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The Improvisational Etude: A Model for Creative Practice

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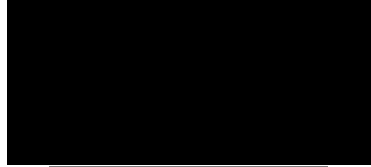
Abstract

This artistic research project investigates the processes involved in adapting the classical etude as a tool for improvisational practice. Tracing the composition, development and performance of eight original etudes for solo piano, the research outcomes are presented in the form of audio recordings, notated scores and exegetical writing. The etude is well established within the Western classical music tradition as a genre that has served pedagogical purposes since the early nineteenth century, and which represents skills development, virtuosity and experimentation. In proposing that the etude genre still offers significant potential for application within contemporary improvised music, and drawing on recent performance work by pianist Matt Mitchell, this research outlines a five-stage model for instrumental practice based on the composition, development and performance of improvisational etudes. This model incorporates heuristic principles and reflective processes to observe and provoke developments in one's practice. The research advocates numerous benefits as a result of this model, through its combination of didactic strategy, composition and reflective practice, which have led to clearer understandings about how new skills manifest in real-time performance. The improvisational etude model is presented as a useful template for practitioners seeking to pursue idiosyncratic outcomes in their practice.

Declaration

This exegesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this exegesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

Signature:



.....

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

1.1 Overview

The purpose of this artistic research project is to investigate the processes involved in adapting the classical piano etude as a model for creative practice in an improvisational solo piano format.¹ Building on the etude's proliferation within the Western classical tradition since the early nineteenth century, it is proposed that the genre offers significant further potential for application within improvised music.

Recent performance work by Philadelphia-based pianist Matt Mitchell has established a precedent for 'improvisational etudes' by deliberately combining didactic strategy with composition to pursue idiosyncratic outcomes in improvised performance. There are also examples of etude-style practices within the jazz tradition, acknowledged herein. To date, however, no study has been undertaken to explore how self-generated improvisational etudes might benefit a practitioner.

Addressing this gap in knowledge, the central question of this research concerns how the etude might be adapted as a tool for creative development in my improvised solo performance practice. This study proposes a five-stage model for self-directed practice through the composition, development and performance of improvisational etudes. Incorporating heuristic, practice-led principles, and drawing on my own reflections, this research explicates the development cycle of a folio of original etudes in order to observe the processes involved and evaluate the model's potential to inform and enrich one's creative practice.

This research presents a contribution to knowledge in three forms. Firstly, its major creative outcome is the performance of eight original improvisational etudes for solo piano, documented on an audio CD (Appendix 1), demonstrating my various artistic achievements as a result of this research. Secondly, the resulting folio of improvisational etudes (Appendix 3) constitutes new compositional work combining performance goals

¹ This research employs the spelling of 'etude' as it appears in common parlance, acknowledging the anglicisation of the French loanword 'étude', generally considered comparable and interchangeable with 'study' or the German 'Übung'.

with didactic strategy. Finally, this exegesis documents experience and insight gained through the five-stage improvisational etude model, which is considered as a template that may be explored, adapted, and tailored by other practitioners.

This exegesis focuses on the compositional and practice processes which led to the performance of my etudes. Chapter One provides an overview of the research and a definition of the term 'improvisational etude', which is positioned in relation to existing literature. In Chapter Two, the improvisational etude model and methodologies relevant to the research are discussed. Chapters Three and Four explicate the processes involved in composing and practising the etudes, with reference to the model's five stages. Additionally, my Recital Notes (Appendix 2) contain an outline and rationale for each etude in the folio, complementing broader themes explored in the exegesis proper. In Chapter Five I reflect on the recorded performance of the etudes, consider progress made towards my initial goals, and position the five-stage improvisational etude model as a valuable tool for my ongoing creative practice.

1.2 The etude: precedents and definitions

In the Western classical tradition, and particularly in the solo piano repertoire, the etude is an important compositional genre that has long been associated with pedagogy and skill development, virtuosity, and technical experimentation (Ferguson and Hamilton 2001). While the etude has traditionally been used to target aspects of pianistic technique, dexterity and coordination, I argue the genre has not been adequately explored as a tool for developing one's improvisational resources. Without dismissing the value of learning challenging repertoire to increase facility at the piano, the traditional etude stops short of directly fostering the investigative practice essential to improvisation. In this section, I position the 'improvisational etude' as the synthesis of two diverse musical traditions.

1.2.1 The classical etude

The practice of composing etudes began to flourish in the early nineteenth century, in response to developments in piano technique, the advent and popularity of the pianoforte itself, and the consequential demand for amateur pedagogical material (Finlow 1992). Over the subsequent two centuries, the term 'etude' has been rendered

prolific, with many notable composers contributing an enormous and diverse body of work in that name. Some of the most lauded and notoriously difficult works in the classical piano repertoire are etudes, demanding feats of pianism and showmanship befitting the nineteenth century 'romantic virtuoso' ideal (Caldwell et al. 2001). Conversely, the genre also contains some of the most aesthetically banal, yet strategically useful compositions one might encounter, owing to its origins in pedagogy and rudimentary technique.

Surprisingly little musicological attention has been dedicated to surveying the etude genre in its entirety, with some helpful exceptions (Ganz 1960; Weber 1993). Notable examples from the genre have been the subject of extensive analysis and discussion, especially works by Chopin (Finlow 1992; Tovey 1944) and Liszt (Samson 2003). What the literature lacks, however, is a concise and widely accepted definition of the term 'etude' and its comparable translations.

The idea of a 'study piece' incorporating didactic elements is something I have been familiar with since my teenage years studying classical piano. Yet ambiguities and inconsistencies emerge when investigating the genre overall. According to Weber (1993), the piano repertory contains works bearing no reference to the term 'etude' but which exhibit properties commonly associated with the genre, such as technical unity. Moreover, precedents for didactic repertoire were established well before the term itself came into use (Ferguson and Hamilton 2001). Attempts have been made to theorise distinctions between 'etude' and variants such as 'exercise' and 'concert study' (Finlow 1993; Thompson and Temperley 2001), with little consistency or universal consensus, while Ganz (1960) argues many works bearing the title 'etude' can more appropriately be considered studies in composition, rather than performance.

The disparities evident throughout the genre suggest that it is the composer's *intent*, rather than any overt structural or musical features, that defines an etude. Fundamentally, the genre has largely depended on the composer's discretion in balancing didactic and aesthetic objectives, and establishing a level of difficulty appropriate to students, amateur hobbyists or—in the case of composer-performers—to adequately challenge their own facility. From an improviser's perspective, this offers a broad scope for interpretation.

1.2.2 Etude-style practices in jazz and contemporary improvised music

In the jazz tradition, self-directed practice and experimentation has long been central to growth and innovation in one's musical language. Certain works within the jazz repertoire stand out for their harmonic construction and are widely adopted as studies for melodic improvisation. One example is Coltrane's *Giant Steps*, which has been described as an etude targeting major third harmonic movements (Porter 2000; Parker 2006). The process of transcribing recorded solos has also been likened to a kind of etude (Berliner 1994).

It should be acknowledged that there is no substantial barrier preventing a resourceful improviser from appropriating any notated repertoire for practice or performance purposes. Pianist Dan Tepfer illustrates this through two examples: an informal video of himself playing Ligeti's *Etude No. 4 'Fanfares'* against a samba backing track (2016), a remarkable and unconventional feat, and his acclaimed album *Goldberg Variations/Variations* (2011), which contains stylistically informed improvisations alongside Bach's original variations. These examples typify a strategy to expand one's musical resources by engaging creatively with other works and traditions.

Pianist Matt Mitchell has most clearly established a precedent for improvisational etudes. His album *Fiction* (Mitchell 2013) documents fifteen pieces performed in a piano and percussion duo format, all of which originated as etudes. In an interview, he describes wanting to access language from contemporary classical sources, including Messiaen, Ferneyhough, and Birtwistle, and integrate certain ideas into practice on his own terms (Cymerman 2014a). The compositions are typically limited to one page, containing highly contrapuntal polyrhythmic challenges, wide intervallic leaps and dense harmonic clusters, and mastering them demands considerable effort.

From my perspective, Mitchell's work offers the most compelling precedent to date for adapting the etude to target idiosyncratic creative development. His notion of generating "self-contained pieces of music" (Crane 2011) intended to expand harmonic and rhythmic resources implies a combination of didactic and experimental processes, extending the 'etude' concept far beyond that of a pre-composed technical exercise or static composition. This was a factor in conceiving my improvisational etude model, expounded in Chapter Two.

Another pianist whose work has directly impacted my vision for improvisational etudes is Craig Taborn, and in particular, his solo album *Avenging Angel* (2011), an intriguing collection of thoughtfully constructed sound worlds. Discussing the preparatory work that led to this recording, he describes improvising short pieces with predetermined durations, and working with tightly focused materials to develop “algorithms” for manipulating them in performance (Cymerman 2014b). With less emphasis on composing and notating, Taborn’s process demonstrates an iterative, experimental approach to solo practice, one that supplants the more formal notion of ‘repertoire’ with small, fertile groups of musical ideas.

Although Mitchell uses the term ‘etude’ in reference to his work, and as far as I can tell, Taborn does not, both their practices demonstrate the kind of experimental, didactic intent I associate with the genre. Importantly, these processes can be repeated and adjusted to target different skills and parameters, offering long term value in terms of individual creative development.

1.2.3 Motivation for adapting the etude in my practice

As an improviser, my interest in exploring the etude is driven by a desire to establish a detailed practice methodology for solo improvisation, and I perceive great value in generating one’s own practice materials. Mitchell’s etudes are technically and conceptually challenging, and while I can recognise uses for them within my practice, those challenges do not necessarily reflect my own goals and performance ambitions. While I intend to build on Mitchell’s precedent, the opportunity to set personal targets and trace my progress through the composition and development of original etudes outweighs the value of emulating existing works.

In my practice, I strongly identify with certain ideas expounded by Morris (2012), especially in relation to the practitioner’s position in navigating diverse traditions of composition and performance. Access to musical resources—including recent and historical recordings, scores, analytical research, and live (or streamed) performances—has never been greater, but so much information can overwhelm just as it can excite. Morris offers a useful perspective with application to the utility of etudes:

The term free music applies to the practice of making music that allows a composer or player to use composition and improvisation in any way they might feel is useful to

present their art, regardless of the prevailing notion of what is 'correct,' no matter the idiom or context (Morris 2012, 8).

An improviser himself, Morris views jazz-based improvisation from outside the tradition with a "non-linear, ontological perspective" (2012, 36) that encourages practitioners to make any desirable connection between new or established processes and ideas.

Such a perspective is fundamental to my etude model, which offers freedom to consider and adapt musical methodologies from jazz, classical and non-Western traditions. The capacity to draw upon different methodologies to benefit one's practice is what Morris terms a "repertoire of approaches" (2012, 8) and is exactly what my etudes seek to exploit.

1.2.4 Defining the 'improvisational etude'

I propose that an improvisational etude is a composition that incorporates didactic strategy in order to expand one's musical resources and performance skills. An etude score should provoke experimentation within one's practice by providing an open-ended set of challenges, but as a composition it should remain fundamentally incomplete, using the disparity between information provided and not provided to invite dialogue and interaction between materials contained in the score and the practitioner's interpretative ability. As distinct from a classical etude, an improvisational etude should not be fully notated, nor should it account for all elements of a musical performance.

This definition emphasises the etude score's role as a referent, rather than a prescribed course of action. Pressing defines a referent as "an underlying formal scheme or guiding image" (1984, 346), which demands further constructive action by a performer to realise a musical interpretation. In conventional jazz, referents often comprise cyclical harmonic forms or melodies, employing chord symbols for ease of navigation. In the case of improvisational etudes, the referent is somewhat more abstract: my scores are conceived as microcosms of self-generating problems, and vessels for ongoing musical inquiry.

1.3 Related literature

While Mitchell's aforementioned etudes established an exemplar for this research, they have not yet received academic discussion or analysis. To date, information about them is limited to weblog and podcast interviews (Crane 2011; Cymerman 2014; Weinberg 2013). A pianist increasingly regarded with esteem, Mitchell has garnered considerable press (Ratliff 2011) but the concept of etudes in improvisation appears to have gained little traction.²

Widening the scope, this research acknowledges the plethora of instructional material available for jazz and improvisational practice. Significant portions of these materials are based around preliminary stylistic training and the acquisition of jazz 'vocabulary' (Bergonzi 1994; Crook 1999; Levine 1989; Liebman 1991). Further, any Google search featuring the keywords 'jazz' and 'etude' yields a plethora of links to independently published materials targeting chord-scale relationships, incorporating various melodic patterns and 'licks' over specified harmonic progressions. Without dismissing these sources I argue that my improvisational etude model targets a fundamentally different approach to musical study, one that is less predicated on stylistic conventions.

Beyond traditional jazz vocabulary, more extensive creative pathways are expounded through idiosyncratic practice methods established by individual artists. For example, Garzone (2008) has codified his 'triadic chromatic' approach to chord superimposition and chromaticism in improvisation, while O'Gallagher (2013) presents an approach to improvising based on twelve-tone and trichord theory. In a more theoretical realm, both Slonimsky (1947) and Russell (1953) have published concepts for pitch organization, both of which have been adopted by jazz practitioners.³ These concepts are more relevant to my etudes, and they certainly offer pathways for rigorous practice. A distinction is that my etude model offers a framework, rather than a theoretical method, which could be used to explore these kinds of constructs.

² Despite the lack of formal discourse, I am aware that Mitchell's etudes have attracted interest and regard from his contemporaries. I had casual discussions about the pieces with pianist Vijay Iyer while attending the Banff International Workshop in Jazz and Creative Music in 2012, and also in private lessons with pianist Kris Davis in 2012 and 2013. Both advocated their perceived usefulness.

³ For example, Blair (2003) offers an analysis of selected improvisations by John Coltrane, tracing influences from Slonimsky's *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns*.

The myriad sources and references available to inform improvisational practice stem from the theories and experiences of their progenitors, and ultimately it is the responsibility of any practitioner to select and experiment with materials that offer pathways resonant with their creative ambitions. My evaluation of the above examples is based on considerations within my practice, which would vary against that of another practitioner. Importantly, the improvisational etude is not intended to replace existing practice methods. Rather, it offers a non-exclusive process through which one might investigate and absorb relevant techniques, styles and theoretical concepts. As explored further in Chapter Two, value lies in overall etude *process*, not just the resulting compositions.

CHAPTER TWO: Methodology and Method

2.1 Overview of Methodology

This artistic research project is underpinned by qualitative research methodologies and in particular, heuristic principles, placing myself at the centre of the inquiry as both practitioner and researcher. Recognizing the value of tacit and embodied knowledge in relation to improvised performance practice, my methodology seeks to access and illuminate knowledge generated through the creative process of developing improvisational etudes for performance.

The emergent field of artistic research in music has been described as one of the more latent areas to develop in arts-based research (Leavy 2014, 106), a domain which has, historically, lacked a clearly established “standard package of methods” (Nimkulrat 2007). In this chapter, I clarify the position of my project in relation to some of the existing terminology. Subsequently, the method and appropriate guidelines by which I composed, practised and performed my improvisational etudes are outlined, and the reflective framework that both guided my observations and strengthened the numerous iterations of the etude development process is discussed.

This project identifies with the term ‘artistic research’ following the paradigm adopted by other researchers at Monash University (*see* Burke and Onsmann 2017), which in turn has been informed by research practices in numerous European countries led, arguably, by Borgdorff (2007; 2011; 2012). Further, this research aligns itself with the notion of ‘practice-led’, summarised by Gray as being “initiated by practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice and practitioners” (1998, 3). This project originated in response to self-perceived needs as a developing practitioner, but with the expectation that it will resonate with other improvisers. On this basis, I also connect with the cyclical model of practice-led research and research-led practice described by Smith and Dean (2009). In the interest of expanding one’s musical skills, knowledge and resources, both approaches are mutually beneficial and strongly related to the purpose of improvisational etudes.

The ‘research-led practice’ methodology is deeply embedded in my creative process. It applies to the external sources that inform and expand my practice. These include

scores, musicological and analytical texts, recordings and live performances, or the oeuvre of a particular artist. These sources are engaged both consciously and subconsciously, for example: through exposure to other creative work, or by transcribing, analyzing and imitating musical language. Smith and Dean suggest research-led practice is “complementary to practice-led research” (2009, 7) and I posit this can lead to two non-exclusive interpretations. From a practitioner’s perspective, the term relates to the idea that art is not created in a vacuum, free of external influence. From a scholarly perspective, the term implies the processual rigour of applying theory to practice. Both perspectives recognise the impact of external knowledge on one’s practice, but the former allows such knowledge to be drawn from other practitioners’ creative work, as well as from more traditional forms of publication.

Particularly relevant to this project is Haseman’s recognition (following Gray 1998) that in artistic research, academic methods interact with long-standing, ingrained artistic working methods, which actually form the “spine” of a research process (Haseman 2010, 151). As a pianist who has been engaged in learning and playing the instrument for the better part of twenty-one years, this recognition places value and meaning in the practical methods I have come to rely on for my own creative development, and which are essential to this project.⁴

2.2 The improvisational etude model

The model illustrated in Figure 1 outlines five stages of improvisational etude development, intended to provide a framework for expanding one’s performance resources and instrumental skills. When undertaken in a longitudinal manner over multiple iterations, the model facilitates the development of a folio of improvisational etudes with interrelated and complementary didactic strategies, and consequentially, a body of performable repertoire. It is largely based on the six phases of heuristic research, described by Moustakas (1990, 27), which I have adapted as a precedent for self-motivated, reflective research, and for its recognition of processes that enable

⁴ By ‘practical methods’ I refer to the techniques employed in my studio practice, which have been informed by various teachers, colleagues and experiences throughout my musical life, and represent a vast accumulation of strategies for learning and interpreting music in performance. These practical methods are central to the improvisational etude model and form the basis of my ability to generate an improvised performance from a notated score.

growth in both tacit and explicit areas of knowledge, which are central to improvised performance.

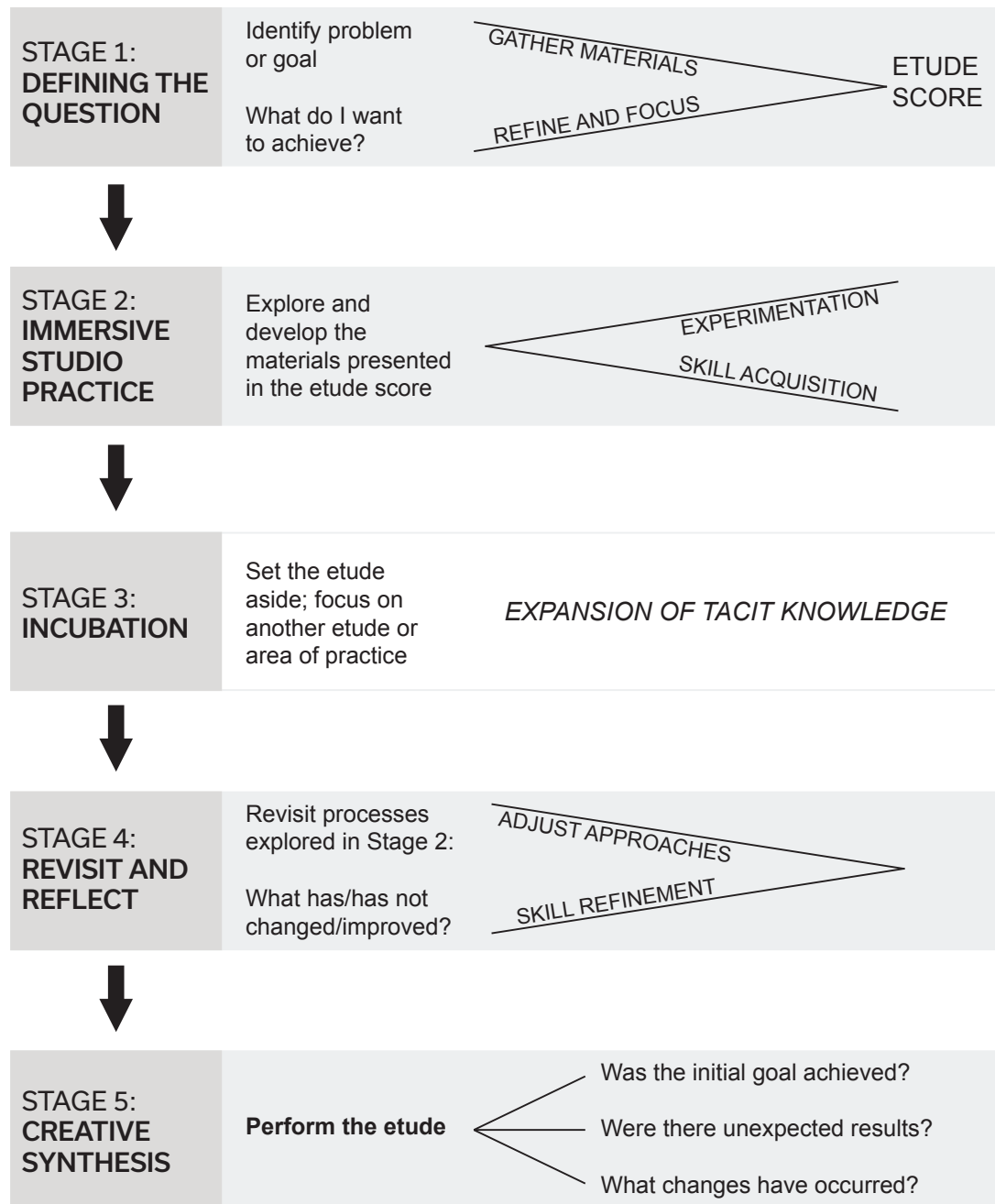


Figure 1 - The five-stage improvisational etude model

2.2.1 Stage 1: Defining the question

The commencement of an etude development cycle parallels what Moustakas describes as “initial engagement” (1990, 27), whereby the practitioner identifies a particular interest or motivation, which coalesces into a well-defined question, represented in the form of a semi-notated etude score. The motivation for a question might be to solve a perceived problem or weakness in one’s playing, identified by reflecting on performance experiences and recordings.⁵ Alternatively, the motivation might be purely aspirational and based on creative ambition.⁶ The concept of research-led practice is applicable here, especially if the etude is influenced by the techniques and musical language of other practitioners.

In this stage, the immediate task is to consider what musical materials might be relevant, and to construct a score that strategically balances composed notation with undefined parameters, to be realised at a later stage. This is the crux of didactic strategy for improvisational etudes, because the information *not* provided in the score places emphasis on the practical investigation undertaken over the subsequent stages. Intuition plays a significant role in this process, particularly in navigating between the materials at hand, and their potential application and transformation through improvised practice.

2.2.2 Stage 2: Immersive studio practice

Once the score has been completed, the practitioner engages in a period of immersive studio practice focusing on the exploration of materials contained within. In contrast to the previous stage, this immersive process is geared towards an expansion of ideas. The goal here is not just to figure out a way to perform the etude, filling in what might be perceived as ‘gaps’ in the score. Rather, by considering the score from multiple angles as an improvisational referent, and by internalizing and reimagining its materials, the practitioner gains access to different interpretative pathways that become a foundation for future performances. In effect, this stage is more about experimenting with skills and acquiring new practical knowledge than it is about facilitating a performance. To that

⁵ Refer to description of *Etude II* in Appendix 2: Recital Notes

⁶ Refer to description of *Etude I* in Appendix 2: Recital Notes

pursuit, the practitioner arguably must engage all their resources and effort, prioritizing the etude among other areas of instrumental practice.

2.2.3 Stage 3: Incubation

An important aspect of heuristic research that readily applies to instrumental practice is the idea of incubation, because it directly acknowledges the time required for subconscious assimilation and sorting of newly acquired skills. Whereas immersion places conscious thought and action at the centre of all activity, incubation “allows the inner workings of the tacit dimension and intuition to continue to clarify and extend understanding on levels outside the immediate awareness” (Moustakas 1990, 29). Therefore, following an intense period of engagement with an etude in the practice studio, it is appropriate to set that etude aside and focus on other areas of practice. This also provides the opportunity to start developing a new etude, or to revisit existing etudes at Stages Four or Five.

2.2.4 Stage 4: Revisit and reflect

After a period of dormancy, the practitioner can return to the etude and revise materials that were previously explored, albeit with a different approach and purpose: to consider what has changed in their experience working with this etude, and how those changes relate to the initial question posed in stage one. From an instrumental perspective, the overall objective is now to refine newly developed skills, and to adjust practical approaches to accommodate remaining problems or difficulties. However, in contrast to the exploration undertaken in stage two, this stage is not geared toward expansion, and it does not require the same singularity of focus. In anticipation of the etude’s performance, the overall objective is to consolidate the work that has already been done, and to steer oneself towards the performance outcome.

2.2.5 Stage 5: Creative synthesis

In the final stage of the etude development cycle, performance and reflection are undertaken to evaluate what has been achieved throughout the process. Borrowing terminology once again from Moustakas, the idea of a creative synthesis serves to bring

together all the ideas explored so far in a way that “can only be achieved through tacit and intuitive powers” (1990, 31). In other words, rather than simply testing the execution of newly acquired skills, the performance of an etude embraces and draws upon all of the practitioner’s accumulated experiences in real-time, manifesting in a recorded performance whose relationship to the initial question, or score, is informed through all the processes that led to it. The practitioner then uses that performance as the basis of reflection to evaluate whether the initial goal was achieved, whether unexpected results became apparent, and overall, what changes may have occurred in one’s performance experience.

None of the stages outlined above have clearly prescribed durations or time limits. Progress through each stage is based on intuitive and practical reasoning. Immersive studio practice, for example, would likely require at least a month or more to prove effective; any less would restrict one’s capacity to thoroughly explore the etude score as an improvisational referent. The length of an etude’s incubation period might be influenced by how many other priorities the practitioner is trying to balance. Overall, however, the improvisational etude model encourages continual engagement with practice in one form or another, both on tacit and conscious levels, facilitating cross-pollination between etudes and an intensive expansion of one’s creative resources.

2.3 Guidelines for etude scores

Throughout the compositional process of Stage One, while constructing the notated scores for each etude, I adhered to a set of guidelines designed to mediate between my combined roles and composer and performer. These guidelines, outlined below, ensured that each composition remained geared toward further practical exploration and ultimately, improvised performance. Within my broader creative practice, composition can result in varied types of output aimed at providing materials appropriate to different performance contexts, but which are not necessarily suitable for etudes.⁷ Adhering to these guidelines helped to delineate etude composition from other aspects of my creative work, and to create a sense of cohesion within the overall folio. Therefore,

⁷ These outputs variously include rough sketches, detailed but incomplete idea ‘stems’, melodies accompanied by chord symbols (in the style of jazz lead sheets), and fully arranged ensemble scores.

in notating and formatting the improvisational etude scores, I determined that each score should:

- (1) remain short and succinct, occupying no more than one A4 page,
- (2) present only the essential materials needed to pose a question or challenge to my practice,
- (3) avoid unnecessary instructions or directions, expressions, and tempo markings,
- (4) avoid the use of chord symbols,
- (5) offer (but not prescribe) a form and contour for performance, and
- (6) present materials in a manner conducive to creative musical thinking.

The first two of these guidelines ensured that each piece remained tightly focused, and that I remained aware of how much information was being provided. In *Etude I*, for example, I only used notated materials derived from a twelve-tone row, on the basis that additional materials might dilute the etude's purpose, even though they may emerge in practice and performance. The third and fourth points specified above were intended to place greater responsibilities on my practice, and to encourage more varied outcomes in performance. I consider expressions, dynamics and tempi as variables to be explored when practising, rather than predetermined. Similarly, the absence of chord symbols emphasises the specific notation, encouraging me to look closely for harmonic options.⁸ It is worth reiterating that my improvisational etudes are intended to be unpacked and explored in practice, not sight-read, and therefore no advantage is gained by using reductive symbols. In *Etude I* and *Etude VI*, atonal and non-functional harmonic approaches are central to the didactic strategy. *Etude III*, on the other hand, embraces traditional Western four-part voice leading but still eschews chord symbols to emphasise the specificity of voicing and linear movement, again bestowing further responsibility on myself as a performer.

Finally, the fifth and sixth guidelines aim toward the variability and musicality of etude performance outcomes. The suggestion of form and contour is apparent in all scores, most often through the use of short, contrasting sections, offering navigable pathways. Sections delineated by repeat signs are always considered 'open', allowing complete flexibility in performance. For example, *Etude VI* contains four open repeats, including

⁸ I became particularly aware of the value of avoiding chord symbols in composition through the music of Tim Berne. This necessitates a process of internalisation with the notated score, which I argue has the capacity to result in improvised performance outcomes more specific to the composition in question, reducing the likelihood that a familiar chord progression will become the main improvisational referent.

two instances where the materials from one hand continue from one section to the next. This suggests a way of gradually navigating through the materials on the page, but does not preclude other possibilities arising through practice. 'Creative musical thinking' is used as an expression used here to describe open-ended, explorative interaction between score and improvisation, something that should be encouraged in the composed materials. In *Etude I*, for example, this is achieved through an arrangement of a twelve-tone row, rather than presenting the row in a simple linear fashion. Theoretically, both approaches would warrant the same exploration of the row for its intervallic and harmonic possibilities, but the score places the row within a soundscape characterised by wide intervals and sustained pitches that, to my intuition, immediately offers interesting musical potential.

2.4 Observation and reflection

Within this research, the purpose of observation and reflection is to illuminate implicit and tacit knowledge, in order to strengthen and inform successive iterations of the etude development cycle, and to demonstrate the overall capacity of the improvisational etude model to generate greater understanding of one's practice through experiential learning. Acknowledging that creative work generally incorporates various forms of reflection, this research draws on Schön's concepts of reflection in-action and reflection on-action (1983), which distinguish between knowledge generated during and after an activity.

These concepts allow the practitioner to "surface and criticise the tacit understandings that have grown up around the repetitive experiences of a specialised practice" and to "make new sense of the situations of uncertainty or uniqueness which he may allow himself to experience" (Schön 1983, 61). This research employs reflection in-action when engaged in musical activity, such as practice or performance, in order to identify real-time, intuitive decision making processes that might otherwise be taken for granted. Subsequently, reflection on-action draws on those real-time experiences, considering them in the context of broader goals and overall progress. These reflections take the form of journal writing, and it is through this engagement and critique of personal experience that presumptions are challenged, and new knowledge generated.

CHAPTER THREE: Composing the Etudes

3.1 Overview

This chapter examines the processes involved in composing my improvisational etudes, which constitute Stage One of the etude development model outlined in my methodology. I discuss my approach to navigating the complex and variable relationships between notation and improvised performance, and consider, from a compositional perspective, how the materials provided in my etudes aim to inform different improvised outcomes. I discuss the strategies employed in targeting performance goals through etude composition, and reflect on how decisions made at this stage affected practice and performance in subsequent stages.⁹

Improvisational etude scores serve to codify self-perceived problems or developmental goals, and establish the specific ground on which they will be explored in practice. They introduce melodic, harmonic and rhythmic materials, often through juxtaposition, and they act as referents for improvisation. The premise connecting all my improvisational etudes, and their didactic strategies, was to increase the musical resources available to me in performance and to improve my overall range of technique at the piano. Inherent in the design of each score was the intent to provoke and impact future practice, rather than to guarantee a satisfactory performance outcome. Consequentially, my own understanding of how to compose improvisational music was challenged, as was my ability to forecast potential skill development based on self-composed musical materials.

3.2 Composer-performer dialogue

The formulation of effective materials for instrumental practice is an experimental process, relative to one's own skills and ambition, and it requires a speculative attitude in order to draw links between strategy and outcome. Most importantly, in my experience, it is a largely intuitive process in which tacit and experiential knowledge

⁹ Whereas outlines of each individual etude are presented in the form of my Recital Notes (*see* Appendix 2), this chapter aims to illuminate broader themes that emerged through the composition stage.

plays a significant role, enabling the practitioner to generate compositional ideas and estimate their value or usefulness in practice.

Throughout Stage One, I observed an ongoing dialogue between my composer-self and performer-self, which drew on knowledge specific to each role to develop and refine the etude scores. Composition and improvisation are, at times, closely related musical processes, but they invite different mindsets, largely due to the different timeframes over which they occur. Their relationship is fluid, offering myriad points of intersection that combine with practitioners' own backgrounds, knowledge and preferences. Such variability makes it impossible to singularly define their relationship, but it opens up possibilities for diverse approaches (Knight 2011).

In the improvisational etude context, the relationship between composition and improvisation was framed by a motivation to challenge and expand my skills. This is an abstract concept, because it does not offer inherent musical direction. It therefore required extensive consideration of my own experiences both as a composer and an improviser, to choose and develop musical materials that addressed this motivation. I identified this as a continuous dialogue between both facets of my practice. While the score guidelines outlined in Chapter Two provided a helpful presentational framework for the etudes, it was this ongoing internal dialogue that allowed me to compose highly indeterminate works whilst still anticipating a satisfactory outcome.

RH phrases using alternating rhythmic groupings:

The image shows a musical score for a piano etude, specifically Bar 3. It consists of two staves: a right-hand (RH) staff in treble clef and a left-hand (LH) staff in bass clef. The RH staff contains a sequence of notes with three distinct rhythmic groupings indicated by brackets and numbers above them: a group of 7 notes, a group of 6 notes, and another group of 7 notes. The sequence ends with the word 'etc.'. The LH staff contains a sequence of notes with several rhythmic groupings indicated by brackets and numbers below them: a group of 2 notes, a group of 3 notes, a group of 3 notes, a group of 3 notes, a group of 3 notes, a group of 2 notes, a group of 2 notes, and a group of 3 notes. Below the LH staff, there are four larger brackets indicating groupings of 5, 6, 5, and 5 notes respectively. A text box within the LH staff area states: 'LH phrases can be felt in groups of 2 or 3 quavers, or larger combinations:'.

LH phrases can be felt in groups of 2 or 3 quavers, or larger combinations:

Figure 2 - Bar 3 excerpt from *Etude VII*, showing rhythmic groupings

An essential consideration for each score was that it should present an appropriate level of difficulty, warranting dedicated, intensive practice. ‘Difficulty’ is a problematic term in relation to improvisational repertoire, and is closely tied to the performer’s ambition and interpretation of the score.¹⁰ Neither the apparent playability or complexity of a notated etude score precludes the potential for a compelling improvised performance, nor does it guarantee one. To establish optimal difficulty within in my etudes, I looked to past experiences, as demonstrated through my estimation of the materials in *Etude VII* (illustrated in Figure 2):

The bass ostinato in bars 3-4 employs rhythmic groupings of two and three quavers, whereas the treble part plays against the ostinato, alternating between seven and six quavers. The finger work and coordination shouldn’t be a huge issue—I’ve internalised stranger things studying Tim Berne’s scores—but I wonder whether that ostinato might end up being too complex for me to freely improvise over? Alternatively, might it invite each hand to play *against* the other? I suspect that in performance, I’ll end up deviating from those parts, but they will help establish momentum along the way, which I will be challenged to sustain and build upon (DS journal entry 4/8/16).

My performance of *Etude VII* reflects these forecasts: I did deviate from the notated ostinato, but I was able to create intensity and momentum based on those materials.¹¹ In this instance, my compositional and performative instincts were correct in estimating the etude’s rhythmic complexity and demand on my capabilities.

Another process of composer-performer dialogue emerged through interaction with my instrument. Composing at the piano can facilitate a more immediate and tangible exploration of musical materials, but it can also lead to evaluating materials based on existing skills, rather than anticipating growth. Often I observed my focus shifting prematurely towards the performance stage, bypassing other processes intended to shape the performance in equally significant ways. I tried a number of approaches to remain focused on composition: refraining from improvisatory noodling or any exploratory practice more appropriate for Stage Two, regularly swapping between piano and desk to change perspective, enforcing time limits on compositional work, and sketching the concept/outline of the etude prior to developing notated materials. While

¹⁰ Assessing the difficulty of a composition is, arguably, more subjective in improvised music than in the classical repertoire, where works are regularly categorised into graded, examinable repertoire for pedagogical purposes. Some objectivity can be found in determining the level of technical achievement required to play fully notated repertoire, whereas the myriad variables in improvised performance undermine or obfuscate such a determination.

¹¹ See CD Track 9, particularly from 3:10 onwards.

helpful, none of these approaches guaranteed a clearer distinction between composer and performer mindsets. To me, this reinforced that even for didactic purposes, composition resists being reduced to an objective and predictable process. Creative aspirations, aesthetic preferences, and reinforced instrumental habits lead to tendencies that cannot easily be circumvented.

The completion of each etude was largely intuitive, relying on my perception of balance between its core strategy and the materials introduced to target that strategy:

The question I keep asking myself during the compositional process is “do I have enough to work with?” Sometimes it feels like I am trying to compose using negative space, focusing on the gaps between certain elements, so that there are loose ends and uncertainties in the score. As soon as I think an etude score has enough material going on, it is probably time to stop composing and start practising (DS journal entry 14/7/16).

Bearing in mind the *practical* objective of these etudes, I adhered to the principle that the scores were only the first stage in the project, and that rather than laboring the compositional process, my research would be better served by putting them into practice as soon as possible. Throughout the research, it became easier to compose on this basis, leading to the conclusion that etude composition is a process requiring sustained practise and effort, just like any other aspect of my practice.

3.3 Implicit and explicit materials in etude composition

Although the etude score serves to define notated materials appropriate to a particular focus or goal in improvisational practice, in my experience the finished score offers a small representation of the volume of ideas generated along the way. A composition is the result of conscious and subconscious decision-making, which frequently requires choices between numerous alternative pathways. Once made, however, these choices do not necessarily erase their alternatives. Other possibilities and variations remain implicit in an improvisational etude long after the score itself is finalized, and may resurface in subsequent stages.

Recognizing implicit and explicit materials in a composition does not contradict the integrity of the score, nor the guidelines proposed in Chapter Two; rather, it recognizes the multitudinous pathways accessible through improvisational practice, and that the

transition from composition to practice will involve picking up familiar ideas and threads, but from a fresh performance perspective. Thus, the practitioner is afforded a degree of leeway in determining how the materials are presented, because while the score is finalized prior to Stage Two, pathways for interpretation and practical investigation remain open.

3.4 Targeting performance goals in etude scores

At the outset of this research, I grouped my various developmental goals into two broad categories: technical goals, dealing with issues of dexterity, coordination and sound production, and language goals, encompassing various approaches to melodic, harmonic and rhythmic organization within my playing. In the practice studio, it can be useful to differentiate between ‘what’ one plays and ‘how’ one plays it, even though musical language and instrumental technique are inexorably linked. In relation to my desired areas of improvement in performance, these categories allowed me to consider multiple angles of skills development in each etude.

3.4.1 Technical goals

An ongoing developmental focus within my practice has been the strengthening of my left hand, and the achievement of greater fluidity and independence between the two hands.¹² Inspired, for example, by Brad Mehldau’s virtuosic dexterity, or Craig Taborn’s ability to sustain complex, multilayered ideas and textures, I composed my etudes with the intention that their materials should be explored by both hands, regardless of the clef in which the notation is presented. This intention was rendered most explicitly in the score for *Etude VI*, where the right hand material in bar one is adapted and repositioned for the left hand in bar six, as shown in Figure 3. By providing each hand with slightly varied material, I aimed to exploit idiosyncrasies in the dexterity of each hand.

¹² One of the vestiges from my initial immersion in jazz piano, following many years of classical training, is a tendency for my left hand to play a subservient role to my right hand when improvising. This has led to a sense of imbalance between the hands and, particularly, a reluctance to ‘lead’ or ‘drive’ an improvisation with my left hand.

RH notation in bar 1 of *Etude VI* score:



Similar notation in bar 6, adapted to target LH 4th and 5th finger staccato repetition:



Figure 3 - Comparison of similar materials notated for RH and LH in *Etude VI*

I also aimed to encourage wide use and movement across the piano's registers, as well as the idea that two hands can share and swap between three or more concurrent roles to exploit the instrument's symphonic capacities. I targeted this concept in the *Etude V* score, combining a static middle voice with interacting materials in high and low registers. The intent was that both hands would have to share responsibility for maintaining the middle voice in order to incorporate the wider extremes of the instrument, something that I successfully achieved in the recorded performance.¹³

I generally avoided specifying articulation, preferring to explore different options when practising. Use of the piano's full timbral range is an ongoing priority for me in performance, however, and with *Etude VI*, I employed articulation in the score to target a particular area of technique: the use of light, agile staccato in combination with rapidly repeated notes and wide intervallic leaps (see Figure 3). Combining staccato, accents and tenuto markings in bars one, six and seven, I anticipated having to focus on maintaining a relaxed hand whilst swapping fingers to rearticulate fast notes, and particularly when reaching for intervals wider than my handspan. The purpose of *Etude VI* was to encourage a kind of 'gestural' improvisation, where my hands would interact with intervallic shapes and repetitive movements, so it seemed appropriate that articulation could be employed to emphasize rapid finger work and spatial coordination.

3.4.2 Language goals

¹³ See CD Track 7.

One of the distinctions between the established classical etude tradition and my improvisational etude model is the latter's capacity to target different approaches to rhythmic, harmonic and pitch organization in practice and performance. A genuine exploration of an etude's materials is a prerequisite for performance; the notation alone does not account for all performance parameters, nor do the scores necessarily make musical sense if played straight through in a conventional manner. Therefore, the performer must generate pathways within and around the notated materials, especially if they present unfamiliar musical language.

Etude I is an example of an etude designed to introduce new musical language, relative to a practitioner's knowledge base. Driven by an interest in exploring improvisation based on a twelve-tone row, and its melodic and harmonic possibilities, the concept behind the score was to create a musically coherent starting point for my practical investigations. Using the row illustrated in Figure 4, selected for its melodic properties, I sought to construct a score that emphasized its intervallic relationships, whilst offering space to explore the soundscape. My strategy displaced the row over multiple registers, maintained low density, and employed a symmetrical expanding/contracting bar structure in order to highlight different intervallic combinations within the row.¹⁴ As demonstrated in both recordings of *Etude I*, the score functioned effectively both as a launching pad and as an arrival point for improvisation.¹⁵



Figure 4: Twelve-tone row used in *Etude I*

In contrast, *Etude III* was composed as an exercise in more familiar tonal language, emphasizing four-part voice leading. I had previously experimented with different ways to approach common-practice voice leading in an etude, including an idea to notate melodic and bass lines only, leaving the inner voices to be explored in practice. This

¹⁴ The expanding/contracting bar structure employed in *Etude I* was informed by Arvo Pärt's solo piano piece *Für Alina* (1976), a composition considered to represent the emergence of his 'tintinnabuli' technique (Mikhelson 2012). Pärt's piece uses limited pitch material with loosely defined rhythmic direction, creating an atmosphere in which each new sound interacts with a background of accumulating resonance. As an example of research-led practice, I drew upon organisational ideas in *Für Alina* to see whether they could be effectively applied to my tone row.

¹⁵ See CD Tracks 1 and 2 respectively.

framework seemed far too rigid, however, and was too closely related to other voice-leading exercises in my practice routine, without capitalizing on the etude's potential scope.¹⁶ I eventually decided that a brief, fully harmonized melodic idea would be a more effective and compelling improvisational referent, offering a platform upon which to extrapolate its materials in practice. As an unusual example within my folio of a score that appears to function in a conventional manner, this choice of strategy was accompanied by expectations that a performance outcome would deviate significantly from the specific notation, whilst remaining focused on effective voice-leading.

These examples demonstrate the diversity of thought and strategy behind the etude folio, as well as the format's flexibility in addressing different musical priorities.

Although Stage One of the improvisational etude model is a precursor to intensive practice, it provides a crucial foundation for future work; in my experience, composer-performer dialogue provided excellent preparation leading towards focused practical exploration.

¹⁶ From time to time, I work with the Riemenschneider (Bach 1941) volume of Bach chorales, and particularly the chorale melodies supplied only with figured bass. This can be a useful exercise in 'filling in' missing voices, forcing me to quickly assess my options and anticipate their harmonic impact. It is less of an improvisational process than it is problem solving, however, and not ideal as the basis for an etude.

CHAPTER FOUR: The Etudes in Practice

4.1 Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to articulate processes involved in developing the etudes for performance, following the composition of each score. With reference to Stages Two, Three and Four of the etude development model (outlined in Chapter Two), this chapter demonstrates the complementary nature of 'systematic' and 'open' practice strategies, and how these were employed by considering each score as an improvisational referent. Throughout the research process, the assimilation of new skills and techniques resulted in expanded possibilities for interpreting the scores, as well as a more nuanced understanding of how my studio practice can impact performance outcomes.

Throughout the course of this research, eight original etudes were incorporated in my instrumental practice routine in an overlapping, longitudinal manner following their emergence from Stage One. By definition, I consider instrumental practice to be time spent principally engaged with the piano, following what Krampe and Ericsson describe as "deliberate practice" (1995), distinct among many other related and overlapping activities within my broader creative work. At the core of instrumental practice is a motivating desire to improve my performance skills and to expand my scope for musical expression. Effective practice is generally undertaken with a goal or strategy in mind, targeting immediate or long-term gain. Self-perceived 'goal posts' tend to shift over time, however, and incremental progress is usually rewarded with further ambitions, which may inform new etudes.

4.2 Early phases of etude practice

A significant shift in focus occurred between Stages One and Two, from reducing and refining materials into a composed state, to identifying and investigating myriad pathways at the piano. As discussed in Chapter Three, the score of an improvisational etude encompasses material notated explicitly in the score, as well as implied remnants and preconceptions from my involvement in the compositional process. Therefore, at

the outset of Stage Two, there was already a sense of creative momentum surrounding each etude, and a readiness to expand upon existing ideas.

The initial phase of practising a new etude dealt primarily with the notated material. For some etudes, this involved approaching the notation as a gateway to deeper explorations. This was the case in both *Etude I* and *Etude III*, whose scores were designed to facilitate immersion within their specific approaches to sound organization and harmonic language. Both these scores were relatively accessible in terms of the reading involved, but they offered immediate scope to improvise and experiment within their given soundscapes, and subsequently to form strategies for expanding beyond the notation.

On the other hand, some etudes presented immediate challenges, requiring a strategic approach in order to play the notated material, prior to considering opportunities for improvisation. This was most likely the case when issues of rhythmic coordination lay at the core of an etude, such as in *Etude II*, *Etude IV* and *Etude VII*. The preparatory work demanded by these scores proved equally immersive, however, and often led to realizations about inconsistencies within a particular skillset:

These etudes, while ostensibly focusing on a particular challenge, tend to bring larger skillsets into question and really test how thoroughly they have been explored previously. In *Etude IV*, it is clear that the challenge lies not only in differentiating between the highlighted rhythms [see Figure 5], but in the many permutations of the 3:2 polyrhythm. I am reminded that there are always deeper and more complex ways of approaching any musical materials (DS journal entry 25/08/16).

Such a realization represented the beginning of a higher level of engagement with the etude, and a greater awareness of how it might confront my existing skills, making it necessary to strategize for deeper explorations of the material.

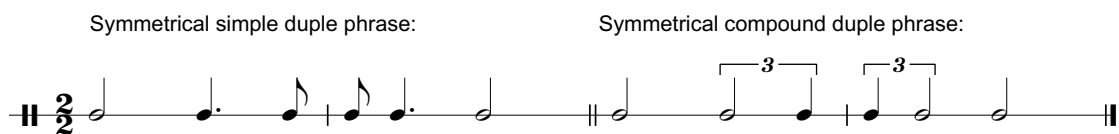


Figure 5 - Comparison of rhythmic phrases as used in *Etude IV*

4.3 Two complementary approaches to practice

Throughout Stages Two and Four of this research, I employed two distinct but complementary approaches in studio practice. In my experience, the two-way relationship between ‘systematic’ and ‘open’ approaches is essential to effective improvisational practice. I define ‘systematic’ practice as being tightly organized, repetitive practice aimed at internalizing and refining specific skills. It is goal-oriented and measurable. ‘Open’ practice, on the other hand, is more broadly focused on experimentation, and is generally less structured. It casts a wide, non-discriminatory net to uncover ideas and possibilities that can then be targeted and developed through systematic approaches. Alternatively, new materials and techniques might be introduced and studied systematically, then employed in an open-ended setting to explore ways of using them—or, indeed, to test the efficacy of the practice already undertaken.

4.3.1 Applying systematic approaches

The opportunity to approach particular etude materials in a systematic manner provided foundations for the refinement and accumulation of specific skills, fulfilling a role reminiscent of the more methodical and clinical examples from the classical etude repertoire. *Etude I* and its twelve-tone row offer a clear example of this. Informed by an understanding of twelve-tone theory, and its use by various practitioners in both the jazz and classical traditions (O’Gallagher 2013; Schönberg 1950), I formulated various strategies to help identify, familiarize and internalize sounds that could be derived from the row.

Figure 6 illustrates a strategy undertaken to learn all four forms of the tone row—prime, inversion, retrograde, and retro-inversion—and to be able to use these in any combination between both hands. The resulting practice resembled a finger exercise such as might be found in Moskowski’s *Vingt Petites Etudes* (1913), albeit with significantly greater intervallic variation. Unlike in Figure 6, however, this strategy was not actually notated for practice purposes. Instead, I internalized the row forms and combined them at slow tempos until I could reproduce the entire sequence from memory, anticipating that this process would eventually result in an improved capacity to improvise different manipulations of the row. The impact of this strategy can be

heard in my performances of *Etude I*; further evidence of its assimilation into my performance language can be heard in *Etude V*.¹⁷

Upon repeat, swap RH and LH roles

Figure 6 - Twelve-tone row familiarization strategy used for *Etude I*

Etude II, with its focus on 5:3 polyrhythms, presented a clear pathway for systematic practice based on increasingly difficult rhythmic coordination challenges. My strategy was to identify and combine different ways of articulating the rhythms in each hand. Figure 7 shows four ways to articulate quavers grouped in five, along with different options for the underlying ‘three’ pulse. These are a sample of the many permutations that were explored in both hands, initially by assigning each hand to a single note, before gradually incorporating more varied pitch and melodic material derived from the etude score. This laid the groundwork for a more rhythmically complex approach to improvised performance.

¹⁷ See CD Track 1 (from approx. 3:00 onwards); Track 7 (particularly 3:25 to 3:50).

RH option 1: 5s over 3s

RH option 2: "Short-Long" (2 + 3) over 3s

RH option 3: "Long-Short" (3 + 2) over 3s

RH option 4: Increased quaver movement within 5 groupings

LH basic rhythmic pulse: even 3s

More challenging LH pulse: "Short-Long-Short-Short" (2-3-2-2) rhythm

Longer LH pulse structure: 9s instead of 3s

Figure 7 - Example of polyrhythmic coordination practice in *Etude II*

Both these examples resulted in new skills, particularly regarding coordination between my hands when playing their respective materials. It must be emphasized, however, that new skillsets do not automatically transfer to improvised performance—at least, not in a particularly organic way. Knowing how to do something in a controlled and deliberate manner is one step, albeit a crucial one; the next step is to be able to access and apply this knowledge in real-time performance, while navigating variables such as tempo, volume and density. To achieve this, one's practice must evolve to continually challenge newly acquired skills and knowledge.

4.3.2 Exploring open approaches

Open approaches to instrumental practice bring one closer to performance conditions, affording a more intuitive scope to explore musical materials and test the efficacy of previous practice. In my experience, while it is unlikely that specific problems and skill deficiencies will be fixed in open practice, they are more likely to be identified, thus binding the two approaches in a reciprocal, iterative relationship. However, one must not discount the value of what can be learnt *during* an improvisation. As Morris argues,

musicians rely on existing skills and knowledge when improvising, but can rapidly make new connections and expand this knowledge in real time (2012, 8).

A purpose of open practice is to incorporate newly acquired skills and materials whilst maintaining a larger perspective that encompasses form and duration, tempo, and narrative contour. This addresses a question prompted through systematic practice: how can I use these materials to generate something new? Peters' 'junkyard' analogy (2009) is relevant here, in the sense that these raw materials are imbued with meaning and intent when combined in a musical context, becoming subservient to a greater performance objective.¹⁸

Open practice played a crucial role in providing such a context for the polyrhythmic materials in *Etude II*, which were ideally suited to repetitive processes (as illustrated in Figure 7) but which were more difficult to approach in an organic, improvisational manner:

The difficulty with these 5:3 polyrhythmic ideas is that while they work well in isolation, they tend to weigh down the organic flow of an improvisation and dominate the soundscape when introduced. Being able to coordinate and play a rhythmic device is sometimes quite separate from being able to *use* it; it will take more time to develop the kind of subtlety I'm after (DS journal entry 2/7/16).

Over the weeks following this journal entry, I regularly recorded short improvisations with the objective of using these materials for a predetermined timeframe of between one and five minutes, varying the tempo and starting point for each attempt. Such practise elicited rough results at first, but it embraced the discomfort involved in pushing one's boundaries—a necessary step towards assimilating new skills into my existing performance language.

In a different way, I employed open approaches with *Etude III* in order to identify opportunities for relevant systematic practice, and to improvise tangential musical excursions from different starting points within the score. At times, this felt like a simultaneous hybrid of systematic and open practice: I used repetition to reinforce harmonic pathways, including modulations, and to clarify options for voice leading, but

¹⁸ In *The Philosophy of Improvisation* (2009), Peters refers to television game shows such as *Junkyard Wars* (USA) and *Scrapheap Challenge* (UK) to illustrate how the participant is asked to look backwards (referring to materials already existing in some form) to create something new, emphasising how an existing repertoire of skills and ideas gain new purpose through actions in the present.

always maintained an attitude of exploration whereby the *process* of identifying and testing ideas was more important than the ideas themselves. In doing so, I avoided the temptation to rely on pre-learnt formulae.

Etude III: score except (bars 1-3)

Musical score for Etude III, bars 1-3. The score is in 4/4 time and G major. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

Etude III (bars 1-3) - CD Track 4 (0:35 - 0:50)

Musical score for Etude III, bars 1-3, showing a performance interpretation. The right hand includes slurs, accents, and a triplet of eighth notes in bar 2. The left hand features a long, sustained chord in bar 2.

Etude III (bars 1-3) - CD Track 4 (1:14 - 1:25)

Musical score for Etude III, bars 1-3, showing a performance interpretation with tempo markings. The right hand includes slurs and accents. The left hand includes slurs and accents. The markings "rit." and "accel." are placed below the right hand staff.

Etude III (bars 1-3) - CD Track 4 (3:01 - 3:11)

Musical score for Etude III, bars 1-3, showing a performance interpretation. The right hand includes slurs and accents. The left hand includes slurs and accents. A tremolo effect is indicated by a wavy line under the first few notes of the left hand in bar 1.

Figure 8 - Three interpretations of bars 1-3 of *Etude III* compared with original notation, transcribed from my performance (Appendix 1 - CD Track 4)

In performance, my interpretation of *Etude III* reflected this practice by straying from the notated material in an episodic manner, but always maintaining some connection to the melodic theme, as well as the harmonic style specified in the score. The recording shows that this practice resulted in me being able to draw freely upon the notated material without being restricted by the level of detail in the score, and that such materials were employed in a manner subservient to my improvisation. This can be demonstrated by considering three contrasting improvised iterations of bars 1-3 from the score, transcribed in Figure 8, and by listening to these excerpts in their performance context. On this basis, I am satisfied that my original objectives in *Etude III* were achieved through an appropriate combination of open and systematic approaches.

The practice strategies discussed in the previous examples are not positioned as new or groundbreaking, but the way they are generated and explored in the context of these improvisational etudes represents a cogent marriage of strategy and experimentation within my practice. Alternating between systematic and open approaches allowed me to test new materials and ideas, reflect on my handling of them in an improvised context, and reinforce specific skills as needed. Understanding how these approaches can impact improvised performance outcomes is invaluable to my creative work, and will better inform future practice strategies. This reaffirms the importance of *process* within the improvisational etude model.

4.4 Incubation

The most intriguing catalyst for the assimilation of new skills into my improvisational language was not a practice strategy at all, but rather, the passive and incubative space afforded to new skills and materials by periodically setting each etude aside from my practice routine. In Stage Three of the improvisational etude model, following Moustakas (1990), I recognize that ongoing developments in instrumental practice can cause subtle shifts and changes within my overall knowledge base, particularly on a tacit level, often with surprising results. This accounts for the phenomenon where rigorously practiced material can feel more comfortable when played days after the initial effort, or similarly, when particular skills emerge organically in improvised performance weeks or months after receiving attention in the practice studio.

The process of incubation was relatively straightforward. Given that I can generally feature between two and four etudes in my practice routine at any one time, each etude inevitably had to be put aside to incorporate a new one. In order to encourage incubation and tacit growth, I aimed to replace each etude with a contrasting one, thereby shifting my practice and focus in a different direction. For example, in late August 2016 I set aside *Etude IV* and commenced *Etude VI*, consequentially shifting from a rhythmic focus to a study in gesture and articulation, albeit with some skill overlap. Ongoing at the time was *Etude II*, whose polyrhythmic materials continued to require systematic practice, and *Etude V*, a relatively accessible score that warranted extensive open exploration. At the time, I observed that this diversity of materials seemed to elicit a stimulating level of invention and experimentation within my practice, sharing ideas and strategies between the etudes. Upon revisiting *Etude IV* in November, despite having lost some of my familiarity with the specifics of the score, I noted that I felt more capable of interacting with its rhythmic materials in an organic way, and that my perspective of the etude's potential as a musical event had broadened.

Inherent in the notion of 'incubation' is the idea of placing trust in one's processes, and the expectation that over time, seeds planted through various forms of practise will grow and interact on a subconscious level. While it is not the purpose of this research to explicate the subconscious workings of an improvised musician from a neuroscience perspective, it is certainly relevant in my practice to hypothesize ways they might be enriched or encouraged. Based on my experience, the improvisational etude model has led to some unexpected outcomes in my performance capabilities, which I attribute largely to the diversity of materials in my etude folio, as well as to the regular variations in my practice routine.

4.5 Steering towards performance

Following the incubative period, Stage Four of the improvisational etude model involved revisiting each etude in practice, reflecting on how I felt about skills and pathways that have developed, and refining my approaches in anticipation of the recorded performance outcome. While rigorous practise was still relevant and necessary at this stage, I no longer afforded myself the 'expansive' perspective that defined Stage Two. Rather, this final developmental stage employed open practice geared towards teaching myself how to make the most of the improvisational resources already available to me.

Despite the inevitable emergence of new ideas, as well as the awareness of loose-ends and pathways yet to be thoroughly explored, the process of steering towards performance warranted an attitude of limitation and acceptance, manifesting through internal dialogue around a question previously posed in Stage One: do I have enough to work with? Whereas instrumental practice in Stage Two targeted future growth, Stage Four once again saw the adoption of the 'junkyard' mentality (Peters 2009), focusing on how to best exploit that which is available to me in the present.

By the nature of their composition, certain etudes lent themselves well to performance-oriented practice, meaning that I was able to approach my solo recording confident in my ability to generate a compelling performance from their respective materials. This was especially true of *Etude I*, *Etude V* and *Etude VI*, because they afforded leeway to vary tempos and develop sustainable momentum. Practising these etudes in Stage Four involved setting target durations while improvising, and challenging myself to consider elements such as performance contour, climax, and resolution.

As a contrasting example, *Etude VII* challenged my hand coordination to such a degree that I often felt at the edge of my technical capacity to sustain the contrapuntal intensity I was targeting, and I observed myself reverting to systematic approaches to strengthen the notated material. Upon reflection, I realized this was a strategic fallacy, as it diverted my efforts away from the real challenge of learning to apply my existing skills:

It's important right now not to focus on what I can't do... my perfectionist tendencies are stifling me. The way to make music out of *Etude VII* is to embrace discomfort and allow myself to make a mess, focusing on *process* rather than self-evaluation (DS journal entry 22/11/16).

Through this, I was reminded of the notion that effective practice rarely sounds polished, or feels self-gratifying, and that success and progress can be observed in incremental details—being able to sustain an idea longer than in the previous attempt, or allowing a moment of intensity to collapse into a contrasting texture. Adjusting my focus this way enabled me to better access and maximize skills already available to me.

Differentiation between my experiences throughout Stages Two and Four attests to the potential value of the improvisational etude model in broadening one's perspective of their own skills. So often, I find it easy to idealize instrumental practice as the infinite pursuit of expansion and growth, with so much work yet to be done. While not theoretically untrue, this research has shown that it is equally important to accept my

limitations in the present moment and focus on what I *can* do well. Further, while the hours of accumulated practice in Stage Two would undoubtedly have been useful in isolation, Stage Four allowed—if not forced—me to change perspective and appreciate the resources already available to me, in anticipation of the pressure of a performance outcome. In hindsight, understanding this combination of *expanding* and *narrowing* practice perspectives is of crucial importance in the etude model.

CHAPTER FIVE: Performance Reflections and Conclusions

5.1 Overview

Following my account of the etude development process throughout Chapters Three and Four, this final chapter will reflect on the impact the improvisational etude model has had on my practice by considering the recorded performance outcomes as a manifestation of personal creative growth. Further—and in relation to the research question outlined in Chapter One, perhaps more importantly—this chapter presents the most salient observations about the overall value of the improvisational etude model, as drawn from my experience. Finally, I consider opportunities for future research and application of the model.

As discussed in Chapter One, the genesis of this research was a desire to enrich and expand my improvisational resources, and to pursue a direction tailored to the development of a solo performance practice. Summarily, this has been achieved, and I am satisfied that the performances contained in Appendix 1 represent a significant step forward in my musical development. This is a subjective, experiential judgment, which acknowledges that growth observed in relation to one's artistic practice may be less discernable to other people. Such a judgment is not without value when inherently *felt* by the practitioner. Reiterating that the adoption of this model by any other practitioner would—and by its nature, *should*—elicit vastly different musical results, depending on one's priorities, discussion of these performances focuses on key observations regarding musical progress, rather than the quantification of specific skills.

5.2 Personal creative growth reflected in the recorded performances

Returning to my broad categorization of performance goals in Chapter Three, I argue that the improvisational etude model has facilitated growth across the full range of technical and language areas specified. In this section, I consider how my performances demonstrate progress towards these goals, mirroring the themes of the original discussion.¹⁹

¹⁹ See Chapter Three, Section 3.4: 'Targeting performance goals in etude scores'

Targeting improvement in my left hand dexterity was a broad but important objective, reflected in the strategies behind numerous etude scores. In performance, I feel that progress is most clearly demonstrated late in *Etude VII*, during a climactic period in which I had departed from the notated materials in bars 3-4, but managed to sustain intensity in my left hand, which remained a driving force until the end of the performance.²⁰ Another example is in *Etude V*, where my left hand becomes quite forceful in the low register, a sound I have rarely associated with my own playing.²¹ I felt at the very edge of my technical limits maintaining this kind of raw contrapuntal activity between the two hands, but acknowledge that prior to this research, I would likely not have afforded myself the opportunity to take such a risk in a solo improvisation.

I feel that I made effective use of the piano's range throughout the performances, and I was particularly happy with how I managed to move freely between materials in low, middle and high registers during *Etude V*. My navigation towards the rapid left hand ostinato in bar 5 illustrates this: over one minute, I morph from high register linear movement, anchored by a static semitone dyad in the middle, to a hoquet-like counterpoint between both hands in the low register.²² This descent demonstrates an improved subtlety in my ability to coordinate simultaneous shifts both in register and in the role of each hand, with moments like this building confidence in my capacity to navigate 'undefined' transitions between contrasting notated sections in a score.

My two performances of *Etude I* represent a significant development in new improvisational language, and in this sense, I feel that the improvisational etude model has proven an ideal framework for expanding my approaches to pitch and harmonic organization. The two performances also exemplify how an etude score's role as an improvisational referent can be exploited to produce different results, in this case by treating the score as a starting point²³ from which to venture outwards, or as a destination at which to direct one's performance.²⁴ Both performances were clearly informed by my systematic study of the twelve-tone row and its forms, as previously discussed, as well as the intervallic colours uncovered by the row's octave displacement in the score.

²⁰ See Audio CD Track 9 (approx. 3:45 to end).

²¹ See Audio CD Track 7 (approx. 4:20 to 5:30).

²² See Audio CD Track 7 (approx. 3:30 to 4:30).

²³ See Audio CD Track 1, which commences with clear reference to the *Etude I* score.

²⁴ See Audio CD Track 2, which concludes with an interpretation of the *Etude I* score.

Certain performances delivered surprising results, based on expectations built through previous practice. For example, in *Etude IV*, I did not explicitly articulate material from the two staves at the same time; rather, the performance transpired in a fluid and organic manner, nonetheless exploiting the variation in rhythmic phrasing (previously illustrated in Figure 5). Whilst the focused and systematic practice undertaken to coordinate the notated materials is not overtly represented in the performance, it certainly contributed to the outcome.

On reflection, the hour of recorded music resulting from this research represents the undertaking of a significant body of developmental work, and on a personal level, the most musically compelling and mature solo improvising achieved to date. In many ways, this can only be considered a sample of the developments that have occurred within my improvisational skills and knowledge base. Further, I expect the manifestation of these developments, and the observation thereof, to be an ongoing process as I continue my practice into the future.

5.3 Appraising the value of the improvisational etude model

Having experienced an intensive period of development within my improvisational practice throughout this research, and having observed the variety and interaction of processes inherent to the improvisational etude model, I am convinced that it offers a deeply personal and comprehensive approach to practice, with ongoing potential for further iterations of the cycle.

A key feature of this model is the requirement to alternate between expansive and reductive perspectives, illustrated in Stages One, Two and Four. The processes of defining a question in the form of an etude score, extrapolating possibilities for exploring that question, and focusing new skills towards a performance combine effectively to push one's boundaries whilst elevating one's awareness of their own resources. These processes are not unique to this model, but through it I have experienced them more acutely and provocatively than ever before in my creative work. The etude embraces practice as experimentation, and although linking goals with strategies is essential to the developmental cycle, it affords the practitioner an intuitive

scope to pursue ideas for the sake of creative discovery. As a model for practice not geared towards instant gratification, it promotes trust in one's processes, affording time to develop and incubate ideas, and delay evaluation until skills have had the opportunity to manifest. Yet it also demands rigor, drawing attention to gaps in one's knowledge and skillsets through the interplay between open and systematic practice. For these reasons, I argue that the five-stage model outlined in Chapter Two offers far more benefit to a practitioner than appropriating existing etude scores, and I reiterate that my etudes are not designed for use beyond my own creative practice.

Significantly, this model has driven me towards a looser distinction between the ideas of 'repertoire' and 'resources', pertaining to the materials from which one can build a musical performance. An etude score is neither a musical composition in its own right, nor do I specifically have to perform an etude in order to use skills that I developed from it.

The improvisational etude is, by its nature, an inward-focused approach to practice, and in this case it has been well suited to the pursuit of outcomes in solo performance. Further possibilities for investigating this model, however, could certainly incorporate ensemble and collective improvising processes, introducing a whole new dimension of interaction, as well as the combined potency of multiple perspectives investigating shared materials. Alternatively, there is scope to investigate the composition of improvisational etudes for use by other practitioners. This could be achieved by composing specifically for another improviser, viewing their practice from an 'outside' perspective, or by developing a folio of etudes for general use. It may also be possible to design etudes for less experienced, intermediate improvisers, but this would require a more constrained approach to choosing musical materials, and less idiosyncratic performance objectives.

The classical etude genre developed through centuries of accumulated effort and varied application, resulting in a repertoire steeped in pedagogical strategy with the potential to enrich and refine the skills and techniques essential to classical performance. In the same way, though tailored towards different demands and outcomes, this improvisational etude model is hereby presented as a framework for creative practice that can be replicated, adapted and modified by other practitioners to suit any objectives deemed relevant to their practice. Whilst not seeking to replace established practice approaches documented in jazz and improvisational traditions, it promotes a

deeply personalized, reflective and intensive attitude to practice, with experimentation and exploration at the core of its methodology.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Folio of Audio Recordings (CD attachment)

Track 1:	<i>Etude I</i>	(5:09)
Track 2:	<i>Etude I (alternate)</i>	(4:42)
Track 3:	<i>Etude II</i>	(5:27)
Track 4:	<i>Etude III</i>	(4:46)
Track 5:	<i>Etude III (alternate)</i>	(7:00)
Track 6:	<i>Etude IV</i>	(5:25)
Track 7:	<i>Etude V</i>	(7:16)
Track 8:	<i>Etude VI</i>	(7:01)
Track 9:	<i>Etude VII</i>	(5:00)
Track 10:	<i>Etude VII (alternate)</i>	(2:29)
Track 11:	<i>Etude VIII</i>	(6:56)

Total duration: (61:11)

All compositions and performances by Daniel Sheehan (solo piano).

All tracks produced without edits or overdubs.

Recorded 17th December, 2016 at Monash University by Ben Grayson.

Mixed and mastered 9th February, 2017 by Philip Rex.

Appendix 2: Recital Notes

The performance component of this research consists of an audio CD containing recordings of my improvisational etudes (see Appendix 1). Supplementing the recordings, these recital notes provide an outline of each etude, briefly acknowledging the challenges, strategies and goals addressed in their construction.

Etude I is a minimalist arrangement of a twelve-tone row, designed as a launching pad to experiment with the incorporation of twelve-tone language in improvisation. It originated through my interest in exploring structured and logical ways to organize non-tonal sounds, informed by the works of Arnold Schönberg and Alban Berg, and improvising pianist Kris Davis. The musical vision for the etude was to develop an approach focusing on intervallic relationships within a particular twelve-tone row, as shown in Figure 9:

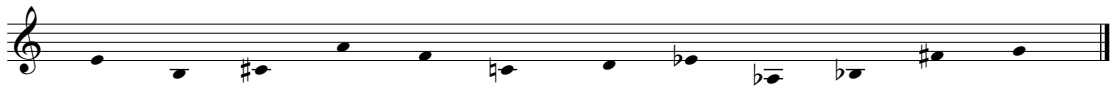


Figure 9 - Twelve-tone row used in *Etude I*

The didactic strategy for the etude was to arrange the tone row in a situation that might be conducive to creative musical thinking. Rather than presenting the row in its simplest form, I opted to assign each pitch to a particular register, widening most of the intervals to create space for melodic development. Stemless notes, suggesting indeterminate rhythm, also encourage space in performance. The sixteen-bar form expands incrementally from a single pitch event to eight pitches in a bar, before contracting again to expose the same intervals in retrograde. Rather than adhering to this form, or to strict serial principles, however, the objective of this etude in performance is to explore a soundscape where pitches are less stable, and my performance reflexes are challenged accordingly.

Etude II is one of several etudes to feature specific rhythmic challenges. It arose from a desire to improve my precision and control when employing polyrhythmic groupings in an odd-time meter. Specifically, this etude addresses the ability to hear and execute

larger rhythmic groupings as composites of short and long pulses of 'two' and 'three' respectively, as illustrated in Figure 10:

'short' pulse	=	2 quavers
'long' pulse	=	3 quavers

Figure 10 - Combining 'short' and 'long' pulses to articulate groups of 9

Bars 1-7 invite exploration of a 5:3 polyrhythm, presenting melodic pitches grouped in 'five' set against an underlying 9/8 pedal, which also offers the possibility of a larger 5:9 polyrhythm. The etude is designed so that additional layers of rhythmic difficulty can be found by varying the 9/8 pedal from even dotted crotchets to combinations of two and three-quaver groupings. Bars 8-15 challenge me to maintain the same rhythmic aesthetic while interacting with a contrapuntal theme, which offers a climactic arrival point to aim for in the course of a performance.

Etude III focuses on four-part voice leading in a tonal environment, and was designed to improve my capacity to improvise using common-practice voicing principles, particularly with regards to inner voices. Within the overall folio, this etude demonstrates two ideas: firstly, that the improvisational etude concept can be usefully applied to established and traditional instrumental practices, and secondly, that etudes can be conceived in order to consolidate and build upon existing skill sets, as well as exploring new and experimental processes. The notated score offers a clear three-bar thematic statement in the key of B minor, pathways for modulations through an efficient (if slightly truncated) eight-bar development section, and a climactic three-bar recapitulation resolving to B major. It is intended that through improvisation, the melodic theme will be thoroughly explored—along with harmonic pathways suggested in bars 4-11—whilst maintaining the integrity of the four-part style.

Etude IV targets a very specific aspect of rhythmic control by exploring subtle differences in execution between similar phrases felt in simple and compound duple time, illustrated in Figure 11:

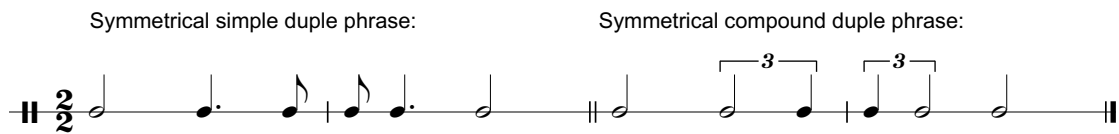


Figure 11 - Comparison of rhythmic phrases as used in *Etude IV*

It originated as a question of whether I could exploit these differences whilst maintaining a strong sense of each minim beat, hence the designation of a 2/2 time signature. This question stems from previous experience performing Tim Berne's composition *Hard Cell* (2004), which variously employs quaver, crotchet and minim triplets to interrupt an otherwise even flow. I often find these rhythmic devices challenging to place accurately. *Etude IV* does not recreate the same musical conditions, but challenges me to articulate syncopated variations of crotchet pairs and triplets in each hand.

The score employs a twelve-bar form, with the upper staff offering an AAB thematic cycle, loosely defined in the key of Bb minor. The lower staff contains a counter melody that subverts the theme through rhythmic anticipations (bars 1-4) and delays (bars 5-8), before reverting to a steady duple feel (bars 9-12). The decision to notate both parts in bass clef reinforces the idea that neither part is intended to occupy high or low registers exclusively, and accordingly, both hands should be familiar with each. The challenge is to draw on these rhythmic devices in performance, with the twelve-bar form an optional framework for improvising.

Etude V is an example of an etude designed to troubleshoot one problematic skill or musical device, supported by materials intended to highlight and strengthen skills associated with it. In this case, the problem is the repetitive bass clef figure in bars 1-2, recurring in the treble clef in bars 3-4, which comprises a 'short-long-long' ostinato organized into larger groups of three, implying a 15/8 bar structure overall, as illustrated in Figure 12:

'Short' pulse = 1 quaver
'Long' pulse = 2 quavers

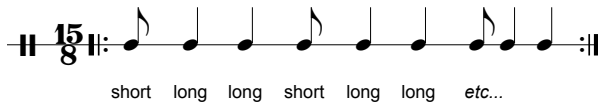


Figure 12 - Repetitive rhythmic figure in *Etude V* score

The apparent simplicity of this ostinato figure is deceptive, and it targets a self-identified weakness: when improvising around repeated patterns commencing on ‘short’ pulses, I encounter coordination issues and often struggle to sustain the integrity of those patterns, especially in odd-time settings. Due to the specificity of this problem, I broadened the scope of the etude to encourage wide use of the piano’s registers, as well as thematic materials that require me to alternate hands in order to maintain the ostinato. Bar 5 offers a contrast in linear density, combining a twelve-tone bass ostinato with suggested groupings and variations within the 15/8 rhythmic structure.

Etude VI is a study in gesture²⁵ and articulation, designed to elicit greater levels of detail and precision in the attack techniques employed in piano performance. It was motivated by a desire to interrupt some self-perceived negative tendencies, like the use of excessive sustain pedal, or to articulate improvised phrases in an overly casual manner, without considering the range of contrasting expressive options available to inform my sound. Taking into account reflective journal entries that have noted an occasional lack of variety or homogeneity in my articulation choices, I constructed an etude that would accentuate articulation in both hands.

Bar 1 contains a rapid and irregular series of intervallic leaps and repeated notes for the right hand, constituting a melodic referent, with accents revealing semiquaver groupings of sevens, fives and sixes. Staccato and tenuto symbols encourage varied articulation within the groupings. The left hand receives a similar focus in the final two bars of the score. Meanwhile, the sparser, more elongated middle section (bars 2-5) offers a textural contrast and an opportunity for gradual transition to left hand activity. As with all my etudes, repeats are considered ‘open’. Additionally, this score eschews

²⁵ By ‘gesture’ I refer to an approach to improvisation that is informed primarily by bodily movement and my physical relationship with the piano, and less by theoretical constructs such as harmony and rhythm (though not exclusively).

time signatures so that the notated materials may be explored without reliance on meter, further emphasizing gesture as the primary focus.

Etude VII employs two long-form bass ostinato figures, both derived from a thirteen-beat cycle, divided for practical purposes into bars of $21/8$ and $18/8$ (or, in practice, '7' and '6'). These ostinatos are illustrated in Figure 13:

Reduced form of ostinato (appearing in bars 1-2):

Expanded form of ostinato (appearing in bars 3-4):

(Accents indicate notes aligning with reduced form)

Figure 13 - Comparison between reduced and expanded ostinatos in *Etude VII*

Ostinatos are a commonly employed device in piano improvisation. Given the instrument's polyphonic nature, they offer an obvious appeal in their capacity to provide a repetitive and stable role for one hand, simultaneously enabling the other to freely explore melodic ideas. In my experience, however, longer and more complex ostinatos can be difficult to sustain, and this etude seeks to exploit that challenge. The bass ostinato in bars 1-2 is a reduction of that which appears in bars 3 and 4 (as shown in the above figure). Both offer different challenges, and they are each conceived as being potentially difficult to maintain. In terms of improvisation, this opens up an interesting scenario where I might alter or fragment an ostinato, either by choice, or because an error necessitates deviation. In bars 3-4, the treble clef offers a kind of counter-ostinato, employing different rhythmic groupings so that the accents in each hand only align on the first beat of the cycle.

Conceptually, **Etude VIII** targets a strategy for manipulating relatively simple musical materials in performance. Specifically, it aims toward real-time displacement of a single-line melody using hoquet technique, so that the alternation between voices creates rhythmic interest and varied interactions between the hands. The score poses the

question in my practice of how a single melodic line can inform polyphonic improvisation.

The score is a hocket arrangement of the continuous melodic cycle outline in Figure 14, in which bars 1, 3, and 5 are designated as open repeats, with bars 2, 4, and 6 acting as 'cues' to between them:

open repeat: *cue to next section:*

The figure displays three staves of musical notation. The first staff is in 10/8 time, the second in 9/8, and the third in 10/8. Each staff shows a melodic line with repeat signs and cues. The first staff is labeled 'open repeat:' and the second is labeled 'cue to next section:'. The notation includes various note values, rests, and accidentals, illustrating the melodic cycle used in Etude VIII.

Figure 14 - Melodic cycle upon which *Etude VIII* is based

Slight variations between the bars in terms of duration and contour encourage focus on the melodic line itself, rather than the rhythmic form, in order to improvise different displacements, expanding on that which is suggested in the score. Together, the six bars offer a long-form ostinato. Relative to other etudes, this score is unusual because it prescribes a form, although this does not preclude any departure when improvising.

Appendix 3A: Etude I (score)

Etude I

Dan Sheehan

The musical score for Etude I by Dan Sheehan is presented in four systems, each consisting of a treble and bass staff. The piece is in a key with one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, accidentals, and dynamic markings.

System 1 (Measures 1-5): The treble staff begins with a whole note chord (F#4, A4) in measure 1. Measure 2 features a half note (F#4) with an *8va* marking above it. Measure 3 contains a half note (B4) with a slur over it. Measure 4 has a half note (Bb4) with a slur over it. Measure 5 features a half note (F#4) with a slur over it. The bass staff provides accompaniment with chords: (F#2, A2) in measure 1, (F#2, A2) in measure 2, (Bb2) in measure 3, and (F#2, A2) in measure 5.

System 2 (Measures 6-10): Measure 6 starts with a half note (F#4) with an *8va* marking. Measure 7 has a half note (Bb4) with a slur. Measure 8 features a half note (F#4) with a slur. Measure 9 has a half note (Bb4) with a slur. Measure 10 features a half note (F#4) with a slur. The bass staff accompaniment includes chords: (F#2, A2) in measure 6, (Bb2) in measure 7, (F#2, A2) in measure 8, (F#2, A2) in measure 9, and (Bb2) in measure 10.

System 3 (Measures 11-15): Measure 11 has a half note (F#4) with a slur. Measure 12 features a half note (Bb4) with a slur. Measure 13 has a half note (F#4) with a slur. Measure 14 features a half note (Bb4) with a slur. Measure 15 has a half note (F#4) with a slur. The bass staff accompaniment includes chords: (Bb2) in measure 11, (F#2, A2) in measure 12, (F#2, A2) in measure 13, (Bb2) in measure 14, and (F#2, A2) in measure 15.

System 4 (Measures 16-20): Measure 16 has a half note (F#4) with a slur. Measure 17 features a half note (Bb4) with a slur. Measure 18 has a half note (F#4) with a slur. Measure 19 features a half note (Bb4) with a slur. Measure 20 has a half note (F#4) with a slur. The bass staff accompaniment includes chords: (F#2, A2) in measure 16, (Bb2) in measure 17, (F#2, A2) in measure 18, (Bb2) in measure 19, and (F#2, A2) in measure 20.

Appendix 3B: *Etude II* (score)

Etude II

Dan Sheehan

The first system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a time signature of 9/8. It features a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, some with slurs. The lower staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature, containing a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, indicating a specific articulation or technique.

The second system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a time signature of 9/8. It features a melodic line with slurs and various note values. The lower staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature, featuring a melodic line with slurs and various note values.

The third system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a time signature of 9/8. It features a melodic line with slurs and various note values. The lower staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature, featuring a melodic line with slurs and various note values.

Appendix 3C: *Etude III* (score)

Etude III

Dan Sheehan

The first system of the score consists of three measures. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The melody in the right hand features eighth-note patterns with various accidentals (sharps and naturals). The left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

The second system contains measures 4 through 7. Measure 4 continues the 4/4 time signature. Measures 5 and 6 show a change to a 3/4 time signature, and measure 7 returns to 4/4. The notation includes a variety of note values and rests, with some notes marked with flats.

The third system covers measures 8 to 11. Measure 8 is in 4/4, while measures 9, 10, and 11 feature a 5/4 time signature. The melody in the right hand includes a long, expressive slur over several notes. The left hand continues with a steady accompaniment.

The fourth system contains the final three measures of the piece, measures 12 through 15. The time signature remains 4/4. The piece concludes with a final cadence in the right hand, marked with a double bar line.

Appendix 3D: Etude IV (score)

Etude IV

Dan Sheehan

The first system of music consists of four measures. The treble clef staff begins with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 2/2 time signature. The melody features a series of eighth notes with slurs and ties, including a triplet of eighth notes in the second measure. The bass clef staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with eighth notes and triplets.

The second system of music consists of four measures, starting with a measure number '5' above the first measure. The notation continues with the same melodic and harmonic patterns as the first system, including slurs, ties, and triplets in both staves.

The third system of music consists of four measures, starting with a measure number '9' above the first measure. The notation concludes the piece with a double bar line and repeat dots. The melodic line in the treble clef staff ends with a sharp sign (F#) above the final note.

Appendix 3E: *Etude V* (score)

Etude V

Dan Sheehan

The first system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It begins with a series of eighth notes, followed by a half note, and ends with a quarter note. The lower staff is in bass clef and features a steady eighth-note accompaniment throughout the system.

The second system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the melodic line from the first system, primarily using eighth notes. The lower staff continues the eighth-note accompaniment, with some chords and rests interspersed.

The third system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff contains a series of rests, indicating a melodic rest for the right hand. The lower staff continues the eighth-note accompaniment, which becomes more complex with some chords and accidentals.

Appendix 3F: *Etude VI* (score)

Etude VI

Dan Sheehan

The first system of music consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a series of eighth notes with various accidentals (flats and naturals) and accents. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a few notes, including a half note and a quarter note, with a long slur underneath them.

The second system of music consists of two staves. The upper staff begins with a double bar line and a repeat sign, followed by a series of notes with slurs and triplet markings. The lower staff also begins with a double bar line and a repeat sign, followed by a few notes.

The third system of music consists of two staves. The upper staff begins with a double bar line and a repeat sign, followed by a series of notes with slurs and accents. The lower staff contains a series of notes with slurs and accents.

Etude VIII

Dan Sheehan

The first system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The time signature is 10/8. The first measure (measures 1-2) contains a quarter rest in the treble and a quarter note G2 in the bass. The second measure (measures 3-4) contains a quarter note A2 in the treble and a quarter note F2 in the bass. The system ends with a double bar line.

The second system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The time signature is 9/8. The first measure (measures 5-6) contains a quarter rest in the treble and a quarter note G2 in the bass. The second measure (measures 7-8) contains a quarter note A2 in the treble and a quarter note F2 in the bass. The system ends with a double bar line.

The third system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The time signature is 10/8. The first measure (measures 9-10) contains a quarter rest in the treble and a quarter note G2 in the bass. The second measure (measures 11-12) contains a quarter note A2 in the treble and a quarter note F2 in the bass. The system ends with a double bar line.