ÉTUDES D’EXÉCUTION TRANSCENDANTE

FRANZ LISZT

Aquiles Delle Vigne
THE ETUDES D’EXÉCUTION TRANSCENDANTE
BY FRANZ LISZT  Aquiles Delle Vigne

“His performance of the Etudes was full of fire and passion, truly diabolical, almost a wild Liszt, seductive and capricious but always new. It was a great moment of musical power.”

Georges Cziffra, pianist, Paris, last Professor of Aquiles Delle Vigne

“Only few pianists can go from a sparkling Mendelssohn to a thundering Liszt while passing an aristocratic, sophisticated and charming Ravel. Aquiles Delle Vigne can.”


“Liszt’s Transcendental Etudes still represent a monumental task, even in our era of mass-production of virtuosi. Nevertheless only few artists have achieved the transcendental stage where technique is taken for granted and musical imagination reigns supreme. It is interesting to note how some of the most celebrated romantic pianists of our century avoided this obstacle or just played a couple of Etudes. I have found only one mention of Horowitz playing some of them: Feux Follets in his youth. They were not part of the usual repertory of Rachmaninoff, Cortot, and Rubinstein… Only a small number of pianists like Jeanne-Marie Darrée and Russell Sherman recorded and played them with great success. Lazar Berman made a celebrated recording of the set. Sviatoslav Richter performed an unforgettable version of the Feux Follets and Harmonies du Soir in the 60s. Two Latin American pianists distinguished themselves with landmark recorded performances of the complete set: Jorge Bolet and Claudio Arrau. Very different, both versions are very impressive by the total command of the chosen expressive devices, unity of style, characterization of the wildly diversified poetic content. Arrau’s version, made quite late in his career, is even more provocative in the bold choice of unusual tempi, absence of clichés and mastery of epic musical style.

I believe Aquiles Delle Vigne, a disciple of Claudio Arrau and Georges Cziffra, is entering this exclusive group of artists with this present performance. He brings to it all the equipment that is necessary. The technique is so solid that you can forget its existence concentrating solely on the musical purpose. The heroic musical vision is bold provocative, reminding us of younger, wilder Liszt. Some will be shocked, perhaps even disagree. But there is such a force, strength to this performance, that it makes us look at the Transcendental Etudes and imagine the impact they caused when heard for the first time.”

Luis de Moura Castro, pianist, Brazil-USA
The **Etudes d'Exécution Transcendante** were written according to a specific tonal plan: C major-A Minor, for the first two etudes. Then the order of the others was F major-D minor, B flat major-G minor, E flat major-C minor, A flat major-F minor and D flat major-B flat minor, not in the chromatic order of Bach but in an order of descending fifths and relatives.

This tonal order will especially gain widespread acceptance in Russia, where, as tribute to Liszt, Liapunov wrote his “Etudes” according to the Maestro's plan.

Compared with Chopin’s Etudes of which the first series Opus 10 was dedicated to Liszt, the Etudes Transcendantes are less “rationales” than those of Liszt's Polish friend. Chopin was a structured genius and approached his Etudes “problem by problem” (thirds, sixths, octaves, arpeggios, etc.). Liszt combines all this with a poetic eloquence in a form of a literary and symphonic program. Chopin remains a “genius of the piano”. Liszt develops into a complete artist and the piano is only a pretext. He is a poet, a dramatist, a philosopher, a believer, a lover...not only “a pianist”.

**Molto vivace**: the second etude seems to have been written on a “fate” theme and soon assumes the appearance of a toccata in the Paganini’s style. It is like hearing the “devil of Genoa” wrestling with his four “accursed strings”. Every register of the piano is leaping about a mad speed, in full-unbridled passion.

**Paysage**: it is a calm plaintive song like a nocturne. It is in fact an Etude for the “legato, the voicing and the cantabile”. The song’s development in the left hand announces Scriabin and Ravel.

**Mazeppa**: this etude was unfairly described as the touchstone of a somewhat empty virtuosity. Liszt also composed a Symphonic Poem inspired in Victor Hugo. Mazeppa, a Ukrainian military, was attached to a wild horse galloping through the night on a wild ride. It was, like a human life, a true odyssey. He faces every possible obstacle in his way, endlessly testing his willpower and overwhelming him. He falls often but when standing up again, he becomes King.

**Feux follets**: (live performance – as an encore – in the Saint Marc Church in Brussels, 1994) the most unimaginable capriccio in a pianistic extravaganza which anticipates the impressionism and whose double notes are the nightmare of every virtuoso. The piece is interspersed with the greatest possible moments of effervescence, imbued with a fantastic and visionary character, and the enchantment of a magical toccata, all with a supreme nonchalance. One
must be able to play it with a noble and aristocratic smile, since Liszt demands “dolce, tranquillo e con grazia”.

**Vision:** This work could have two sources of inspiration. According to Busoni it is the funeral of a king. According to another version it is the morbid vision of Liszt’s own funeral, seen in a bombastic and megalomaniac light. The atmosphere is gloomy and grandiose and the theme of the Lugubre Gondola can be heard.

**Eroica:** Like Mazeppa, it explores a small thematic cell in form of symphonic variations of chords and octaves. We have here an exposition of orchestral timbres. Characters can be stated and modulations translate profound emotional shocks.

**Wilde Jagd:** A real piano poem in which the development of the second idea pathetically heralds the pianistic style of Rachmaninov. It is a dramatic “hunt” in which the theatricality of the psychological crescendo of the finale meets Liszt’s genius of his Sonata in terms of thematic transformation.

**Ricordanza:** The magnificent theme of a berceuse displays itself with charm, gentleness and elegance, breathtaking and delicate cadenzas become firmly established. This stunning arpeggiato becomes spirit. The Coda is superb. Liszt ends with an improvisation, in a simpler form than in the beginning.

**Allegro, agitato molto:** This is the famous “Etude in F minor”. It assumes the name of its tempo “agitato molto” and it is Liszt’s own “Appassionata”. The rhythmic originality, the superb touch of the agitated and anguished phrasing, the resistance put up by the left hand and the somersaults are nothing compared to the extraordinary poetry which imbues these pure and brilliant pages.

**Harmonies du soir:** The whole of French music seems to be united here: the Berlioz grandiloquence, the intimacy of Fauré, the bells, the hints of Messiaen superpositions and the gigantic chords that grow from a calm melody, but which after the “trionfante” passage, die down into infinite gentleness.

**Chasse-neige:** The end of this Herculean cycle. By using tremoli Liszt is able to create the typical vibrato of the strings. It is the most beautiful of the Etudes and one of Liszt’s best pieces. It is like a doubt in the face of God, of the Nature, and also a faith and a hymn. Such a cycle ends with the melancholy of the uncertain world and an empty struggle in the eternal dilemma between matters and spirit, between the impossible and the true.

Alexis Devils
AQUILES DELLE VIGNE
Only few pianists can go from a sparkling Mendelssohn to a thundering Liszt while passing an aristocratic, sophisticated and charming Ravel...
“says Harold Schoenberg of the New York Times. The Italian newspaper La Repubblica calls him „A prince of the piano“ and the PRS Rheinische Post „a Grand Seigneur of pianists“. The SVZ Salzburger Volkszeitung titles its review „From silence till steel power“ („Von still bis stahlhart“).

Born in Argentina, Aquiles Delle Vigne gave his first recital at the age of 8. At 17 he was already a disciple of Claudio Arrau and won the prestigious Grand Prix „Albert Williams“. This award opened the doors of the most important concert halls of the continent for him. Later, he completed his training in Europe with Prof. Eduardo del Pueyo and Georges Cziffra.

He accomplished more than 25 concert tours in Japan, 10 in Australia, the United States of America and Mexico, Hong Kong and Korea, and all South America. Today he is invited to the most important Festivals and performs in the most important halls in the world: Santa Cecilia in Rome, Salle Gaveau in Paris, the Colon Theatre in Buenos Aires, the Arts Center in Seoul, the Atheneu George Enescu in Bucharest, the Tchaikovsky Hall in Moscow, the Philharmonic Hall in Saint Petersburg the Suda Hall in Tokyo. He performed in the Festivals in Gstaad, Paris, Salzburg, Madrid, Euro Festival in Korea, Beethoven Festival – where he played the Concerti N° 3, 4 and 5 -, Lausanne, Bern, under Lord Yehudi Menuhin, Leopold Hager, Georges Octors, Alberto Lysy, Lee Dong-ho, Bogo Leskowitch, Vladimir Kim, Emiel Simon, Edvard R. Tchivtzel, Andrè Vandernoot, Edgard Donneux, Kamen Goleminov, Juan Carlos Zorzi, Jesus Medina, Claudio Santoro, Henrique Morelenbaum, D. Marinescou, Laurent Petit-Girard, with leading orchestras of the world.

Considered also as a leading teacher in the world, Aquiles Delle Vigne gives Masterclasses at the International Sommerakademie Universität Mozarteum in Salzburg, was Visiting Professor at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester and now Professor Extraordinaire of the National University in Taipei. He is also regularly invited at the Juilliard, Manhattan and Mannes Schools in New York, the Tchaikovsky Moscow Conservatory and the Korsakov Saint Petersburg Conservatory, the Toho University in Tokyo, the Hochschule in München, Karlsruhe and Hamburg, the Universities in Seoul, Taejan, Sydney, Melbourne, Pretoria, Baltimore, Texas, Indiana, Osaka, Kyoto, Bangkok.

He is a member or Chairman of the panel of Judges at the most important international Competitions on all five continents: Sydney, Pretoria, Cincinatti, Turin, Paris, Texas, Casagrande, and Masters in Monte-Carlo, Roma, and Warsaw.

His vast discography with EMI His Master’s Voice, BASF Harmonia Mundi, BMG-RCA Victor, Naxos, Pavane and EMS received outstanding praise and distinction. His performance of the Preludes by Olivier Messiaen for the Pope John Paul II at the Vatican earned him tremendous praise from the composer.

Aquiles Delle Vigne is now finishing the complete recording of the 32 Piano Sonatas by Beethoven.
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Recorded at: EMS Studios in Brussels in March 1994
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Program notes by: Alexis Devils
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Piano Bösendorfer Imperial 297 (EMS ‘s piano)
Piano Steinway D-274 (EMS’s piano) for Feux Follets

1  0:52  Prelude
2  2:20  Molto vivace
3  5:32  Paysage
4  7:40  Mazeppa
5  3:55  Feux follets
6  6:01  Vision
7  4:36  Eroica
8  5:41  Wilde Jagd
9  10:53  Ricordanza
10  4:32  Allegro, agitato molto
11  10:17  Harmonies du soir
12  5:26  Chasse-neige

TOTAL: 67:53

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