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The A section of the Study is based on Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 5. For the first half of the section (bars 1-8) of the Study, the right hand plays a nearly literal copy of Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 9, while the left hand is identical to the right hand of Op. 10 No. 5 (Ex. 3-11a, 11b and 11c). The only discrepancy occurs in bars 7 and 8 where Godowsky modifies both hands to suit the harmonic needs, as shown in Ex. 3-12.

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70 The only difference is that Godowsky spells out the chromatic inner voice that Chopin does not specify.
Ex. 3-11a Godowsky, Study No. 47, mm. 1-2

Ex. 3-11b Chopin, Étude Op. 25 No. 9, mm. 1-2

Ex. 3-11c Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 5, mm. 1-2
Godowsky continues in the same fashion until bar 13, where he switches the roles of two hands: now the right hand has the triplet passage from Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 5, whereas the left hand plays the part from Op. 25 No. 9. The right-hand passage from the Study in bars 15 and 16 is modified to match the harmonic progression of the left hand, which leads into the B section. (Ex. 3-13)
Ex. 3-13 Godowsky, *Study* No. 47, mm. 13-16. End of A section; right hand modified

In terms of structure and harmony, the B section is identical to those of Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 9. The roles which Godowsky assigns to the two hands remain the same as in the previous section only for the first two-and-a-half bars of the B section (Ex. 3-14), then the hands switch again afterwards. The triplet passages come from Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 5; despite the fact that Godowsky keeps the triplet motion intact throughout the B section, the content is very often modified due to the necessary harmonic support for the right hand, which plays the right-hand part from Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 9.
Ex. 3-14 Godowsky, Study No. 47, mm. 16-17. Beginning of B section

From bar 20 on, Godowsky employs the technique of addition: the right hand demonstrates two-voice writing by adding an inversion of the main line in the tenor voice displaced by one-half beat; the lower voice plays an accompanying voice based on Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 5.

Ex. 3-15 Godowsky, Study No. 47, mm. 25-27. Contrary motion in the two voices in the right hand
Structurally speaking, the recapitulation, or the A’ section, is a bar-by-bar copy of Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 9. Godowsky writes the right hand in two voices in the same manner as in Ex. 3-15: the lower voice presents the theme from Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 9 first and the upper voice follows half a beat later. Godowsky writes an *ossia* from here and he combines yet another *Étude* in it, which he claims to be “a slight allusion to the *Étude* Op. 10 No. 10.” Godowsky presents the main melody of the Op. 25 No. 9 in the right hand of the *ossia*, only in sextuplets in imitation of Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 10. He adds an inner line, which is more of a harmonic support than an important voice.

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71 Godowsky, 363.
Ex. 3-16a Godowsky, *Study* No. 47, mm. 45-46. A’ section with *ossia* (allusion to Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 10)

Both in the original and in the *ossia* the left hand remains the same. It is written in the same fashion as in the B section: Godowsky keeps the triplet

Ex. 3-16b Chopin, *Étude* Op. 10 No. 10, mm. 1-3. Quoted in the *ossia*
movement intact, while heavily modifying the content to better suit the harmonic progression of the right-hand part based on Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 9.

Ex. 3-17 Godowsky, Study No. 47, mm. 37-39. In the left hand, the motion of Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 5 is still intact yet notes themselves are heavily modified.

The structure of the first eight bars of the coda of the two G flat major Études is identical; both follow the four plus four bar scheme, and the harmonic progression is identical in the two works. Therefore, it is possible to say that the first eight bars of the coda of Godowsky’s Study follow either of them. Godowsky switches the hands in the beginning of the coda: the part that represents Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 5 is in the right hand and the left hand plays Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 9 part. The ossia continues, but Godowsky
now gives the allusion of Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 10 to the original part and the \textit{ossia} has the Op. 25 No. 9 part. Godowsky switches hands yet again in bar 49.

Ex. 3-18 Godowsky, \textit{Study} No. 47, mm. 45-46. Original and \textit{ossia} switched

In the bars 53 to 56, the left hand takes after the Op. 10 No. 5 upon which the right hand superimposes a quotation from the theme of the Op. 25 No. 9:
Ex. 3-19 Godowsky, *Study* No. 47, mm. 53-54. Fragment of Op. 25 No. 9 coda superimposed upon the coda of Op. 10 No. 5

The last six bars of this *Study* are interwoven with the two *Études*, and the structure becomes more complicated than the previous sections. First, Godowsky merges the ascending passage and the descending octave scale in Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 5 together:

Ex. 3-20a Godowsky, *Study* No. 47, mm. 57-58. Two different parts of Chopin, *Étude* Op. 10 No. 5 are merged together
Ex. 3-20b Two elements of Chopin, *Étude* Op. 10 No. 5 which Godowsky combines

Godowsky then switches back to Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 9 in bar 59. The triplet motive from the other etude persists until that point; bar 60 and the first half of the next bar are a nearly literal copy of the last two bars of Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 9. Godowsky surprises the listener once more by finishing the Study with the two tonic chords that conclude Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 5, in pianissimo instead of the fortissimo that Chopin indicated.

Ex. 3-21 Godowsky, *Study* No. 47, mm. 61-62
Study No. 47 is a great example of Godowsky’s achievement in compositional imagination and pianistic freedom. While this work inspires awe in most, he did not intend this *Badinage* to be a mere showpiece of which the focus is a demonstration of the pianist’s physical prowess:

The combining of the above two studies [Études Op. 10 No. 5 and Op. 25 No. 9] was not intended as a virtuoso trick: the idea came to the author as a musical “Espiégerie,” as a polyphonic “Badinage.”

Godowsky combines the two études by having a simple yet sound structural scheme, and using different elements from each of the originals and modifying them, if needed, to better suit the harmonic needs at places. He understood exactly how much from the original he had to use and how much he could afford to sacrifice in order to sustain the impression of two works playing simultaneously. Godowsky has also proven that he had not exhausted his imagination in combining the two works; the ‘allusion’ to Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 10 and other *ossias* suggest that Godowsky could have accomplished the same feat in different ways. Despite the complexity of this Study, the pianistic writing is so natural that a pianist may “get a physical pleasure,” in addition to the cerebral joy that Godowsky intended.

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72 Godowsky, 360.
73 Nicholas, xxiii. Comment by pianist Josef Lhevinne (1874-1944).
Chapter 4: Analysis of Studies Nos. 34 and 45

This chapter will examine two Studies: Study No. 34 from the Metamorphoses category and Study No. 45 from the Variation category. The two Studies share one trait: the switch technique is not used as the main device of recreation even though it would have been possible since they are written for both hands. In Study No. 34, the main right-hand melody from Chopin’s original appears mostly in the right hand of the Study; in Study no. 45, the original right-hand part appears as follows, in the order of the variations: top (right hand), top (right hand), tenor (left hand), top (right hand), alternating between voices (right and left hands), tenor (left hand) and top (right hand). The main compositional techniques Godowsky employs are addition and reconstruction; other techniques are present, but they are not as prominent.

**Study No. 34 (Second version of Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 5: Mazurka)**

Godowsky classifies the Study No. 34 based on Chopin’s Étude Op. 25 No. 5 under the category of ‘Metamorphosis,’ which is appropriate because the character of the original étude is now transformed into a Mazurka.

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74 See Chapter 2 of this dissertation for Godowsky’s categorization.
Godowsky makes sure that the character of the Polish national dance is easily recognizable by constantly emphasizing its unique rhythm and accents throughout the piece. One more striking difference is the tonality: while the original is in E minor, Godowsky’s Mazurka is in C sharp minor. It is not clear why he chose the key. Perhaps the same tonality of E minor would have had too similar an atmosphere to the original étude and would have been an obstacle for a metamorphosis. Tonality is not the only difference; their structures are rather different as well, especially in the latter half of the pieces. Chopin’s Étude is more concise, and Godowsky’s Study is longer. Below is a comparison of the structure:
Table 4-1 Structural comparison between Chopin, *Étude* Op. 25 No. 5 and Godowsky, *Study* No. 34

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Chopin</th>
<th>Godowsky</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>1-16</td>
<td>1-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>17-28</td>
<td>17-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c</td>
<td>29-44</td>
<td>29-44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (Trio)</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>45-52</td>
<td>45-52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>61-68 + 69-72 + 73-80</td>
<td>61-68 + <strong>69-76</strong> + 77-84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c</td>
<td>81-88 + 89-97</td>
<td>85-92 + <strong>93-104</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A’</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>98-105</td>
<td><strong>105-140</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>106-113</td>
<td>141-148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>114-129</td>
<td>149-164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>130-133 + 134-137 + 138</td>
<td>165-168 + 169-172 + <strong>173-176</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The bars in bold style in the Mazurka’s outline indicate that they are repeated or modified from the original. The entire A and Ba sections correspond, bar by bar. In Bb, Godowsky repeats bars 69-72 of the original once; Godowsky expands the last two bars of Bc in Chopin’s original into five bars. The most significant repeat occurs in A’a, where Godowsky repeats the entire A section and also expands its contents. The last four bars in the Mazurka are the equivalent of Chopin’s last bar. These repeats and modifications will be discussed in detail later.
Godowsky transforms the upbeat that starts Chopin’s *Étude* into a chromatic turn that is mimicked in the left hand in contrary motion, using the reconstruction technique. While the notes of the main melody stay intact, it now has a dotted rhythm punctuated by Mazurka accents notated with a tenuto sign in the third beat of every bar. The alto voice loosely imitates the top line of the left-hand chords in the original, as shown in Ex. 4-1a. The left hand provides harmonic and rhythmic support, remaining as an accompanying voice. While the chord progression is slightly different from the original due to different inversions resulting in interesting flavour, the overall tonal scheme stays the same. The beginning of the Chopin *Étude* Op. 25 No. 5 is presented in Ex. 4-1b.

Ex. 4-1a Godowsky, *Study* No. 34, mm. 1-4
When the theme is repeated Godowsky now gives the left hand more prominence than in the original. Instead of following the right-hand rhythm as Chopin did, he gives the left hand two roles: bass notes and a secondary melody. Godowsky always had a preference for contrapuntal texture, and he frequently adds at least one more voice when repeating something as he does in other Studies.\(^7\) The main melody is moved up an octave and doubled by an octave. The space between the bass note and the melody is where Godowsky plays with his newly composed melody in continuous eighth notes, as in Ex. 4-2.

\(^7\) For example, see Studies Nos. 9, 10, 16 and 25.
Godowsky switches between three and four voices but in Ex. 4-3, there are four clearly distinguished voices. The secondary melody that first appeared in the left hand of Ex. 4-2 is now on the top, taking over the role of main melody with the Mazurka rhythm while the original melody is intact in the alto in plain quarter notes this time. The left hand in the Mazurka shows a typical technique Godowsky uses frequently in his left-hand works: delayed bass which is sustained by pedal, harmonic support and a singing voice on the top layer as circled in Ex. 4-3. Since all four voices move differently both in rhythm and in direction, the combined effect of both hands is an illusion of three or four hands playing simultaneously, and it is something Godowsky loved to do.
Chopin’s writing does not change much in the last part of the A section, but Godowsky changes the character completely (Ex. 4-4a). As before, his left hand can stand alone as a complete piece upon which he imposes a new melody. The top line of the left hand now has the main melody in Mazurka rhythm. When this is repeated, Godowsky adds yet another voice (Ex. 4-4b).
Ex. 4-4b Godowsky, *Study* No. 34, mm. 37-38

The end of Chopin’s A section consists of three simple chords stretched over three bars. Godowsky starts it with a chromatic turn that the Mazurka began with then syncopates the dominant in the top while continuing with the main theme in the left hand, as in Ex. 4-5. Chopin prepares the transition through spaces between his chords; Godowsky does so by keeping the continuity.

Ex. 4-5 Godowsky, *Study* No. 34, mm. 42-44
Chopin introduces completely contrasting material in the B section which forms the trio of the *Étude*. Godowsky does the same as well, but he also maintains the four-voice writing. This thicker texture allows him to keep the main theme from the A section intact by having the left hand play the bass and the melody while the right hand takes care of Chopin’s trio melody as well as an additional line in thirds. As seen in Ex. 4-6, the usage of merging technique is a compositional stunt which is clever and witty, but it also helps give the Mazurka a sense of unity by leaving the rhythm of the dance intact.

Ex. 4-6 Godowsky, *Study* No. 34, mm. 45-48

Unlike the warm and melodic nature in the original as shown in Ex. 4-7b, Godowsky makes a powerful outburst out of the passage, emphasizing the
Mazurka rhythm and exploring a wide range of keyboard in Ex. 4-7a. It also shows that Godowsky gives performers three ossia versions to choose from: the first ossia is straightforward and rhythmic; the second is more melodic, spread out and complicated. The second and third versions are identical except for the first bar, the latter of which approaches the topmost B flat in a more flamboyant fashion.

Ex. 4-7a Godowsky, *Study* No. 34, mm. 61-64
It is from bar 69 that the first structural discrepancy occurs. Godowsky repeats Chopin’s four-bar phrase using the technique of metamorphosis; the second time is more sung out and the two-against-three rhythm, in addition to the contrapuntal texture, gives the phrase more tension. (Ex. 4-8)

The last part of the trio is a great example of a complete freedom that Godowsky takes. The left hand in Ex. 4-9a is written using the condensation
technique: it has both the melody and the accompaniment at the same time, and is enough to stand alone as an individual entity. Its similarity to his writing in Study No. 35 for the left hand alone based on the same Étude (Ex. 4-9b) is worth mentioning (note that the key of the left hand study is B-flat minor/major). In the right hand, Godowsky superimposes a new two-part melody upon the left hand.

Ex. 4-9a Godowsky, Study No. 34, mm. 85-87

Ex. 4-9b Godowsky, Study No. 35, mm. 45-47
Instead of continuing with the same pattern as Chopin did, Godowsky felt the need to place the climax in Ex. 4-10. He successfully avoids monotony by introducing octave writing which was relatively rare for him. The four-part writing is still intact, but the melodic lines are enhanced by octave doubling and the accompanying chords are richer.

Ex. 4-10 Godowsky, *Study* No. 34, mm. 93-96

Chopin concludes the trio with two bars of murmuring tonic first-inversion chord, which Godowsky expands into five bars of conversation between the two voices in the right hand upon the left-hand pedal point of low D flat octave (Ex. 4-11). The top voice is the turn motive as shown in Ex. 4-1, constructed with metamorphosis technique; the bottom voice represents the main theme (addition technique). This conversation anticipates the return of the main section, and the pedal point persists until three bars into the return of the opening section.
In the beginning of the thematic return, Godowsky departs far from the original by repeating the entire A section, expanding the eight-bar section in Chopin into thirty-six bars (bars 105-140). Since there is no written evidence of the reason behind the repetition, again one can only speculate. Godowsky may have felt that Chopin’s tight structure did not suit the character of his dense writing in this Study. Godowsky’s texture is thicker with many polyphonic techniques, and the dynamic and emotional range is also much wider than Chopin’s original. The repetition in the recapitulation can be justified because the outburst at the end of the trio section needs time to cool down before the elegant beginning of the coda. While the body of the repetition is an exact copy of the earlier appearance, he does write a variant of the beginning for the first eight bars of the recapitulation using pedal point and conversation of the two motives as in
Ex. 4-11 then doubling part of the melody in the last eight bars. After the repetition, Godowsky exchanges the roles of two hands in Ex. 4-12 which leads into the Coda.

Ex. 4-12 Godowsky, Study No. 34, mm. 141-144

The coda of the Mazurka starts from bar 149 and continues using similar techniques as shown in Ex. 4-3 and in Ex. 4-5. Ex. 4-13b shows the final bars of Chopin’s original that are made of a series of chords ornamented by trills in the inner voices, followed by a free bar with an ascending scale that concludes the Étude (Ex. 4-13a). Godowsky follows Chopin’s structure in the first eight bars of this section but what he does with it is very interesting and deserves to be quoted in its entirety. One can see in Ex. 4-13b that he keeps the basic rhythmic and harmonic elements from Chopin’s original in the left hand: first with single perfect fifth chord per bar followed by syncopated rhythm, then introducing the trill in the fifth bar.
of the example while keeping the syncopation intact in the bass as Chopin did. For the right hand, he adds a variant of the trio theme merged with the dotted rhythm of the main theme. The final four bars in the Mazurka are the equivalent of Chopin’s last bar; Godowsky keeps the right-hand motive in Mazurka rhythm intact and spells out Chopin’s ascending scale underneath in the left hand. Godowsky adds two chords to finish the piece with a statement.

Ex. 4-13a Chopin, *Étude* Op. 25 No. 5, mm. 130-138
One can see now that while Godowsky worked mainly with Chopin’s structure, harmony and motives, he built an entirely different and charming work using them as building blocks. The title ‘Metamorphosis’ is therefore appropriate.
Study No. 45 (First version of Trois Nouvelles Études No. 2)

Study No. 45 is based on the second Étude from Chopin’s Trois Nouvelles Études, and it is in the form of variations. Godowsky’s Study begins straight from variation 1, omitting the presentation of the theme, which is clearly stated in the preface. Godowsky transposes the Étude from A flat major to E major; he does not explain the reason for this change, as is the case in many of his Studies in different keys than the original. Whatever the reason may be, Godowsky takes advantage of his new key and explores different registers avoiding the risk of sounding too heavy or too thin. Another notable difference is the time signature: Chopin writes his Étude in 2/4 while Godowsky chooses to double the bar length to 4/4, fitting two of Chopin’s bars into one in his version. Again, Godowsky does not offer an explanation; one can only speculate. One possible reason is that Godowsky’s harmonic language is much more chromatic and therefore requires a longer breath, and his rhythmic patterns are so complex that notating them in 2/4 would have falsely suggested a completely different character. Another explanation is that in Variation 4, the right-hand rhythm would have been even more complicated to notate had it been in 2/4, because the syncopated alto voice spans four beats.

76 Godowsky, 340.
Chopin’s original is written in a simple ternary form with a coda; Godowsky’s study consists of six variations and a coda. Below is a structural comparison of the two pieces:77

Table 4-2 Structural comparison between Chopin, *Trois Nouvelles Études* No. 2 and Godowsky, *Study* No. 45

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Chopin</th>
<th>Godowsky</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1-16</td>
<td>Var. 1: 1-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Var. 2: 9-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Var. 3: 17-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Var. 4: 25-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>17-40</td>
<td>Var. 5: 33-44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A’</td>
<td>41-56</td>
<td>Var. 6: 45-52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>57-60</td>
<td>Coda: 53-56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is possible to argue that Godowsky simply repeated Chopin’s A section four times, giving each repetition a different character. The B and A’ sections are identical to the original, bar by bar; Godowsky inserts two bars of his own in the coda before following Chopin’s model.

77 Bear in mind the difference in time signature in the two pieces. For example, the A section in the Chopin, which is sixteen bars long, is equivalent to Godowsky’s variation 1, which is notated as eight bars.
A brief glimpse is sufficient to notice that Godowsky intended the challenge of this study to be the difficulty of complex and irregular rhythms. He precedes the Study with a preface in which he gives valuable advice on the breakdown of the rhythmic patterns in the first four variations. In Variation 1, the right hand maintains triplets containing the original melody in the top voice with chromatic harmonic support underneath, while the left hand is in sixteenth notes with bass and loose imitation of the melody in the middle voices, resulting in a three-against-four rhythm (Ex. 4-14).

Ex. 4-14 Godowsky, Study No. 45, mm. 1-2: Variation 1. Left hand inner voice circled

In variation 2 (Ex. 4-15), the left hand plays quintuplets throughout the variation. The right hand begins with continuation of triplets as in

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78 Godowsky, 340.
variation 1, now in wider arpeggios, resulting in a three-against-five rhythm. In the second and fourth bars of the variation, he changes the pulse of the harmonic support from triplets to eighth notes, making it a three-against-two-against-five pattern.

Ex. 4-15 Godowsky, *Study* No. 45, mm. 9-10: Variation 2. 3-5 rhythm in general; 3-2-5 where circled

Variation 3 (Ex. 4-16a) is rhythmically much more complicated than any other variation in this *Study*. To explain it, the unit of rhythm must be expanded from quarter notes to half notes. The variation is in a nine-against-three-against-six-against-four rhythm, and Godowsky’s own explanation in Ex. 4-16b is very helpful in understanding this complicated writing.
Ex. 4-16a Godowsky, *Study* No. 45, mm. 17-18: Variation 3. 9:3:6:4 rhythm

Ex. 4-16b Godowsky’s explanation of the rhythm

Godowsky also verbally explains each irregular pattern. His most useful tip in this variation is the explanation of the nine-against-six rhythm:

In the left hand the four triplets (twelve eighths) in each measure must be formed in six groups of two eighths instead of four groups of three eighths, thus enabling the performer to play each two eighths of the left hand against each three sixteenths of the right hand.  

79 Godowsky, 340.
In this variation, the roles of each hand are now switched. Godowsky uses the condensation technique for the left hand, which plays the main theme and the bass line; Godowsky writes freely composed passages in the right hand. The left hand consistently keeps a three-against-two pattern and its writing closely resembles Study No. 45a (Ex. 4-16c) for the left hand alone, based on the same Chopin Étude. The same can be said about variation 6, which will be discussed soon.

Ex. 4-16c Godowsky, Study No. 45a for the left hand alone, mm. 1-2.80

Similar writing to the left hand of Variations 3 and 6 in Study No. 45

The first part of variation 4 (Ex. 4-17a), although Godowsky goes through the pain of faithfully notating the two voices in the right hand, is essentially a study in six-against-eight rhythm as shown in the Ex. 4-17b.

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80 Along with the main melody triplets, the bass line is present as well as the three-against-two rhythm in the original; therefore, all the elements in Chopin’s original are condensed into one hand.
The upper voice of the right hand maintains the main theme, while the syncopated lower voice provides loosely chromatic harmonic support. The left hand murmurs in thirty-second notes; Godowsky introduces an E pedal point in the middle voice of the left hand, which does not change until the second part of the variation along with the appearance of a different rhythm.

Ex. 4-17a Godowsky, Study No. 45, mm. 25: Variation 4. E pedal point in the left hand circled

![Ex. 4-17a Godowsky, Study No. 45, mm. 25: Variation 4. E pedal point in the left hand circled](image1)

Ex. 4-17b Godowsky’s advice on the execution

![Ex. 4-17b Godowsky’s advice on the execution](image2)

In the second half of the variation (Ex. 4-18), Godowsky introduces a new rhythm, resulting in a nine-against-eight pattern:
Ex. 4-18 Godowsky, *Study* No. 45, mm. 29. New rhythm; left hand pedal point moves as circled.

After two bars, he goes back to the initial six-against-eight rhythmic pattern but now the lower voice of the right hand is given a new melodic character as shown in the Ex. 4-19. The inner-voice pedal point in the left hand that began to move is now transformed into two-note motives.
Ex. 4-19 Godowsky, *Study* No. 45, mm. 31. Return of 6:8 rhythm with a lyrical lower voice in the right hand. Left hand inner voice transformed from a pedal point to a moving line as circled.

In terms of structure and harmony, variation 5 is identical to the B section of the original *Étude*. The main rhythm scheme is three-against-two and the original theme alternates between the two hands. Godowsky writes freely composed polyphonic lines surrounding the main line; a new rhythm with a character of a dance appears in the left hand as shown in the Ex. 4-20, enhancing the variety of the character in the variation.
Ex. 4-20 Godowsky, *Study* No. 45, mm. 33-36: Variation 5. Circled is a new rhythm in the left hand.

The last variation (Ex. 4-21) goes back to a simple two-against-three pattern; the left hand takes after the *Study* No. 45a again as it did in variation 3. Godowsky superimposes a newly composed melody line on top of the left hand.
Ex. 4-21 Godowsky, *Study* No. 45, mm. 45-46: Variation 6. Left hand with theme and bass; right hand superimposed melody

Godowsky inserts two additional bars of his own in the coda. In these two bars, Godowsky reintroduces the theme twice; it appears first in the left hand with a superimposed melody, then in the right hand with inner lines. In both bars, the E pedal point is present. Godowsky combines the dance-like rhythm in the left hand from variation 5 and the original melody together in the second last bar to create a sense of conclusion. The *Study* ends with two simple chords, exactly as in Chopin’s original.
Clearly, the complexity of the rhythm is a challenge for pianists who tackle this *Study*. It must have also been a compositional challenge for Godowsky to repeat the A section of the original four times, preserving the natural structure and avoiding the danger of sounding repetitive. In fact, the pianistic challenge is a result in overcoming this compositional obstacle; Godowsky’s device of doing so was to give each variation a new colour and a different character using new rhythms and different registrations.
Chapter 5: Analysis of *Studies* Nos. 2 and 22; two *Studies* for the left hand alone

The very task of rewriting a Chopin *Étude* for two hands into a version for the left hand alone, by default, necessitates the process of condensation. In this chapter, two of the Godowsky *Studies* for the left hand alone will be examined. Although condensation is the most prominent technique used, Godowsky also uses various techniques to further his musical goals. He is inevitably practical in terms of pianistic execution, writing the *Studies* for the left hand alone, yet practicality is not his only concern. For example, *Study* no. 2, the second version of two *Studies* based on Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 1, is converted from the heroic and brilliant original to a more soft-spoken and lyrical piece; *Study* no. 13, based on Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 6, is painted with thirty-second notes instead of Chopin’s sixteenth notes, and it creates an almost impressionistic mood. Of the two *Studies* that are to be examined below, Godowsky departs farther from Chopin’s original in *Study* No. 2 than he does in *Study* No. 22. Both are transposed half a step up from the original; the process facilitates the execution of these extremely challenging works.
**Study No. 2 (Second version of Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 1)**

*Study* No. 2 is the second *Study* based on Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 1. It is for the left hand alone and transposed up half a step to D flat major. No explanation by Godowsky is given for this transposition, as is the case in many *Studies*. But when transposed back to the original C major, this *Study* becomes suddenly much more difficult to play accurately because of the unnatural hand position that the all-white key tonality forces upon the pianist. Another notable difference is the time signature, which is 2/C; Godowsky combines two measures of Chopin’s original 4/4\(^{81}\) into one. Like other changes that Godowsky introduces in his *Studies*, he does not offer any explanation for this change of meter. One possibility is that Godowsky wanted to emphasize the lyrical and linear character of this *Study*, unlike the majestic and harmonic writing of Chopin’s original. Structurally, Chopin’s original and Godowsky’s version are identical; the harmonic scheme is the same as well although Godowsky often uses different inversions and introduces chromatic passing tones.

There are a few reasons why it might be difficult for a listener to recognize immediately the original Chopin *Étude* on which this *Study* is

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\(^{81}\) 2/2 in some editions.
based. The first reason is the different character with which the *Study* begins; as opposed to Chopin’s triumphant *forte*, Godowsky starts with a *piano*. Second is the lack of the octave bass line that is present at every chord change in Chopin’s original. Godowsky establishes the bass with single notes, which helps this part of the *Study* to achieve a more flowing and lyrical atmosphere. The third and last reason is the way the arpeggio in the *Study* is constructed: instead of simple arpeggiated chords in up-and-down motion, Godowsky weaves motivic cells in major or minor seconds into the arpeggio, as shown in Ex. 5-1. This creates a sensation of two-voice writing.

Ex. 5-1 Godowsky, *Study* No. 2, mm. 1. Motivic cell in seconds circled

Throughout the first section, Godowsky continues the same way as in Ex. 5-1. The middle section is written similarly, although he introduces much more chromaticism in the passagework. Another notable difference is that Godowsky adds one more voice to the two-part writing from bar 13 (Ex. 5-2). The complex harmonic language requires such writing; Godowsky may
have felt that two voices would sound too bare for the rich harmonic progression.

Ex. 5-2 Godowsky, *Study* No. 2, mm. 13. Introduction of a third voice

Ex. 5-3 Godowsky, *Study* No. 2, mm. 18. Chromatic writing upon a simple chord progression

Half-way through this middle section, Godowsky begins to introduce the elements that are easily conceivable as fragments of the original. The first of these is the long line that is of the same interval as Chopin’s last two beats of the analogous passage (Ex. 5-4a and 5-4b):
Ex. 5-4a Godowsky, *Study* No. 2, mm. 19. Long notes circled; same scale degrees as in Chopin’s original

Ex. 5-4b Chopin, *Étude* Op. 10 No. 1, mm. 38. Analogous passage

The second element is the use of an octave bass that appears in the last bar of the middle section; recall that in Chopin’s original the octave bass is present throughout:

Ex. 5-5 Godowsky, *Study* No. 2, mm. 24. First appearance of an octave bass (circled)
The two elements in the middle section discussed above effectively prepares a listener for the return of the A section, now in fortissimo with octave basses. In bar 27 of his version, Godowsky even writes the descending bass line on octaves in the same fashion as in Chopin’s original (Ex. 5-6b), giving an even clearer impression of the original, as shown in the Ex. 5-6a. The writing in this section is in two voices again, and the existence of octave basses gives a sense of a firm beat, which was not present earlier in the Study. Godowsky’s lyrical chromaticism and the two-note motive disappear at this point; the entire section suddenly sounds very similar to Chopin’s original because all the elements of the original are now present, condensed for one hand.

Ex. 5-6a Godowsky, Study No. 2, mm. 27. Chopin’s bass line represented in Godowsky’s version
Ex. 5-6b Chopin, Étude Op. 10 No. 1, mm. 53-54. Octave bass line circled

In the coda of Study No. 2, Godowsky goes back to three-voice writing. He continues to respect Chopin’s right-hand writing in the same manner as in Ex. 5-4, while introducing a new four-note motive which serves as an anchor for the frequent modulations as shown in Ex. 5-7. The Study ends in simple yet triumphant arpeggiation of the tonic chord.

Ex. 5-7 Godowsky, Study No. 2, mm. 36, 37 and 39. Four-note motives (circled)
Study No. 2 is the only left-hand study in the entire set that departs from the original to the degree that it becomes almost unrecognizable. All the other studies for the left hand alone start at least with the same opening passage as in their respective originals, even though they may develop in different ways later on. In Study No. 2, one can argue that Godowsky begins with the variation of the original theme and then presents the theme in the thematic return. He could have chosen the other way; the thematic return is indeed very similar to Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 1, which proves that Godowsky could have done a more literal transcription if he wanted. One can only speculate as to why Godowsky chose this path because he never left any commentary for this particular study. One possible theory is that Godowsky feared redundancy in comparison to Study No. 1, which is a Strict Transcription of the same Chopin Étude:
Godowsky’s writing is so rich in this study because he mirrors Chopin’s arpeggios in both hands; the difference in tonality alone would not have been sufficient to prevent the following study for the left hand alone from sounding like a mere condensed version of the same Étude. Another possibility is that Godowsky’s musical ideas were based on the harmonic language of Chopin’s original rather than the literal writing, and such ideas could not be comfortably executed in the original key of C major. Godowsky composed a more lyrical, soft-spoken and chromatic fantasy, and the black keys in D flat major greatly facilitates the execution.
Study No. 22 (based on Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 12)

Of the left-hand studies, the most instantly accessible of all to the general public is the Study No. 22 which is the only study based on Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 12, the so-called ‘Revolutionary’ étude. It is a great example of Godowsky’s technique of rewriting a two-handed piece into one for the left hand alone. He classifies it under the free transcription category because of the compositional liberties he takes in the process of transcription. He employs various rhythmic, harmonic and pianistic tools and modifications to prevent the piece from sounding monotonous, which is an easy trap to fall into for composers writing piano music for one hand. The most prominent technique is condensation; it will be discussed in excerpts such as Ex. 5-11.

First of all, the most striking difference is the tonality. Chopin’s original is in C minor, while Godowsky’s version is transposed up half a tone into C sharp minor. The advantage of the different tonality becomes very apparent when one attempts to transpose it down to the original one: uncomfortable hand and finger positions make many passages virtually unplayable and the leaps become much riskier because they land almost always on white keys which are the tonic, subdominant and dominant tones.
of a C minor scale. Godowsky had a clear idea of what he wanted to hear when conceiving this study and must have chosen the tonality accordingly. There is no difference at all in the structure of the two, which is not unusual in the free transcription category despite the name; Godowsky’s version follows the original bar by bar. While the tempo indications are identical at Allegro con fuoco, the metronome markings are radically different with Chopin’s 152 and Godowsky’s 112-126. This is not necessarily due to the difficulty of execution but rather because of the contrapuntal and chromatic nature, in addition to the natural difference in piano sound in Godowsky’s version in that it dwells often in the lower register.

Godowsky starts the study by reversing the register of right and left hands of the original. The very first chord is now in the bottom while the sixteenth-note passage in the left hand is on the top, accompanied by a harmonic eighth-note figuration right below it to assist with the harmonic structure. The chords ascend just as in the original right hand every second bar as circled in the example. (Ex. 5-9)

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82 In his manuscript, Chopin gives alla breve at 76. Chopin Studies edited by I. Paderewski, 145.
In Ex. 5-10, Godowsky moves the register one octave up as Chopin did for the little climax of the introduction but continues with the eighth-note harmonic support rather than following exactly the original by writing an octave passage, which would have sounded too thunderous for the character, not to mention almost impossible to execute. The fact that an eighth note follows a quarter note in the circled harmonic support implies that the strong beats in the bar are displaced, creating an image of rhythmic imitation after the top melody which has syncopated accents at the eighth-note level.
The first presentation of the theme starts almost in the same manner as in the original except the melody is placed in the lower register with single notes. A small change to the last sixteenth note of the third beat, which is where the first note of the melody appears, is worth an observation. Godowsky writes an E in the accompanying passage instead of D sharp. Certain dissonances work fine when the melody and accompaniment are in different registers, as in Chopin’s original. In Godowsky’s version, however, the D sharp would be harsh against the C sharp in the melody in the same octave. In the fourth beat of the first bar of Ex. 5-11, Godowsky had to introduce a variant of the original left-hand passage to overcome the “major
challenge...to work around the impossibility of being in two places at once."\textsuperscript{83}

He achieves the feat just as Mozart did when the Austrian master encountered the limitation of his instruments. Mozart did not re-use the same passagework in the recapitulation of a work when his instruments did not have the range for it; he did not hesitate to write an entirely new passage to suit his needs, and it never sounded forced. In the case of this study, literal transcription would have resulted in a considerable distance between the melody and accompaniment. Instead, Godowsky writes a variant with a hint of chromaticism that helps distinguish itself from the diatonic melody line in the soprano, and avoids jumping to the bass the next bar by inverting the passage and places the bass two beats later. The result is a natural fluidity of execution and a new material.

The theme repeats as in the original, but Godowsky moves the main melody up an octave and supports it by doubling it one octave lower and by adding middle notes. This change inevitably introduces quick leaps, as seen in Ex. 5-12.

Ex. 5-11 Godowsky, Study No. 22, mm. 10-12

Ex. 5-12 Godowsky, Study No. 22, mm. 20
The phrase before the middle section employs an interesting technique of variation on syncopation. In the first measure of Ex. 5-13, Godowsky presents the melody on the first beat just as in the original, but the bass is delayed by one beat. Chopin does syncopate the melody here, but Godowsky goes one step further in the next bar. In the second bar of the example, the bass is now syncopated by half a beat rather than one full beat as in the original; the melody is even busier as it is syncopated by a quarter of a beat. Also worth noting is the fourth beat of the last bar of this example in the circle: after having followed the chromatic passage of Chopin’s original in the rest of the bar, Godowsky suddenly introduces the modulation to the next section one beat earlier to give harmonic support otherwise unobtainable without forcing the left hand to execute an awkward jump.
The middle section is striking in that Godowsky presents a rather different looking *ossia*. In fact there are four occasions in this study where Godowsky gives *ossia* choices but two of them, the first and the last, are less important modification of passagework or harmonic support. The two versions in Ex. 5-14 are, however, rather significantly different. The main version is a variant of Chopin’s original and is slowed down by twice the time, whereas the *ossia* version has the same rhythmic pulse with the sixteenth notes and the pattern of two chromatic intervals followed by two harmonic intervals. The *ossia* is supported by the tonic arpeggio underneath the tenor passage.
It is interesting to notice the D minor chord in root position in the third beat of the first bar of Ex. 5-15a, not to be found in Chopin’s original; it gives additional resonance and adds to the illusion of two hands at work. Godowsky consistently syncopates the melody notes that fall in the middle of the bar. What is most interesting in the example, however, is the sixteenth-note passage which is considerably modified from the original. As one can see in Ex. 5-15b, Chopin keeps the right hand in the same register while moving the left hand around more than two octaves. The farthest distance between the highest note of the right hand and the lowest note of the left hand is more than four octaves, which can never be achieved in a piece for the left hand alone. Godowsky had to face this problem and had to decide that he would keep the movement intact but rewrite the passage. In a way
Godowsky follows Chopin’s example by keeping the pattern steady throughout the three bars while modulating up one step each bar. In the last bar of the example Godowsky imitates Chopin by presenting an unaccompanied sixteenth-note passage. Godowsky continues with the inversion technique as in Ex. 5-11 and occasionally adds new voices as seen in Ex. 5-16.

Ex. 5-15a Godowsky, *Study* No. 22, mm. 33-36
Ex. 5-15b Chopin, *Étude* Op. 10 No. 12, mm. 33-35

Ex. 5-16 Godowsky, *Study* No. 22, mm. 37-39

After the return of the introduction in the same fashion as in the beginning with only minor changes, the thematic return begins (Ex. 5-17). The pedal markings, whenever the sixteenth-note accompaniment pattern temporarily stops, are worth noting. It is a clever device to keep the harmonic resonance intact while the melody line continues with a rhythmic variation. This is a good example of condensation technique, as well as Godowsky’s understanding of the piano as an instrument. It would have
been unrealistic even for Godowsky to include everything considering the rhythmic complexity in the original. He must have also felt that Chopin’s original variants in the melody line were sufficient; Godowsky keeps them intact except for one small rhythmic alteration in bar 55.

Ex. 5-17 Godowsky, *Study* No. 22, mm. 50-52

After the thematic return where he freely transcribes the original using the techniques already discussed, he reaches the coda (Ex. 5-18). In the first bar he puts the moving sixteenth-note figure in the foreground once again just as he did in the very beginning. They are now accompanied by a busier tremolo variant of the earlier eighth-note accompaniment. He then moves on to the next bar and adds bass notes while syncopating the melody.
The last two bars show a combination of metamorphosis and addition techniques, as shown in Ex. 5-19. For the last two bars of the coda in the original Chopin does not put anything but block chords, while Godowsky continues with the sixteenth notes (metamorphosis) and adds syncopated bass (addition). It would not have been ideal to write the same block chords, because compared to the original where Chopin explores the very low register of the piano, it would have sounded shallow due to the limited range a single hand can play. Another option would be to add lower bass notes as grace notes, but it is precisely something Godowsky would have abhorred because it would have resulted in sacrificing the character of the powerful original chords, not to mention ‘giving away’ the fact that it is written for the left hand alone. So that is why Godowsky decided to continue with the movement.
Ex. 5-19 Godowsky, *Study* No. 22, mm. 84-85

As revealed in the earlier discussion, in *Study* No. 2 Godowsky weaves major and minor seconds into the predominantly harmonic nature of Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 1. The newly inserted intervals provided Godowsky with a chance to write more chromatically, resulting in a lyrical and soft-spoken character. In *Study* No. 22, the left-hand writing is more extended compared to *Study* No. 2, as the use of two staves suggests. The similarity to Chopin’s original is easier to grasp in *Study* No. 22 because Godowsky does not alter the main character as much as he did in *Study* No. 2. Through a careful condensation process which includes clever rearrangement of registers of voices and rhythmic displacements, Godowsky succeeds not only in creating a very convincing imitation of Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 12, but also in introducing his own ideas in the finished product.
With regards to one-hand piano music, Theodore Edel reports: “It cannot be a coincidence that virtually all the well-written repertoire appeared after his[Godowsky’s] Studies.”

One may ask why anyone would compose for just one hand when most pianists, including Godowsky himself, have two highly functional hands. He wished to experiment and prove the potential of the left hand; it even has an advantage of having the stronger fingers on the top range. Another reason for such an effort is the fact that humans are curiously creative when facing limitation. A creative mind soars high when met with challenges; one only needs to look at J. S. Bach’s works for solo string instruments. Another renowned composer who expressed the same perspective was Igor Stravinsky, who wrote:

...my freedom will be so much the greater and more meaningful the more narrowly I limit my field of action and the more I surround myself with obstacles. Whatever diminishes constraint, diminishes strength. The more constraints one imposes, the more one frees one’s self of the chains that shackle the spirit.

As Stravinsky argued, the self-imposed limitation of writing for the left hand alone opened up new ideas for Godowsky.

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84 Edel: 8.
Chapter 6: Technical Challenges of the Studies

Godowsky’s Studies represent the highest achievement of virtuosity in piano literature, “taking technique just about to its limits.” While their difficulties are well known, the reasons for such challenges are not often discussed, if at all. Most of the Studies do not demand rapid octave scales or brilliant passagework like Liszt’s transcriptions. To speak of pure muscular demands, Godowsky rarely demands more than Chopin did in the original. Even Godowsky himself declared that “[his] music is not difficult.” He admits that it may be hard to read his compositions, but they are “not so difficult manually.” According to him, the obstacles in mastering his pieces are created mainly by their contrapuntal and polyphonic devices. Such statements may frustrate many pianists without the command of the keyboard of Godowsky’s calibre. Yet as a pianist who performs Godowsky’s Studies in public, I have discovered that Godowsky spoke truly of the nature of the difficulties in his works.

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87 Nicholas, 133.
88 Ibid., 134.
89 Ibid., 133-134.
It is mostly Godowsky’s compositional techniques proposed in Chapter 2, not the straightforward demand on raw dexterity, that give pianists a seemingly unsurmountable task. Of the five techniques discussed earlier in this dissertation, four contribute to the increased difficulty of Godowsky’s versions compared to Chopin’s original: switch, condensation, superimposition/addition, and merging; the reconstruction technique does not contribute to the increased difficulty because it alters the musical character of the material, rather than its physical demands. The stamina to continue with the same excellence and ease in the last part of a Study as in the first few bars should also be mentioned; this is one type of challenge that Chopin’s and Godowsky’s works share, but it is more demanding in the latter due to the added voices and jumps. The problem of memorization is the last factor that adds to the difficulty of Godowsky’s works in general, including the Studies.

**Switch**

Switch technique is most likely the cause of the first hurdle a pianist faces when attempting the two-hand Studies for the first time. In most cases, the first challenge is to train the left hand to play unfamiliar and agile
passages instead of chords and accompaniment patterns. Theoretically, if it
is to be assumed that all the fingers in both hands are equally developed,
the left hand should be able to execute any passagework that the right is
capable of with the same ease or difficulty. Yet this very assumption is
incorrect in most cases: the long tradition of assigning a role of harmonic
and rhythmic foundation to the left hand and the melody and bravura
passages of the foreground to the right inevitably limits a pianist in his or
her education. Apart from contrapuntal compositions from the Baroque
period, there are few examples in which the composer treats the two hands
equally. For example, of twenty-seven Études by Chopin, only one
concentrates on left-hand virtuosity; the only other works in which Chopin
assigns the equally important and technically demanding part to the left
hand are his Prelude Op. 28 No. 14 and the last movement of Sonata No. 2,
Op. 35, in which both hands play the same material throughout. Clearly, it is
the lack of pianists’ experience and familiarity in dealing with rapid and light
passages in the left hand that make some of Godowsky’s Studies more
difficult than they should be; apart from a few works in the piano literature
like those discussed above, the conventional repertoire displays an
astonishing lack of equality in the two hands.
Curiously, the switch technique does not always increase difficulty; in some exceptional cases, it actually does exactly the opposite. When the switch technique is applied to a right-hand passage, it can alter the nature of the writing and the mechanism of the execution because human hands are constructed in the mirror image of each other. For example, a conventional C major ascending scale starts on the thumb in the right hand and on the fifth finger in the left. An interesting occurrence as such is found in *Study* No. 4\(^9\), the second version of Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 2:

Ex 6-1a Chopin, *Étude* Op. 10 No. 2, mm. 1-2

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\(^9\) Godowsky gives the title *Ignis fatuus*[will-o’the-wisp] to this study.
The original by Chopin is intended to train fingers 3, 4 and 5 of the right hand by giving a rapid passage to them; when switched literally into the left hand, the passage is played by fingers 1, 2 and 3, which are the strong fingers. Godowsky does add a similar chromatic passage in the right hand, but he does not rewrite the left hand to assign the same challenge and, as a result, the left-hand execution in itself is technically less demanding than the right hand of Chopin’s original. Godowsky did have two good reasons not to do so. First, Study No. 3, the first version of the same Chopin etude for the left hand alone, deals with the same problem as Chopin intended and Godowsky may have considered it redundant to write the same part for a different Study that has a completely different character; in Study No. 3, Godowsky solves the issue by swapping the harmonic support and the rapid line as shown below:
The second reason is the consideration of the sound effect. He could have used *Study* No. 3 as the base for *Study* No. 4 as he did for *Study* No. 25 in which he uses the version for the left hand alone (*Study* No. 23) as the left hand of the two-hand version\(^9^1\). But such writing in a work titled *Ignis fatuus* (Will-o’-the-wisp) would have resulted in too dense a sound due to the low register of the fast moving sixteenth notes in the left hand. However, the example above is an exception; in most cases the innate difficulty of the left hand is at least not lessened by the switch technique, since most of the *Studies* contain writings that are not hand-specific in nature.

To overcome the increased difficulties that the switch technique brings, one has to put a conscious effort to train the left hand so that it is capable of executing agile figures as fluently as its counterpart. Fortunately, the

\(^9^1\) See Chapter 3 of my dissertation for the analysis of *Study* No. 25.
process does not take as much time as a pianist’s initial formative training; a pianist who is ready to tackle works that are as technically demanding as the Studies will possess sufficient intelligence and experience that will guide him or her to find the most effective path to development of the left-hand fluency.

**Condensation**

Condensation technique contributes to the increased difficulty in all of Godowsky’s Studies for the left hand alone and some two-handed versions in which he condenses Chopin’s original into the left hand in order to give newly composed lines in the right hand. It is common sense that it would be a challenge to achieve the same result with only one hand when the work is originally conceived for both hands. However, Godowsky did not find such a task to be insurmountable because he thought that the left hand has the potential to be the more useful of the two:

In its application to piano playing the left hand has many advantages over the right hand and it would suffice to enumerate but a few of these...the left hand is favoured by nature in having the stronger part of the hand for the upper voice...In addition to what is stated above, the left hand, commanding as it does the lower half of the keyboard, has the incontestable advantage of enabling the player to produce with less effort and more elasticity a fuller and mellower tone, superior in quantity and quality to that of the right hand...A good proof of its greater adaptability is the fact, that there have been a
number of compositions written for the left hand alone, while to the author’s [Godowsky’s] knowledge, with one exception, none have as yet been written for the right hand alone.  

Godowsky’s optimism notwithstanding, there is no use in denying that his Studies written using the condensation technique present pianistic challenges of unusual degree and of unique nature. The reasons for such challenges are very clear, and they can be categorized into two elements: the independence and strength of the fingers that are required to accomplish the separation of different voices, and the frequent leaps to create the illusion of a two-hand piece.

Study No. 16a, the second version based on Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 8, serves as a fine example of the first element. Throughout the Study, Godowsky mostly assigns three voices or at least two to the left hand, one of which is rapid and features continuous sixteenth-note passages:

Ex. 6-2 Godowsky, Study No. 16a, mm. 1-2

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92 Godowsky, 9.
To bring out the different voices effectively, it is crucial that the performer possesses the fluency and absolute control of each finger; otherwise it is possible that this work ends up being a mere succession of monotonous sixteenth notes that travel up and down the keyboard. To avoid such a risk and to create true polyphony, the performer must differentiate the sonority of the top melody notes, bottom bass notes and the middle voice, the last of which requires the velocity and evenness of execution of the sixteenth notes. Combined with the piano dolce indication prescribed by Godowsky, this is not an easy mission to accomplish; it calls for a pianist with complete control of his or her fingers and with the tonal command of the highest order.

It does not help to hastily delve into practicing a left-hand Study as a whole, even though some may look more sparse than others. Each element has to be carefully analyzed and practiced separately before assembling everything together. Godowsky’s works for the left hand alone are just like his two-hand works in that they are polyphonic in nature; a cerebral approach must take precedence, and pianistic mastery is to be assumed if one is to consider performing these pieces.

The second way in which condensation leads to technical difficulty is the wide jumps that Godowsky writes for his compositions for the left hand alone. Wide jumps help with the problem of creating an illusion of a two-
handed work when writing for left hand alone. In these works, Godowsky succeeds in giving the listener such an illusion by covering the width of the keyboard in addition to the clever displacement of melody or bass notes and effective use of the damper pedal, which he considered to be capable of functioning as an additional hand, declaring “in my Chopin Studies...the pedal actually takes place of a third and sometimes even a fourth hand.”

See Ex. 6-3a from Study No. 43 based on Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 12 for an example of such leaps that span more than five octaves:

Ex. 6-3a Godowsky, Study No. 43, mm 47-49

In this excerpt, Godowsky even outdoes Chopin by one octave; the extra lower bass note helps overcome the lack of natural resonance resulting from the distance between the two hands in Chopin’s original in the analogous passage:

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93 Nicholas, 70.
Godowsky does not hesitate to insert jumps in music of subtler character and dynamic. See Study No. 40, the second version based on Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 9:

Ex. 6-4 Godowsky, Study No. 40, mm. 25-26

Needless to say, the frequent leaps and changes of hand position add to the difficulty of Godowsky’s left-hand works by demanding stamina to continuously execute them and by increasing the chance of inaccuracy in terms of both the notes themselves and their desired sonority and character.
However, it is clear that Godowsky had to employ such techniques for musical reasons:

[1]n this particular set of left hand it has been the author[‘]s intention to assign to the left hand alone a task commensurate with the demands made by the modern evolution in the means of musical expression.

Because Godowsky was so knowledgeable of piano writing, his jumps are always cleverly placed so that an experienced pianist can practice them to ensure a reasonable accuracy. A careful repetition that will develop a reliable muscle memory of the distance of a jump while holding the same chord position as shown in Ex. 6-3a, or an intellectual approach to establish an anchor such as the relationship between first and fifth fingers as shown in Ex. 6-4 are examples of such ways of practicing Godowsky’s jumps.

Superimposition/addition and merging

Godowsky was fascinated by counterpoint and his music always reflects such a trait. He writes:

[M]y works [are] not so difficult manually, as [they] require more a polyphonic brain, and fingers that work in co-operation of with the brain...It

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94 Godowsky, 9.
requires tonal discrimination. Huneker wrote of my compositions that they were a union of Bach and Chopin.\textsuperscript{95}

Huneker’s assessment is correct in that Godowsky did not hesitate to stack up voices, each of which demands a certain degree of pianistic achievement. See the following juxtaposition of two bars from \textit{Study} No. 10, the fourth version based on Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 5:

\begin{quote}
Ex. 6-5 Godowsky, \textit{Study} No. 10, mm. 5 and 7 juxtaposed against each other
\end{quote}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{c}
\textbf{Bar 5} \\
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{bar5.png} \\
\textbf{Bar 7} \\
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{bar7.png}
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

In bar 5, Godowsky superimposes his own melody in the right hand, while the left hand plays the bass note, Chopin’s original right-hand melody in sixteenth notes and an additional line in eighth notes stemming from the

\textsuperscript{95} Nicholas, 134.
melody. Godowsky superimposes yet another line in bar 7 on the already complicated texture of bar 5, which would have been a mere repetition of the same passage; this addition results in a passagework that is seemingly unnatural and difficult to execute. Godowsky’s own fingering shows that it is in fact logical and natural, but it is by no means an easy feat to play this passage seamlessly; the upper voice of bar 7 is a loose inversion of the main theme which is presented in the left hand. This passage forces the performer to play the sixteenth note scale passage below, which is identical to the right hand of bar 5, with only first and second fingers this time. Moreover, because of the close proximity of the two superimposed voices, the performer must exercise caution to play the two voices with very different sonority.

Study No. 27, Godowsky’s second version based on Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 2, titled “Waltz” also contains a good example of added difficulty inflicted by superimposition and addition technique:
Ex. 6-6 Godowsky, *Study* No. 27, mm. 1-4 and mm. 39-42 juxtaposed against each other

The *Study* begins in two voices; when the theme repeats in bar 39, Godowsky adds two outer voices. A series of bass notes that were not given in the first presentation is added; a note by note copy of the right hand of Chopin’s original is added as the top voice. In this example, each hand is now burdened with a new challenge. The left hand must jump larger
intervals to play the moving line and the bass notes simultaneously without destroying the piano dynamic; the right hand suddenly has to play a fast passage with weaker fingers while maintaining a legato quality in the upper voice and rhythmic displacement in the lower voice. These four bars require, in addition to the qualities mentioned above, a mastery of pedalling and sensitive ears.

The technique of merging should not be neglected as another element that adds to the increased difficulty in Godowsky’s *Studies*; this technique can be mentioned under the same category as superimposition/addition technique because the nature of the challenges is very similar in the case of these two techniques. Among the works in which the merging technique is used Godowsky’s *Study* No. 46, which is a combination of Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 5 and Op. 25 No. 9, serves as a good example. It is a veritable trial for the dexterity and the mind of a pianist, who has to master first the challenge of playing two Chopin etudes simultaneously and then must polish it so that all the voices are properly balanced.

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96 See Chapter 3 of my dissertation for a detailed analysis of *Study* No. 46.
To deal with the counterpoint as a result of superimposition/addition and merging techniques, one must approach them as though one would Well Tempered Clavier by J. S. Bach. Each voice must be extracted and practiced separately; from finding the right sonority for each line to deciding upon the most desired articulation, everything must be meticulously planned, and not left to mindless and mechanical repetition. Once put together, all the voices have to sound fluent and clear, and the performer should possess complete independence of fingers and an excellent pair of trained ears to make sure that the damper pedal is used just the right amount; enough to sustain notes that cannot be held otherwise, yet not too much that it blurs the clarity of texture.

Stamina and memorization

An element that is easy to underestimate when discussing the difficulty of Godowsky’s Studies is the stamina required in playing through one, not to mention a few in succession. Most of Chopin’s originals are a true test of a pianist’s endurance among other qualities, and Godowsky is often rather merciless in his Studies in that aspect. One pianistic challenge that Chopin’s original and Godowsky’s versions share is the repetition of the
same or similar muscle movements, which result in premature fatigue. In addition to the repetition, the frequent jumps in the left hand in Godowsky’s versions to simultaneously play the bass notes and the moving line contribute to the added necessity of the performer’s stamina. In this case there are two strategies to overcome this challenge of endurance: repetition and planning. Clearly, a repeated stress on a muscle will train it; by playing through a Study multiple times or practicing mechanical exercises, one can increase the stamina in the arm and the fingers. A pianist who has experienced Chopin’s Études will know how to develop such endurance without injuring oneself. Also, it is important not to exhaust all the energy in the beginning of a Study; one should always think of what lies ahead and plan accordingly.

The last element is the matter of memorization. Godowsky found “that memorizing his own works gave him more worry than any other pieces.”

The polyphony of the Studies and the chromatic nature of Godowsky’s harmonic language make it much more difficult to commit the Studies to the performer’s memory than Chopin’s original, which is much simpler in terms of texture and harmonic language compared to Godowsky’s versions. In the Studies, the sheer amount of information in the same playing time is greatly

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97 Nicholas, 142.
increased; compare Ex. 6-7a and Ex. 6-7b, both of which are the first three bars of the trio section, for such an added complexity:

Ex. 6-7a Chopin, Étude Op. 25 No. 5, mm. 45-47

Ex. 6-7b Godowsky, Study No. 33 (first version based on Chopin’s Étude Op. 25 No. 5), mm. 45-47
Chopin assigns the bass notes and the melody line to the left hand, while accompanying it with arpeggiated chords in the right hand in triplets; Godowsky condenses Chopin’s entire writing into the left hand in the Study and superimposes two highly chromatic voices in the right hand. As shown above, memorizing Godowsky’s Studies is truly a task that combines the difficulty of performing Chopin’s deft passages and the challenge of J. S. Bach’s multi-voiced works and it must be treated as such, rather than simple entities of melody and accompaniment.

The causes of the difficulties that Godowsky presents in his compositions are manifold. Switch technique adds the unfamiliarity factor; the challenges that condensation technique imposes are both cerebral and physical. Superimposition/addition and merging techniques require a pianist to approach the work from a contrapuntal point of view; lastly, while stamina and memorization issues are fundamentally present in all performance situations, they are much more challenging and complicated than usual in the Studies. Such complexity was a result of Godowsky’s musical ideals rather than an objective in itself. However there were many who failed to understand it; some of them publicly criticized the Studies for having been designed for impressing the public. Such criticisms as well as positive reactions will be discussed in Chapter 7 of this dissertation.
Chapter 7: Conclusions - Critical Responses and Recordings

Critical Responses

Since their appearance, Godowsky’s Studies were considered by some to be an unnecessary augmentation to Chopin’s already self-sufficient works. While favourably received by the general public and by many of his colleagues, the Studies were despised by some musicians and critics alike. Part of Godowsky’s misfortune was that he was born about half a century too late; had he been a contemporary of Liszt or Brahms, he may have been received quite differently as a composer who created pieces based on existing musical works. After all, in the first part of the Romantic era everybody was doing what Godowsky did. Pianist-composers were still embellishing freely and improvising cadenzas; Liszt was producing a wide range of transcriptions, and arrangements from operatic fantasies, and arrangements of Schubert’s Lieder to adaptations of Beethoven Symphonies for the piano solo. And by no means was he the only one pursuing that line of work. But by the end of the nineteenth century, arrangements and transcriptions were already considered as a thing of the past. By the time Godowsky became active as a composer and performer, he was often labeled as a heretic. There were many who regarded the Study No. 48 that combined two of Chopin’s études as a simple trick to impress the audience,
and the left-hand *Studies* as simply a madman’s attempt at the impossible.

Godowsky’s efforts were, in general, increasingly viewed as almost shameful in the age of the *Urtext* and the strengthening valuation of accuracy and fidelity to the composer.

While the general atmosphere was hostile enough to discourage Godowsky from writing additional *Studies* after 1914, there were also a few who praised Godowsky’s ideas and efforts. James Huneker, in his biography of Chopin, writes the following regarding Godowsky’s *Studies*:

In 1894 I saw in manuscript some remarkable versions of the Chopin Studies by Leopold Godowsky. The study in G sharp minor was the first one published and played in public by this young pianist. Unlike the Brahms derangements [Brahms’ arrangement of Chopin’s Op. 25 No. 2], they are musical but immensely difficult. ...More breath-catching, and a piece at which one must cry out: “Hats off, gentlemen! A tornado!” is the caprice called “Badinage.” But if it is meant to badinage, it is no sport for the pianist of everyday technical attainments. This is formed of two studies. In the right hand is the G flat study, op. 25, No. 9, and in the left the black key study, op. 10, No. 5. The two go laughing through the world like old friends; brother and sister they are tonally, trailing behind them a cloud of iridescent glory. Godowsky has cleverly combined the two, following their melodic curves as nearly as is possible. In some places he has thickened the harmonies and shifted the “black key” figures to the right hand. It is the work of a remarkable pianist. ...and the C major study, op. 10, No. 7, Chopin’s Toccata, is arranged for the left hand, and seems very practical and valuable. Here the adapter has displayed great taste and skill, especially on the third page. The pretty musical idea is not destroyed, but viewed from other points of vantage. ...Whether he has treated Chopin with reverence I leave my betters to determine. What has reverence to do with the case, anyhow? Plato is parsed in the schoolroom, and Beethoven taught in conservatories! Therefore why worry over the question of Godowsky’s
attitude! Besides, he is writing for the next generation – presumably a generation of Rosenthals [Moritz Rosenthal, a famous virtuoso].

Huneker’s assessment of the Studies is valuable in that it recognizes not only the practical and technical values but also the musical intentions that Godowsky demonstrates throughout the set. Huneker correctly points out the humorous character of the Badinage and admits that Chopin’s musical idea is not destroyed.

Alistair Hinton’s more recent article is also worth quoting. While reviewing the first volume of Carlo Grante’s recording of the Studies, Hinton recognizes that Godowsky’s intentions were to create works based on positive aesthetic qualities, not on virtuosity. Hinton reports:

...his [Godowsky’s] development of total independence of each finger expanded the expressive potential of the pianist – polydynamic, polyrhythmic, polychromatic and, most especially, polyphonic. ...He considered his Studien as a new edifice built upon the ‘solid and invulnerable foundation’ of Chopin’s originals...Certain past pedagogues of the piano frowned upon the Studien as tasteless perversions of Chopin – missing the point entirely. Godowsky’s harmonic and polyphonic vocabulary begins where Chopin’s left off – not the Chopin of the youthful Études but the more subtly refined later Chopin of the last great works...neither pianistic nor composerly virtuosity are at the heart of what Godowsky presents to his audience in these works. Elegance, eloquence and spontaneity are the order of the day.

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98 James Huneker, Chopin: The Man and His Music (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1918), 208-212.
Documented critical responses of Godowsky’s debut in Berlin in December 1900, which was the turning point of his pianistic career, provide other examples of positive reaction towards the Studies. Audience members, professionals and amateurs, showed an enthusiastic acceptance towards his Studies, seven of which Godowsky played in the concert. The Berlin music critic Ernst Taubert writes:

Herr Godowsky offered us rare gifts which he had compiled himself out of the studies of Chopin. If one hears how it sounds, then one’s not exactly unjustifiable misgivings evaporate immediately. Entirely new formations are sounded which moreover nobody will be able to imitate in playing, because they offer unheard of technical difficulties which are only calculated for the abnormal abilities of their author…he stands out as the most important artistic personality that the season has so far offered us.100

Owing to their nature, the Studies were inevitably met with negative reactions from people who thought a written text was never to be altered. The interesting aspect of such criticisms is that none of the hostile reactions succeed in displaying a logical grounding for their claims; their only reason to attack Godowsky’s Studies was that they were based on someone else’s work and therefore are sacrilegious by birth. Such criticisms are found as early as in 1901, following Godowsky’s aforementioned Berlin concert where he played his Badinage (Study No. 47) in which he combines Chopin’s Études Op. 10 No. 5 and Op. 25 No. 9. William Candy admitted that he

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100 Nicholas, 51.
“prefer[s] them one at a time.”\textsuperscript{101} Otto Lessmann, a German composer and music critic, had no mercy for such an act and was much harsher than Candy with his words:

An American[sic] ‘specialist,’ Mr. L. Godowsky, of New York, has caused some little sensation here by his playing the great Chopin ‘Etudes’ with the left hand, while with his right he plays a counterpart of his own composition! Inartistic and in bad taste as such trickery undoubtedly is, it is calculated to impose upon and astonish the less musically cultivated portion of the public.\textsuperscript{102}

It must be pointed out that Lessmann, while severely criticizing Godowsky, never explains why such ‘trickery’ is inartistic and in bad taste; Lessmann also misunderstands Godowsky’s intentions, which never was to astonish anyone.

There were also other criticisms and among them, Carl Engel’s (1883-1944) deserves a quotation, especially considering his later change of stance on Godowsky’s works. Engel complained of “transcriptural obsessions in some musicians” and declared that “one of the worst cases, undoubtedly, is that of Mr. Leopold Godowsky. He can not [sic] pick up a sheet of music, without wanting to trace over it convolutions of octave runs and double trills […], and all very cleverly, at that.”\textsuperscript{103} It is very clear that Engel’s was not an informed criticism because octave runs and double trills are very seldom found in Godowsky’s works. Interestingly and ironically enough, Engel later became a

\textsuperscript{103} Sachania, Introductory Essay: viii.
member of the ‘Godowsky circle’ as well as the future Editor of the *Musical Quarterly* and President of G. Schirmer publishing company; Godowsky dedicated his left-hand *Waltz Poems* to Engel in 1930.\(^{104}\)

Huneker’s praises, quoted earlier, were not safe from criticism either. After a more or less favourable review of Huneker’s biography on Chopin, William Reeves felt that he had to settle the account right for the “derangement and tinkering” by Godowsky:

Finally, in regard to the question of derangement and tinkering – ‘bedevilment,’ as Mr. Huneker may well call it – we learn that the pianist Godowsky has concocted a caprice called ‘Badinage,’ which is a bedevilment of two studies by Chopin – ‘in the right hand is the G flat study (Op. 25, No. 9) and in the left hand the black key study (Op. 10, No. 5)’! But still worse: ‘The F minor study (Op. 25, No. 2), as considered by the ambidextrous Godowsky, is put in the bass, where it whirs along to the melodic encouragement of a theme of the paraphraser’s own (!) in the right.’ What next?\(^{105}\)

Reeves, as others, fails to explain why such acts are considered a ‘bedevilment’.

In 1928, there was an exchange of a series of public correspondences in *The Musical Times*. First, a reviewer under the pen name *Discus*\(^{106}\) severely condemned Godowsky’s version of Schubert’s *Moment Musical* No.

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\(^{104}\) Ibid., viii.


\(^{106}\) Most likely a pseudonym; the identity of this person could not be determined.
3, which invited a rebuttal by the American critic Clinton Gray-Fisk. Even though this is not directly related to the Studies, the conversation is valuable enough to be cited here due to the points of view of the two parties involved. Discus accuses:

...let us hope that more respect will be shown to the composer than is present in a distortion of the well-known ‘Moment Musical’...The harmony is altered throughout, very much for the worse, the simplicity of the original being absolutely destroyed; new contrapuntal and other features are added...If Pouishnov [the pianist whose disc is being reviewed], who plays it, prefers this vandalistic version he should be compelled to keep it for private consumption. I hope all my reviewing colleagues will lift up their voices in a chorus of protest; otherwise, we shall find other familiar classics mauled in the same way.107

Unimpressed, Gray-Fisk protested:

...I should like to register a vigorous protest against certain observations by your reviewer ‘Discus’ concerning a certain record...personal dislike of a specific piece cannot be regarded as an adequate basis for the formulation of artistic principles.

‘Discus’ describes Godowsky’s arrangement of the ‘Moment Musical’ as a ‘vandalized version,’ states that Pouishnov should be compelled to keep it for private consumption, and hopes all his reviewing colleagues will lift up their voices in a chorus of similar protest. ...It is curious that this academic attitude persists in face of the fact that the arch-arranger and transcriber was the greatest of all masters, namely, Bach. Moreover, it is significant that the work of arranging and transcribing continues to attract musicians of the front rank, such as Busoni, Godowsky, Rachmaninov, &c. ...When, however, we read that Bach himself...was accused by his church council,...it becomes clear that this class of criticism emanates from a type of mind which is ever in our midst. ...others, including myself, regard it as a disease which may be more accurately described as ‘mental ossification’...To such people any advancement in knowledge or achievement ...is regarded...as being either ‘blasphemous,’ ‘immoral,’ ‘impossible,’ ‘improper,’ ‘unplayable,’ or, as in this instance, ‘vandalistic.’

...He [Godowsky] has by a process of contrapuntal super-imposition, harmonic enrichment, and general re-design of keyboard lay-out, transformed these Schubert and Albeniz pieces from tinkling trifles into genuine pianoforte literature which, musically and pianistically, is far more interesting than the originals.108

Lastly, at the end of Gray-Fisk’s letter, the editor of the journal who remains anonymous added, revealing his or her apparent lack of knowledge of Godowsky’s artistic intentions in creating the works discussed above:

...If Mr. Gray-Fisk really thinks this far-fetched ludicrous harmonization is to the ‘benefit’ of the song, we can only wish him well out of his embryonic stage of musicianship.109

Gray-Fisk’s reaction to the above comment, if it existed, cannot be found.

Such animosities continued even after Godowsky’s death. The critic Bryce Morrison does not hide hostility when he reviews David Saperton’s recording of the Studies:

Godowsky wrote 53 studies on 26 of Chopin’s studies...The theory is admirable but the practice mischievous and of an often perverse ingenuity; and many will question Frank Cooper’s [who wrote the commentary for the recording] enthusiastic rather than critical assessment. ...He assumes that greater complexity equals greater quality. ...He calls Godowsky’s merciless vulgarization of Chopin’s op. 25 no. 5 ‘enrichment’, and if Godowsky’s Ignis fatuus...is of a different technical order from Liszt’s Feux Follets, it is musically much inferior. ...David Saperton (1889-1970), whose sadly uneventful career is charted on the sleeve by his student Sidney Foster, provides wonders of nimbleness. ...[however] many of these performances suggest a pianist whose musical sensibilities were blunted by such intensive work on his curious and Herculean task [on Godowsky’s works].110

109 ibid., 443. An anonymous editorial comment added at the end of Gray-Fisk’s letter.
It is difficult to take someone’s opinion seriously who fails to provide adequate reasoning yet who does not shy away from ad hominem attacks.

There are two kinds of prejudiced judgment shared by the critics on the Studies: first is the fact that Godowsky used existing works as a foundation to create his own music. A musical work is not a painting or sculpture, on which any sort of tampering will be an irreversible destruction of the original works. It is often forgotten that no matter what Godowsky does, Chopin’s original remains intact, as Busoni claims: “A transcription does not destroy the original; so there can be no question of loss arising from it.”\(^{111}\) One may disagree with Godowsky from an aesthetic point of view or simply have no preference for his works, but there should be no argument about the destruction of Chopin’s original. Therefore the criticisms stemming from this point of view lose their strength. Secondly, some critics incorrectly accused Godowsky of taking advantage of a masterpiece for an easy way to impress. As many written accounts by Godowsky himself and a close examination of his Studies show, such statements are false; Godowsky’s objectives were always to create something musically meaningful, and the

unprecedented virtuosity of the Studies is simply a result of the composer’s unique musical language.

Godowsky’s Studies should not be a victim of such prejudices. Branding them as a cheap device for technical showmanship, many musicians and critics alike refused to take them seriously. But as proven earlier, the Studies are full of original ideas and they have their own musical merits, rather than being mere showpieces. If one decides to deny their value, one also is denying the greatness of one specific genre: the variations. It needs to be pointed out that many great composers wrote works in a form of a variation on another composer’s theme. For musical purists, it would be enough to point out that the Handel Variations, without doubt among the greatest pianistic output by Brahms are in fact, a set of variations of a theme by G. F. Händel, as the title implies. There is also the pre-Baroque era tradition of cantus firmus technique, which is precisely the technique Godowsky employs for one of the five categories he thought of for the Studies. It is worth noting that Josquin des Prez did not use the pre-existing L’homme armé because of his lack of genius. Godowsky sums up his reasoning:

To justify himself in the controversy which exists regarding the aesthetic and ethic[al] rights of one composer to use another composer’s works, themes or ideas, in order to freely build upon them new musical creations, such as
arrangements, transcriptions, paraphrases, and variations...the author [Godowsky] desires to say that it entirely depends upon the intentions, nature, and quality of the work of the so-called transgressors. As the Chopin studies are, as compositions in étude form, universally acknowledged to be the highest attainment in the realm of beautiful pianoforte music combined with indispensable mechanical and technical usefulness, the author thought it wisest to build upon their solid and invulnerable foundation, for the purpose of furthering the art of pianoforte playing. Being adverse to any alterations in the original texts of any master works when played in their original form, the author would strongly condemn any artists for tampering ever so little with such works as those of Chopin.\textsuperscript{112}

**Recordings**

Since the composition of the *Studies*, there have been numerous recordings of them by various artists, including the composer himself.\textsuperscript{113} Unfortunately Godowsky’s efforts are only available on piano rolls, which are notoriously unreliable due to their pliability, and therefore they are excluded from this discussion. Two fraudulent recordings must be also pointed out and mentioned to avoid confusion. The first is a recording from a company called Nanasawa Articulates; it was released in 1991 containing selections from the *Studies*. The performance was credited to a pianist by the name of Michael Nanasakov. This recording is in fact a joke by a Japanese piano technician and producer Junichi Nanasawa. The disc is created by the clever use of

\textsuperscript{112} Rimm, 243.
\textsuperscript{113} Nicholas, 256.
Yamaha Disklavier and computer editing. Secondly, there is a famous hoax in the name of the pianist Joyce Hatto. Her husband patched together the recordings of Carlo Grante, Marc-André Hamelin and Ian Hobson and produced a complete set of the *Studies* to be credited to Hatto.\(^{114}\) The origins of Hatto’s recordings did not take a long time to be revealed.

Three pianists have achieved the feat of recording the entire fifty-three *Studies* for official release.\(^{115}\) Geoffrey Douglas Madge is the first pianist to do so in 1989; he provides the listener with not only the sound recording but also a booklet which contains a short commentary by Madge himself on Godowsky’s writing in general. In the booklet, Madge correctly acknowledges Godowsky’s intentions in writing the *Studies*:

> Despite the fact that all the studies pose monstrous difficulties (even the easiest), the general interest lies in their musicality and sonority, the texture of the keyboard writing, the polyphony, the grand line, the use of pedal (sometimes with various possibilities). All of this is reminiscent of the Johann Sebastian Bach solo string partitas and sonatas in the development of the inner polyphonic lines within an ever-developing tonal architecture and design.\(^{116}\)

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\(^{115}\) Italian pianist Francesco Libetta played the entire set in concerts of which the live recordings are available through unofficial routes, but they remain unpublished as of 2017.

Madge generally performs the Studies much slower than the tempi prescribed by the composer and required four compact discs; his recording is valuable as the first sound recording of the complete set and the booklet is worth reading.

Another pianist credited with an officially released recording of the complete Studies is Carlo Grante. Chronologically speaking, Grante’s 2006 recording is the latest of all as of 2017; his recording is a significant indicator of the renewed interest in Godowsky’s works, despite Harold Schonberg’s pessimistic statement: “...the chances are that they will be entirely forgotten a generation from now (1987) unless the twentieth century experiences a complete esthetic turnabout.”\(^{117}\) Grante’s is the only recording of the entire set with all the ossias included as separate tracks.

Of all the recordings of the Studies, Canadian Marc-André Hamelin’s is the most publicly recognized of all; this set of then-obscure works received the Gramophone award in 2000. This recording deserves a special mention also on the account of a very interesting and sometimes witty commentary by Hamelin himself. He begins with a general commentary on Godowsky and

his *Studies*; Hamelin’s argument is supportive of Godowsky as a composer and the intentions behind the creation of the set:

But wait! What’s this? ‘Dolce’, ‘dolcissimo’, ‘molto espressivo’ markings by the dozen? Here a nocturne, a polonaise, there a mazurka? Beautifully involved harmony in velvety rich textures? Anyone who has taken the trouble to spend more than a short amount of time with these pieces finds that Godowsky’s fervent wish to revolutionize pianistic writing carried with it only the loftiest aesthetic aims, and each of the Studies...adheres unquestionably to this dual purpose. Despite their formidable reputation [that they require Olympian feats of execution], many of them are serene in character.\(^{118}\)

Hamelin’s recording is also the only one in which the pianist presents his own points of view on each of the *Studies*. Hamelin’s writings are explanations and insights of each *Study* rather than a scholarly research. Hence one reads comments that are more personal than formal, such as the following:

One of the most pianistically accessible of the entire set. (It is safe to assume that any newcomer to Godowsky will find the final contrary-motion octave flourish vastly amusing.)\(^{119}\)

The one that started it all...For many pianists such a profusion of left-hand thirds represents a fearsome novelty...but, theoretically at least, there is no reason for the left hand to be undercapable. *Per aspera, ad astra!*\(^{120}\)

One also finds witty remarks such as the following:

It had to happen: Godowsky would not have been able to resist at least one waltz treatment, since they could be said to represent the core of his entire

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\(^{118}\) Marc-André Hamelin, liner notes to *Godowsky The Complete Studies on Chopin’s Études*, Marc-André Hamelin, Hyperion B00004S3BF, CD, 2000: 11-12.

\(^{119}\) Ibid., 15. Comment on *Study* No. 7 (the first version based on Chopin’s Op. 10 No. 5).

\(^{120}\) Ibid., 23. Comment on *Study* No. 36.
output (as evidenced by the *Walzermasken* and *Triakontameron* collections).\textsuperscript{121}

Witty the comment above may be, but it also has a piece of truth; Viennese waltz does occupy a sizeable part of Godowsky’s output. Overall, Hamelin’s recording is valuable in that it gives pleasure and education at the same time for casual listeners and experts alike.

Other pianists who recorded selections of the *Studies* include Boris Berezovsky, Michel Béroff, Jorge Bolet, Ian Hobson, Ivan Ilić, Shigeo Neriki, Vladimir de Pachmann\textsuperscript{122}, Doris Pines and David Saperton.\textsuperscript{123} Two of these recordings which are made in the twenty-first century stand out: Berezovsky’s and Ilić’s. Berezovsky (2005) plays eight of Chopin’s *Études*; each etude is followed by the corresponding one of Godowsky *Studies*. In addition to serving an educational purpose, the juxtaposition also gives a certain freshness to the listeners. Because the memory of the original Chopin etude is still vivid, the listeners can track the structure of the Godowsky versions with ease while appreciating the new ideas that are

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 20. Comment on *Study* No. 27.

\textsuperscript{122} The critic Harold Schonberg dismisses de Pachmann’s recording of the *Study* No. 22 as “a ludicrous whatnot of chopped lines, all-but-palpable desperation and wrong notes.” Schonberg, 336.

\textsuperscript{123} Nicholas, 267-269.
added into the *Studies*. Ilić’s recording (2011) is worth mentioning because it is the first complete set of the *Studies* for the left hand alone.

**Conclusion**

The *Studies* began as a simple experiment on Chopin’s *Études*; the five compositional techniques presented in Chapter 2 of this dissertation explain how the set of fifty-three works achieve Godowsky’s musical ideal, which was modern counterpoint. As evidenced in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 of this dissertation, Godowsky put a considerable amount of effort in composing the *Studies*; their notorious complexity and pianistic difficulty are the results of such musical effort rather than the objective in itself. Most critics were not supportive of the *Studies*, which became, according to K. S. Sorabji, “the principal cause of the Niagaras of abuse which have been poured on his [Godowsky’s] head.”

And Sachania reports:

> The broad critical consensus was that the arrangements aimed at ‘improving’ the classics, ‘modernizing’ them, or amplifying their technical difficulties. Accordingly, Godowsky was indicted with ‘damaging’ the works he treated, with threatening the originals’ standing in the repertory, with irrelevance, and with compositional deficiency.  

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Another popular reason for the “Niagaras of abuse” was that his works demand a kind of technical command of the keyboard that is beyond what most people can handle, including most concert artists. Godowsky was undoubtedly gifted with one of the best mechanisms in the history of piano playing, and such display of talent is bound to provoke jealousy in the less fortunate. Unfortunately in this case the less gifted ones had enough power to unjustly label the Studies as cheap display of bravura technique. Sachania sums up:

The critics’ three recurring allegations were: first, that Godowsky had rewritten Chopin’s études in order to augment their technical difficulties; secondly, that in the process he had attempted to ‘improve’ the originals; and, finally, that he had exploited Chopin in order to further his own performing career.\textsuperscript{126}

The aforementioned accusations could not be farther from what Godowsky intended. He writes:

Virtuosity is a fault, not a virtue. And I, who detest virtuosity as such, have been branded a virtuoso, though entirely innocent. Ostentatious mastery of technic, a mastery intended merely to dazzle, I loathe. [...] I can honestly say that in my compositions my aim has never been virtuoso display, but rich and beautiful development of the musical idea. Because in my Chopin Studies I have joined two studies in one and the same composition, I have been regarded as a kind of keyboard acrobat, and my playing of the studies as a bit of theatrical legerdemain. This is really unfair, as what I have accomplished is, in fact, a free musical development along modern polyphonic lines.\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{126} Sachania, Introductory Essay, x.
\textsuperscript{127} Nicholas, 69-70.
As shown in his own words, his goal was never to gain cheap popularity by doing circus tricks on the keyboard, as many suspected. His technical equipment was such that he did not need to invent anything else to convince the public; after all, even before the appearance of the Studies, Godowsky was regarded as the best keyboard technician of all by his peers. Furthermore, the most important musical instrument of the nineteenth century was the piano, and there was enough virtuoso repertoire already waiting to be played when Godowsky started his career. However, he found most of them shallow and meaningless. His attitude towards such a virtuoso vehicle is well known and documented. He writes about one such work, the well-known concert paraphrase by Schulz-Evler on J. Strauss the Second’s Blue Danube waltz:

It is purely a virtuoso piece, whose musical values are slight. In a way I am responsible for its vogue since I played it a good deal when it first came out. But even then I omitted all its banal and empty interlude passages – they are musically impossible – and I kept on reshaping it each time I played it, until at last – there was no Schulz-Evler left!\(^{128}\)

If one is to blame Godowsky for tampering with the existing works, one forgets that the act of transcribing or arranging a piece of music from one medium to another is by no means unknown and unpardonable in the history of western music. Among others, the great Johann Sebastian Bach rewrote many of other composers’ concertos, notably those of Antonio Vivaldi. During

\(^{128}\) Nicholas, 69.
the process he never shied away from reinventing passagework to suit the
destination instrument or to achieve a better musical effect. It must also be
remembered that Bach did not limit his own works within one single medium.
There are plenty of examples where he writes a concerto for one instrument
and then transcribes it into another concerto. There are even works without
specific indication of the instrument on which they should be played – most
notably, the *Art of Fugue*. It is safe to say, therefore, that Bach mainly worked
with musical ideas rather than within the idioms of a specific instrument. W.
A. Mozart left a series of fascinating realizations of a few works by G. F. Händel,
including the famous *Messiah*. Beethoven himself, whose printed notes we
respect almost as much as a religious text, interchanged between piano
sonatas and string quartets more than once.

It was with the emergence of the twentieth-century musicians and of
the new concept of the clear-cut division between a composer and a performer
that people started to look down upon transcriptions. Arnold Schönberg,
hearing the news that the second of his Op. 11 piano pieces was being
reworked by Ferruccio Busoni and that he wanted to publish it side-by-side
with the original, angrily responded:

> It is impossible for me to publish my piece together with a transcription which shows how I could have done it better. Which thus indicates that my piece is imperfect. And it is impossible to try to make the public believe that my piece is good, if I simultaneously indicate that it is not good. I could not do this – out of my instinct for self-preservation – even if I believed it. In this case I
would either have to destroy my piece or rework it myself.\textsuperscript{129}

None other than Schönberg himself had sanctioned or produced many transcriptions of his own and other composers’ music, including the famous arrangement of Brahms’ first Piano Quartet into a work for a symphony orchestra. While one must acknowledge that transcribing a work from an earlier era for new instrumentation is not exactly akin to making a new version of a contemporary work for its original instrumentation, the harshness of Schönberg’s reaction to Busoni is striking and clearly reveals how the attitudes towards transcription were rapidly changing in Godowsky’s lifetime. Schoenberg’s response is a long way from the mindset of Chopin, who himself never was happy with his product and very often added pencil markings indicating possible variants and corrections on his students’ copies, which is the very aspect that makes the preparation of a definitive Chopin edition almost impossible. It is undeniable that it was the trend of the twentieth century that transcriptions were generally accepted as a lesser form of creation, despite the existence of some great works in that genre, but this tendency has undergone some reversal in the past couple of decades, as witnessed by the resurgence of interest in Godowsky’s music and of other pianist-composers of the mid-nineteenth century, or imbued with its aesthetic

\textsuperscript{129} Rimm, 247.
spirit.

Harold Schonberg wrote in 1987:

All conceded that his [Godowsky’s] was – in the studio, at any rate – the most perfect pianistic mechanism of the period and very likely of all time. He was one of the most remarkable pianists who ever lived. [...] His own music – and he composed and transcribed a great deal – is of such complexity, burdened with such elaboration of detail, crossed with so many inner voices, that none but he could play it. [...] In his day it was said that he was composing for a future generation of pianists. If so, that generation has not yet arrived.130

As discussed earlier in this chapter, there are now many pianists who put the work in and took the risk to play and record Godowsky’s complicated music, and many of them achieved success among audience and critics. It is promising to realize that there are more positive reactions than ever; people are finally opening up to them and finding out about not only the pianistic but also the artistic virtue of the Studies. Perhaps the ‘future generation of pianists’ has finally arrived.

Bibliography


Discography


