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DEFINING THE LEFT-HAND PIANO AS “ANOTHER KIND OF INSTRUMENT”
IN THE MUSIC OF LEOPOLD GODOWSKY AND FRANZ SCHMIDT

By

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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This study seeks to situate the contribution of Leopold Godowsky and Franz Schmidt to the history of redefining left-hand piano music. Both were outstanding pianists and composers who came to the left-handed genres for their own individual reasons. They each defined their pianistic styles based on common traits (the music of both Chopin and Bach figured highly for both) but differed in approach owing to the genres in which they worked: Godowsky’s compositions were chiefly in the realm of solo piano music, while Schmidt’s fell in the realms of both chamber music, discussed here, and in concertos. Rather than defining the left-hand piano in a two-handed fashion as had composers before them—attempting to “normalize” the left hand by making it do the work of two—both carefully crafted the left-hand piano as a unique instrument capable of performing its own type of music. The study will begin by discussing the state of left-handed piano music before the early twentieth century from its beginnings in the eighteenth, showing how most composers came to see music written for the left-hand piano before 1900. Two larger chapters will then focus on Godowsky and Schmidt,

detailing their relationship to the piano, clarifying certain of their ideas on the instrument, examining their sources of inspiration, and providing analyses of their music to show how they defined the left-hand piano as an instrument in its own right.

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Introduction

An Overview of the Literature on Music for Left-Hand Piano With Commentary on my Own Investigations

General

Musicological research has long regarded repertoire for left-hand piano as an anomaly, if it recognized it at all. Recent studies, however, have shed new light and bestowed new interest on this music. Unsurprisingly, some of this research have come from performers. One of the earliest studies I have come across is John Bruce Ashton's DMA Thesis titled *Music for Piano Left-Hand and Orchestra. A Study of Technical Solutions to a Musical Problem* from 1971. His work deals primarily with the pianism found in compositions he examined by Strauss, Britten, Prokofiev, and Ravel—Showing common traits found among them, he also drew attention to passages found in them that exemplify the unique musical language of the composers studied. Another goal of his study was pianistically pragmatic: to elucidate the demands made on performers of these works.¹

Subsequent research has been sporadic, at least until the end of the twentieth century. Since then, new interest has been spurred by disability studies: in the musical community by scholars such as Joseph Nathan Straus (CUNY) and especially, with regards to music written for left-hand piano, by his protégé Blake Howe. In an article

¹ John Bruce Ashton. *Music for Piano Left-Hand and Orchestra. A Study of Technical Solutions to a Musical Problem*. DMA thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1971.
<https://scholar.uc.edu/concern/etds/m039k4989?locale=en> (Accessed October 2019)

published in *The Journal of Musicology* in 2010, Howe discusses Paul Wittgenstein and his determination to sustain a nineteenth-century tradition of two-handed thinking in his own arrangements for a single hand. He bolsters his argument by analyzing three works that were to be transferred from the left-hand medium to that for two-hand piano: Ravel's concerto (rearranged by Cortot), Schmidt's concerto (redone by Wührer), and Prokofiev concerto, which the composer thought of rearranging before eventually giving up the idea. This study provided a starting point for my own research: showing how certain composers may have felt about the alleged "weaknesses" of the left hand (or not) and how they came to define the instrument in their own ways. Where a significant amount has been done on concerted works (by Howe and others) less attention has been paid to certain solo compositions and especially chamber music. This is an area on which I hope to shed light—a gap in existing research that I hope to fill.²

Recent research has also been undertaken by the Austrian pianist and scholar Albert Sassmann, whose book deals with technical and aesthetic aspects of left-handed piano music. In it he collects and organizes a comprehensive list of left-hand works for easy browsing.³ Sassmann's research provided another starting point for my own in that he discussed similarities among certain composers' compositions for solo strings and for

² Blake Howe, "Paul Wittgenstein and the Performance of Disability." In *The Journal of Musicology*. Volume 27 Number 2 (Spring 2010): pp. 135-180.

³ Other volumes which have collected these works have done little in explaining especially the sources of inspiration or the aesthetic ideas surrounding these works. They have still proven invaluable in regards the history of left-handed works and in regards the opinions of their writers and how they write about this music. See:

Theodor Edel, *Piano Music for One Hand*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.

Donald L. Patterson, *One-Handed: A Guide to Piano Music for One Hand*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999.

Albert Sassmann, *"In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister" – Technik und Ästhetik der Klaviermusik für die linke Hand allein*. Tutzing: Verlegt bei Hans Schneider, 2010.

left-hand piano. He makes a convincing case for Reger's thinking being connected in aspects of texture, range, and melodic thinking in these diverse genres: the solo string works and those for left-hand piano. This led me to question how one repertoire could influence another.

My own project differs in a major way: whereas Sassmann shows connections among compositions by a single composer, I hope to show how the works of a common and beloved composer of the past could influence this specialized literature, some 150 years later. Though Bach's influence on composers of the early twentieth century has been studied for some time, little has been written on the impact of the solo string works on anything other than later solo string works, whether violin or cello. I have found little on the direct influence of Bach's music for solo string instruments on other genres, in particular original compositions written for the left-hand piano, though David Matthew Haynes's dissertation entitled *Context and Process in Arrangement and Transcription for Solo Piano, Left-Hand Alone* explores the manner in which certain composers have come to arrange solo-string music for the piano. In the process, a number of Bach's string works are explored.⁴ I hope my study sheds light on the fascinating ways that restricted writing in one genre can be felt in these unique ones, here especially in original conceptions not arrangements.

⁴ David Matthew Haynes, *Context and Process in Arrangement and Transcription for Solo Piano, Left-Hand Alone*. PhD diss., The University of New South Wales, 2005.

Paul Wittgenstein

When one talks about left-hand pianism in the first half of the twentieth century, the name of Paul Wittgenstein is paramount. In recent years there have been a number of outstanding biographies and musicological studies of the man, his pianism, and his thought process, including the article by Blake Howe mentioned above and the excellent biography by Alexander Waugh, one which tells his story from the perspective not only of Wittgenstein's own experiences but also those of his family members.⁵ Albert Sassmann's article "'alles, was nur möglich ist, aufzufinden und auszugraben.' Paul Wittgenstein und die Klavier-Sololiteratur für die linke Hand allein." is also useful, in a historiographical way, in that he initially surveys the left-hand piano repertoire before focusing his attention on Wittgenstein the performer, as attested by critics, students, and other who heard him, along with giving a picture of Wittgenstein the piano teacher.⁶

Studies of Wittgenstein's pianism include a doctoral thesis from 1999 by Won-Young Kong entitled *Paul Wittgenstein's Transcriptions for the Left Hand: Pianistic Techniques and Performance Problems*.⁷ This project begins by discussing the role of the left hand in two-hand literature, then moves on to Wittgenstein and his commissions before examining Wittgenstein's transcriptional techniques in the written music and his

⁵ Alexander Waugh, *The House of Wittgenstein: A Family at War*. New York: Doubleday, 2008.

⁶ Albert Sassmann, "'alles, was nur möglich ist, aufzufinden und auszugraben.'" Paul Wittgenstein und die Klavier-Sololiteratur für die linke Hand allein." In *Empty Sleeve: Der Musiker und Mäzen Paul Wittgenstein*, ed. Irene Suchy et al. Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2006: pp. 103-132.

⁷ Won-Young Kong, *Paul Wittgenstein's Transcriptions for the Left Hand: Pianistic Techniques and Performance Problems, A Lecture Recital, Together with Three Recitals of Selected Works of R. Schumann, S. Prokofiev, F. Liszt, M. Ravel, and F. Chopin*. Doctoral Thesis, University of North Texas, 1999. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing 9945813.

pianism as heard in his recordings. A larger, more recent project also approaches Wittgenstein from a number of perspectives: technically, as a pianist, socially, and from the point of his disability. Her technical analyses focus on three major works: the concertos by Ravel, Prokofiev, and Britten, comparing them and contrasting them to their works for two-hand piano. This goes a long way in helping one to understand this specialized literature in a broader context.⁸

In dealing with Wittgenstein in my own project, I have tried to show how he thought about the piano, particularly in how he arranged certain works for his own use: often those arrangements were built upon existing piano works or ones already arranged for the piano—in the case of the Bach-Brahms *Chaconne*, even on a transcription already configured for the left-hand medium. Here I draw on the work of the scholars mentioned, though in my own analyses, I hope to show just how different his attitude was toward the left-hand instrument than that taken by the chief composers of my inquiry: Leopold Godowsky and Franz Schmidt.

Leopold Godowsky

In the realm of solo piano music written for the left-hand alone, there is no more important name than that of Leopold Godowsky. Composing some 50 works for the left hand, with only one request coming from Paul Wittgenstein, Godowsky is important in

⁸ Scanlon, Emma. *Pianism Reimagined: An Analytical Inquiry of Left-Hand Piano through the Career and Commissions of Paul Wittgenstein*. PhD diss., Maynooth University, 2017.
http://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/10040/1/THESIS_CORRECTIONS%20COMPLETE.pdf (Accessed October 2019)

that one can trace a line of development of left-handed thinking in his compositions.

Godowsky has also left some smaller essays on his music, relating his ideas on the left-hand instrument and discussing his goals within them. Part of Godowsky's goal seemed to be the preservation of a pianistic style based upon traditional models.⁹

Much of the musicological research that I have come across on Godowsky's left-hand music focuses on his startlingly original transcriptions and arrangements of the Chopin Etudes. As hallmarks of the literature, described by Harold Schonberg as "probably the most impossibly difficult things ever written for piano,"¹⁰ they have long been considered a pinnacle of the repertoire, though few performers until recently have attempted them in concert. In his DMA thesis entitled *Leopold Godowsky's Fifty-Three Studies on Chopin Études*, Younggun Kim has skillfully given a summary of the composer's life, engaged with some of the little yet meaningful research done on the composer's music, and has laid a groundwork for analysis based on Godowsky's

⁹ An essay dealing with the importance and significance of Godowsky's notation, fingering, and other interpretive directions. This is preceded by a preface detailing the significance of the music of Java in the composition of his Java Suite:

Leopold Godowsky, "Addendum to *Java Suite*." In *Java Suite: Phonoramas, Tonal Journeys for the Pianoforte*. New York: 1925.

A late essay written by Godowsky after he had stopped concertizing and only a few years before his death. This essay details his feelings on the left hand going all the way back to his Chopin studies, moving forward to his work in the late 1920s.

Leopold Godowsky, "Piano Music for the Left Hand." In *Musical Quarterly* Volume 21 (January 1, 1935): pp. 298-300.

Godowsky's introductory notes to his Chopin Etudes detailing his ideas on their construction, musical aspects of performing them, and his compositional ideas behind them:

Leopold Godowsky, "Preface." In *Studies on Chopin's Etudes* (Volumes 1-5). New York: G. Schirmer, 1903: p. vii.

Godowsky's remarks which make special note of the left-hand studies:

Leopold Godowsky, "Special Remarks on the studies for the left hand alone." In *Leopold Godowsky: Studien über die Etüden von Chopin*. Volume III Numbers 21-30. Berlin: Robert Lienau Vormal's Schlesinger, 1995: p. vii.

¹⁰ Harold C. Schonberg, *The Great Pianists: From Mozart to the Present* (Completely Revised and Updated). New York: A Fireside Book, 1987: p. 341.

categorization of his etudes into five different groupings, although Kim proposes a new set of five categories with what he regards as improved labels. His study ends with a short discussion of some of the available recordings.

In his own literature review, Kim briefly discusses perhaps the most significant dissertation work done on the music of Godowsky: Millan Sachania's *The Arrangements of Leopold Godowsky: An Aesthetic, Historical, and Analytical Study* from 1997.¹¹ This work was based in part on work Sachania had done on Godowsky for his master's thesis, but greatly expands that work by discussing not only the Chopin arrangements but the arrangements of music by Bach, Strauss, Schubert, and others, including composers of the Renaissance. Godowsky's musical interests and techniques, like Busoni's, were often based on the music of other composers. Sachania attempts to elucidate these transcriptions in three major ways: historically, by comparison with other composers' works (Liszt, Rachmaninoff, Busoni); technically, by musical analyses of such aspects as harmony, counterpoint, rhythm, and key; and aesthetically, by examining the impetus behind the idea of musical transcription or reworking. Sachania's work is useful, descriptive, and informative, but his analyses are all centered on Godowsky's transcription works. He delves little into solo left-hand aesthetics and spends no time at all on his late original compositions, a body of works which for a long time has been dismissed as irrelevant or uninteresting. This provided me with an interest in exploring the late and original works with fresh eyes.

¹¹ Millan Sachania, *The Arrangements of Leopold Godowsky: An Aesthetic, Historical and Analytical Study*. PhD diss., University of Cambridge (UK), 1997. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing U093106.

Franz Schmidt

For years, until just recently, there existed a Gesellschaft in Vienna dedicated to promoting the music of Franz Schmidt. Sadly, this organization closed during the time when I was beginning my research into his music. On a trip to Vienna in 2017, I was lucky enough to obtain materials pertaining to Franz Schmidt given to me by the then-director of the Gesellschaft, Dr. Carmen Ottner. She was surprised and thrilled that a student at an American university was interested in the music of Franz Schmidt, a composer known little outside of the German-speaking countries. She also gave me a copy of the sixteenth volume of *Studien zu Franz Schmidt*, dealing with piano concertos in Germany and Austria written between 1900 and 1945. This opened a path to all the literature that Schmidt scholars had published in these volumes over the years. Additionally, there were certain essays that helped me to situate Schmidt, to better understand his pianism, and to further research the idea of the left-hand instrument.

I found one of these essays in an earlier volume: Gerhard Winkler's article "Franz Schmidts Quintette: Kammermusik mit Klavier für die Linke Hand allein," published in the eleventh volume of *Studien zu Franz Schmidt* proved to be a major source of inspiration. In the article, Winkler compares a couple of passages from the G-Major Quintet in two versions: Schmidt's original and Wührer's reconfiguration. He finds that in Wührer attempting to "normalize" the piano part, he instead loses much of the musical dramaturgy of the moments—inside jokes, backward interplay (the cello taking over the bass role, while the piano plays above it). This proved to be a major starting point for examining the role of the piano in Schmidt's music. Where his article falls short

is not in his ideas or his plans, but in his resources: the original left-hand-alone scores were only seen for the first time again after Hilde Wittgenstein, Paul's wife (30 years younger than he) died in 2002 and the musical archive went up for auction the following year; the music was finally published in its original form only in 2010. This made possible my own research, which fits into and expands upon that done by Winkler.

The volume Dr. Ottner bequeathed to me also contained an important article by the scholar Robert Pascall titled "Franz Schmidts Klavierstil für Paul Wittgenstein."¹² This article was written before access to the original versions of the works were available for broader study. One of Pascall's goals (or hopes) at the time was that the original versions of these works would be made available for study and use in performance giving a better understanding of the music as Schmidt conceived it. His article chiefly deals with various figurations used by Schmidt, their use in the grand scheme of the works (their form-building role), and their use as expressive devices. The idea of figuration having a grand role not only in small moments led me to think about them anew: could the figurations have meaning through their placement at any one moment in the work? And could the type of figuration that Schmidt used be thought of as specifically pianistic? If so, how did the composer define pianism in his works?

This question already intrigued me through my interest in the instrument and the time period, but also through my knowledge of Schmidt's story: a phenomenally gifted performer, both cellist and pianist, who wrote little up until his 40th year and who

¹² Robert Pascall, "Franz Schmidts Klavierstil für Paul Wittgenstein." In *Studien zu Franz Schmidt Band XVI: Das Klavierkonzert in Österreich und Deutschland von 1900-1945*. Wien: Doblinger, 2009: pp. 62-86.

claimed to hate the instrument of which he was a master, the piano. In the last two decades, his output exploded: from 1920 until his death in 1939, he produced a plethora of works including two symphonies (his third and fourth), two piano concertos, three quintets, two string quartets, over twenty major organ works, miscellaneous orchestral works including his celebrated *Hussar Variations*, two smaller piano works, and a major oratorio, *Das Buch mit sieben Siegeln*. What intrigued me most were the works that included the piano: why now and why at all? Having previously read Alexander Waugh's excellent book on Wittgenstein (mentioned above) I sought out further information on Schmidt.

This led me to the biographies of Schmidt by Andreas Liess and Norbert Tschulik.¹³ Liess's biography is the older of the two. Liess also knew Schmidt. His biography was helpful in recounting the basic story of his life in a way that could be compared and contrasted with Tschulik's work. Perhaps more importantly, it provided me with a sample of Schmidt's own writings, detailing his own ideas on music, musical construction, and the piano. Tschulik's biography proved useful as it is the only biography of the composer in English. It also runs systematically through Schmidt's story and through his compositions, which are discussed in separate chapters. His biography proved especially useful for its emphasis on contemporary commentary by reviewers,

¹³ Andreas Liess, *Franz Schmidt: Leben und Schaffen*. Graz: Hermann Böhlaus Nachf. Ges. M.B.H., 1951. Norbert Tschulik trans. Angela Tolstoshev, *Franz Schmidt: A Critical Biography*. London, Glover & Blair, 1980.

scholars, colleagues, and others who knew him or had heard him in concert. This proved especially useful given that Schmidt left no recordings.

Another source useful in piecing together Schmidt's story is Harold Truscott's book analyzing his orchestral music.¹⁴ Biographically it includes an early history of Schmidt's story in the composer's own words. Though some details should be read skeptically, it nevertheless provides insight into the composer's state of mind and his feelings towards the piano and the reasons why he may have composed so little for it. It also includes a discussion by Hans Keller, a friend and musician who played with the composer in his quartet readings in the 1930s. But Truscott's book was pivotal in another way: it was the first of a proposed three-book series which the writer hoped would be followed up with volumes on the rest of his music. He sought to shed light importantly on the organs works, the chamber works, and the oratorio. However, Truscott died before he could complete the project. The oratorio¹⁵ was discussed in some detail by Truscott's pupil, Thomas Bernard Corfield, who also examines the symphonies in detail in his dissertation.¹⁶ But Corfield never went back to discuss any of Schmidt's other works. This gap led me to attempt to fill in with some further research

¹⁴ Harold Truscott, *The Music of Franz Schmidt: 1. The Orchestral Music*. London: Toccata Press, 1984.

¹⁵ The oratorio has also been discussed in some detail in two of the *Studien zu Franz Schmidt* volumes. I have not included these in my bibliography as they were not used in the research below. For those interested, see:

Reiner Schuhenn, *Studien zu Franz Schmidt VIII: Franz Schmidts oratorische Werke*. Wien: Doblinger, 1990.

Carmen Ottner, *Studien zu Franz Schmidt XIII: Apokalypse*. Symposium Juni 1999. Wien: Doblinger, 2001.

¹⁶ Thomas Bernard Corfield, *Franz Schmidt (1874-1939): A Discussion of His Style with Special Reference to the Four Symphonies and 'Das Buch mit sieben Siegeln.'* New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1989.

of the often-sidelined chamber genres. The quintets are among Schmidt's most important musical contributions.

Chapter 1

Left-Hand Pianism?

“Piano played by left hand alone is another kind of instrument, which has its own language, its own dialectics and even its own kind of harmony and technique.”¹

Ari Schönfeld, composer and pianist

The history of the left-handed piano repertoire has recently reached a milestone according to one of the websites devoted to it: the online left-hand database has now amassed a list of over 800 composers who together wrote over 6,000 compositions for this once-specialized medium. This list includes works for the solo piano, both original and in transcription, chamber works, and numerous concerti. As the site attempts to keep up with the newest works, it can be considered a living repository of information rather than a simple and unchanging catalogue. Its growing size seems to confirm that the further we progress into the twenty-first century, the more composers there are who devote at least some of their attention to these once unique mediums.²

If we look at the names and pieces listed, one thing stands out: that the majority of this literature did not develop gradually over a long period of time but rather is concentrated in the years after the turn of the twentieth century, truly blossoming, even exploding, only in the last one hundred years. Some of the reasons behind this phenomenon are obvious: the piano was still developing, only becoming more or less

¹ Albert Sassman, “‘...alles, was nur möglich ist, aufzufinden und auszugraben.’: Paul Wittgenstein und die Klavier-Sololiteratur für die linke Hand allein.” In *Empty Sleeve: Der Musiker und Mäzen Paul Wittgenstein*, ed. Irene Suchy, Allan Janik, Georg Predota. Innsbruck, StudienVerlag, 2006: p. 127.

² <http://www.left-hand-brofeldt.dk>

standardized in range, sound, and pedal mechanisms as we know it today in the late 1800s; other innovations in design did not occur until after the turn of the century.³

But why write for such an unconventional medium in the first place? In an interview in which Theodore Edel has discussed the repertory and the history of the left-hand piano, he has given some suggestions as to reasons why composers or arrangers have come to produce anything for this unique medium. He gives four major ones:

1. "To show off": A repertory conceived to astonish audience members with feats of virtuosity and spectacle. Alexander Dreyschock and Adolfo Fumagalli (who will be discussed below) are listed as members of this category. Their music was written not for any reasons of necessity but was spurred on by their own interest.
2. "To shore up the disparity in skill between the two hands.": As piano pedagogy became codified, exercises or etudes to develop skill with the left hand alone also flourished in an age when the right hand of the pianist was required to perform most of the virtuoso passages.
3. "Injury": For reasons of permanent or temporary use, due to over-practice or over-exertion, or in more serious cases after wars or other major accidents in which a functioning arm becomes disabled. Paul Wittgenstein and Géza Zichy are members of this category.
4. "The challenge of limitation": by limiting oneself in certain ways, each composer also can become inspired to create a music within these limits, a type of music which may never have been born otherwise. Godowsky is the major exponent here, though Edel also lists Brahms's Chaconne as manifesting from that composer's will to "feel like a violinist."⁴

³ Arthur Loesser, *Men, Women and Pianos: A Social History*. New York: Dover pp. 511-518 and 564-569.

⁴ Theodore Edel, "An Interview: One Hand Piano History and Repertoire." (Date Unknown)
<http://www.cello.org/heaven/disabled/intervie.htm> (Accessed October 2019)

But for the reasons why these composers came to this repertoire, what Edel does not mention in detail is just how many of these composers who are categorized as being a member of one of the above groups all fall together under one larger compositional bracket. When one examines most of the music written in this medium (especially that in the nineteenth century) one notices yet another aspect of it which becomes not *a* defining feature of virtually every piece written for the pianist's left hand but *the* defining feature: the will for the music to accomplish that which the "normal" pianist's two hands would do in its own repertoire, if not more than what the two hands could do.

The quotation at the beginning of the chapter leads one to believe that, at least in some composers' eyes, the left-hand piano was a type of instrument of its very own, an instrument that could eventually be understood as one capable of producing a type of music which was unique unto itself. Schönfeld's quotation comes from 2004: years after the modernist and postmodernist movements greatly shifted musical thinking. For the composers of the nineteenth century though (and the later ones who were still heavily influenced by it) music was greatly conceived by and for those virtuosos who helped to define the types of music which were to become known as the epitomes of the repertoire. By the early twentieth century, many of the ways of thinking about music also became standardized, perhaps especially those regarding the piano—the

instrument that was not only of the nineteenth century, but which epitomized it for later generations.⁵

In one of the first anthologies devoted to single-hand literature the pianist Raymond Lewenthal, one of the great American pianists of his age, collected a series of works and published them under the Schirmer label: the book has become a quasi-Bible, a major starting point, for those who sought and still seek to explore this literature. His goal was to help students who came to this repertoire not out of necessity but out of interest to better develop one of the primary tools at their disposal, one that in even the best pianists he found was often “sluggish, slothful, inaccurate” and “unrhythmical.”:

“Why could not such pianists simply use two-hand piano music which has a difficult left-hand part to develop that hand?” Answer: one of the surest ways to develop left-hand technique is by playing pieces written for it *alone*, because they allow complete scrutiny of the left hand uncamouflaged by right-hand activity—putting the left hand under a microscope, so to speak.⁶

But this was all from the perspective of the pianist, the performer, not the composer of such music.

Most composers of this music started writing in the ways that they best understood, treating the left-hand piano as they had the two-hand piano. When they did write for the solo left-hand piano most composed exercises which could help train the hand. By the 1830s many began to conceive of the left hand in other ways: as a

⁵ Billy Georgette, *Piano Lesson: A Glimpse into the World of Professional Piano Playing*. Xlibris Corporation (2014): p. 75.

⁶ *Piano Music for One Hand: A Collection of Studies, Exercises and Pieces*, selected and edited with Prefatory Notes by Raymond Lewenthal. New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1972. [Milwaukee: distributed by Hal Leonard Corporation]: p. iii.

vehicle for virtuoso display at a time when a bit of outstanding piano virtuosity was one of the best-selling musical tickets of the day.⁷ The major similarity between these two types of pieces was the idea that the single hand would need to do more than just the left hand's normal share: it would have to encompass the entirety of the composer's "normal" way of composing for the two-handed instrument. This is hardly in keeping with Ari Schönfeld's statement above that the left hand was its own instrument with its own unique techniques and abilities. What were the possibilities of the left hand and how could it be shaped in ways by composers to be its own vehicle for musical delivery?

The piano has of course always engaged with the two hands of the pianist. This customary foundation was greatly upset by the idea of composing music for what some critics deemed only half of an instrument—for some of them, half of a person. But where other instruments were once engaged in normative modes of performance that changed over the course of the instrument's history⁸—I think here of the violin, perhaps especially how the bow has evolved over the course of several hundred years, changing the basic approach the violinist has taken in performing music on the instrument—the issue with the left-hand piano was not with the instrument itself but with the performer: the piano was after all still the piano.

⁷ In 1838 a reviewer for the *Gazette* wrote that "Thalberg's recent concert had been 'one of the most expensive of the year; no one since Paganini had had dared to put the exhibition of his talent at so high an assessment...'" For further information please see:

Arthur Loesser, *Men, Women and Pianos: A Social History*. New York: Dover pp. 372-373.

⁸ Pepina Dell'Olio, *Violin Bow Construction and Its Influence on Bowing Techniques in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*. DMA dissertation, Florida State University, 2009: pp. 22-33.

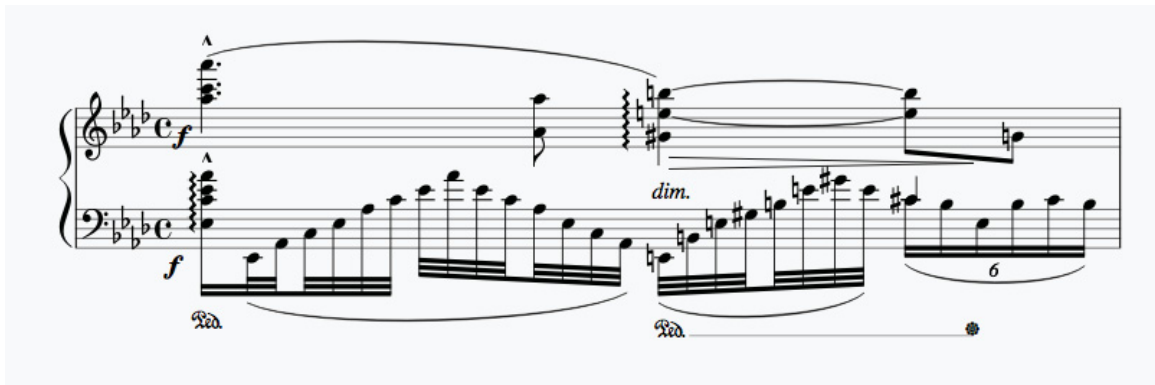
<http://diginole.lib.fsu.edu/islandora/object/fsu:168941/datastream/PDF/view> (Accessed November 2019)

This was one of the major concerns that Paul Wittgenstein had when he first began to perform as a left-handed artist in the late 1910s and early 1920s: that everyone who heard him perform would consider him only “half as good as a two-handed pianist” and would come for the spectacle of seeing a one-handed pianist rather than for any musical reasons; this was a major reason that his brother, the famed philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, refused to go to his brother’s concerts. The problem stemmed not only from his audiences’ opinions, however. It was also heightened by his own approach to the instrument: virtually everything he did was to convince his listeners that he was in fact as good as a two-handed artist if not a three-handed one in his abilities. Alexander Waugh describes his approach to arranging music as based on this very idea, one which he even later describes as being able to “deceive even the sharpest-eared critic,” making all believe that he really was not what he was: a left-handed artist. Wittgenstein’s

artful pedaling and finger techniques that he employed to create an illusion of not just two but sometimes of three and four hands playing, were entirely of his own invention. He placed himself at the instrument, not opposite the middle of the keyboard, where a two-handed pianist normally sits, but far to the right so that he could strike the highest notes without twisting his body to reach them. By constant exercise he developed a formidable strength in his fingers, wrist and upper arm; he played sometimes with his fist or with two fingers on one note for extra force; he learned to use his thumb and index finger to carry a melodic line while his middle, ring and little fingers accompanied at a different volume. His most far-reaching innovation was a combined pedaling and hand-movement technique that allowed him to sound chords that were strictly impossible for a five-fingered pianist to play. By striking a chord loudly in the middle register, using a subtle “half-pedal” technique with his right foot, and by following immediately with a barely audible pianissimo note or two in the bass, he was able to deceive even the sharpest-eared critic into thinking that he had played a

chord with his left hand alone that required a span of two and a half feet across the keyboard.⁹

When one analyses Wittgenstein's arrangements one sees this very facet of the left hand trying to be everywhere and do everything that the two hands of the "normal" pianist would do in its own repertoire. As an example, the passage below quotes from his transcription of Liszt's transcription of music from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*:



Example 1.1: Wagner-Liszt: *Isoldens Liebestod*, m. 15.

⁹ Alexander Waugh, *The House of Wittgenstein: A Family at War*. New York: Doubleday, 2008: pp. 105-106.



Example 1.2: Wagner-Liszt-Wittgenstein: *Isoldens Liebestod*, m. 15.

The work presented Wittgenstein with a number of opportunities to reorganize Liszt's version: the composition was already written; it was clearly presented on a two-staff system by a master arranger, one who worked out many of the pianistic ideas already. It was now a matter of rearranging the work in order for Wittgenstein to accomplish with his single hand what Liszt had accomplished with two: this is always how Wittgenstein approached his left-hand arrangements.

Wittgenstein's solo repertoire must have been considerably larger than what was published in his *Schule für die linke Hand*.¹⁰ The volume, however, is fascinating in

¹⁰ He himself mentions the solo left-hand works by Max Reger (there are four in total: *Scherzo* in F Major, *Humoreske* in D Major, *Romanze* in A-flat Major, and *Prelude and Fugue* in e-flat minor) which he would have liked to include in his *Klavierschule* as he thought them "too little known." Among the works he was interested in were Lieder accompaniments—Brahms's *To a Nightingale* is included in the second volume of his school. He too mentions, but does not include, Schubert's *Ave Maria* and Mendelssohn's *On Wings of Song*: these were songs which he felt could be performed easily with singer and left-hand piano.

showing just how he handled a number of different styles, arranging them with the same care and precision that he took with the Liszt transcription above. The last composition in the third volume is a true oddity—placed in an appendix at the end of the book is the largest and most ambitious of Wittgenstein’s arrangements, his rearrangement of the Bach-Brahms *Chaconne* (the last movement from his D-Minor Violin Partita). The work proved to be pivotal in a way: a Baroque composition as seen through the eyes of a then-modern composer. Brahms was a favorite of Wittgenstein’s (he met him as a young man). After the turn of the century, the composer gained new notoriety for his motivic experiments through a number of his followers: through Reger’s assimilation of his compositional principles and through Schoenberg’s analyses of both works by Brahms and Reger in which he found a new path towards understanding German compositions from Bach onwards, something which he labelled as “developing variation” (though this was still in the future). For this generation of composers, Brahms became a new source of inspiration and a new height in compositional practices.¹¹

There is an obvious question: why re-transcribe a piece that Brahms had already managed to arrange for the left hand alone? Why include it in his own *School of the Left Hand*? Because Wittgenstein here revealed his own wants, likes, needs and expectations further than in any other instance. Here was a work already reimagined for the

The contents of Volume 2 include a number of excerpts from works by Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms, Haydn, J. Strauss, and Bach (a violin sonata) as well as complete works (mainly etudes) by Chopin, Rubinstein, Haberbier, and J. Strauss.

Paul Wittgenstein, *Schule für die linke Hand: II. Etüden*. Wien: Universal Edition, 1957.

¹¹ Arnold Schoenberg, trans. Leo Black. “Brahms the Progressive,” In *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975: pp. 398-441.

capabilities of the one-handed artist, arranged by a master of the instrument. But Wittgenstein took issue with the transcription in a number of ways. In one of his prefaces to his *Klavierschule* volumes, he wrote:

I have provided Brahms's transcription of Bach's Chaconne in the arrangement which I have played many times in public. I have taken the liberty of making rather extensive changes in this piece, not of course in the contents, but merely in the piano arrangement. I believe this to be justified, firstly because Brahms only arranged this piece for Clara Schumann because she had injured her right hand (and he probably attached no special value to it), secondly because the arrangement itself is a transcription of a violin composition, and in the case of such transcriptions from one instrument to another a certain latitude is not only permissible but even necessary. Brahms himself made use of this privilege by setting the Chaconne one octave lower. However, because of this undoubtedly correct change which alone, so to say, placed this piece on firm ground, making possible the full use of the piano bass, the music remains exclusively in the tenor register of the piano. This results in a certain monotony of tone, which I have tried to overcome by making certain changes.¹²

Arguably, Wittgenstein did not truly grasp the manner in which Brahms sought to transfer the qualities of the violin work to the piano. When Brahms came to transcribe the *Chaconne*, he found that one of the most striking aspects of the piece was the powerful message of a musical text being delivered in such a reduced format: for him, maximalist meaning in a minimalist setting. He wrote to Clara Schumann, after she had slightly injured her right hand and was on hiatus from practicing, that he was including this transcription to help her through this rough patch. He described the impact of the piece on himself, when he wrote:

To me the Chaconne is one of the most wonderful, incredible pieces of music. On a single staff, for a little instrument, the man writes a whole world of the

¹² Paul Wittgenstein, "Preface," In *Schule für die linke Hand: II. Etüden*. Wien: Universal Edition, 1957.

deepest thoughts and most powerful feelings. If I imagine that I had created that piece, had conceived it, I know surely the immense agitation and shock would have driven me mad.¹³

When he came to transcribe the piece, he had already known of the work itself: he had performed a version of it with Joachim on violin and himself on piano at Robert Schumann's funeral. But when he came to transcribe it—perhaps owing to Clara's injury, perhaps for other reasons¹⁴—he chose the left hand alone. This is unsurprising as the mastery of the left hand had long intrigued him: he also arranged Weber's *Perpetuum mobile* from his First Piano Sonata with the left hand as the star, performing all of the right-hand runs of the original. The Bach work was special, however. Whereas Weber's work was written for his instrument already—he needed only to rearrange the parts and reverse the roles of the right and left hands to make the piece work—Bach's composition was different. To capture the spirit of the violin work on the piano was what Brahms most wanted: he had to ensure that the same qualities which restricted Bach's ideas on the single line instrument were also captured in his transcription both in quality and in feeling. And there was a single way in which he felt he could do the piece musical justice: “there is only one way in which I can secure undiluted joy from this

¹³ William Horne, “Brahms's Variations on a Hungarian Song, op. 21, no. 2: “Betrachte dann die Beethovenschen und, wenn Du willst, meine.” In *Brahms Studies, Volume 3*, ed. David Brodbeck. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001: pp. 47-128. (Quotation on p. 116, fn. 77)

¹⁴ The fact that Brahms wrote the work for Clara Schumann after she injured her hand seems to be questionable. In a letter written by Schumann after she received Brahms's gift, she said: “just think, on the day of my arrival here [Kiel], when I was opening a drawer I strained a muscle in my right hand, so you may imagine what a glorious refuge your Chaconne has been to me.” She may have injured or strained her right hand at some other point, something is not infrequent with performers, but it seems that Brahms's interest in the piece may have also been spurred by other reasons. See: <https://interlude.hk/musical-ventriloquismchaconne/>



Example 1.5: Bach-Brahms-Wittgenstein *Chaconne*, opening measures.

In arpeggiated passages Wittgenstein takes the pianism a step further: here he writes a type of music which not only sounds two-handed, but which also looks as though it should be performed by the two hands of the “normal” pianist. Again, compare the Brahms with the Wittgenstein rearrangement that follows:

The image displays a musical score for a piano piece, identified as Example 1.6: Bach-Brahms: Chaconne, mm. 112-115. The score is written for piano (p) and consists of four systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The first system begins with the instruction *sempre f* (always forte). The music features a complex, rhythmic pattern in the right hand, characterized by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, often grouped in threes. The left hand provides a steady, rhythmic accompaniment, primarily using eighth notes. The notation includes various musical symbols such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Example 1.6: Bach-Brahms: *Chaconne*, mm. 112-115.

The musical score is written for piano in 3/4 time, key of B-flat major. It consists of four systems of music. The right hand (treble clef) plays a complex, rapid melody with many triplets, while the left hand (bass clef) provides a steady, rhythmic accompaniment. The score is marked with a piano (p) dynamic and a 'sempre f' (always forte) instruction. The right hand's melody is characterized by frequent triplets and a constant eighth-note pulse. The left hand's accompaniment is more straightforward, often using quarter and eighth notes. The overall texture is dense and rhythmic, typical of the Chaconne by Brahms.

Example 1.7: Bach-Brahms-Wittgenstein *Chaconne*, mm. 112-115.

By the work's end, Wittgenstein's resolve to have the solo left hand act the part of two has not diminished in the least. Again, if Brahms's goal was to imitate the violin on the piano, Wittgenstein's was to recreate the work not as one for the left hand alone, but one for the left hand which acted the part of a mini orchestra, which willed to do that which the two hands of the "normal" pianist did:

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the ending of the Bach-Brahms Chaconne. The first system consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. The treble staff begins with a long, sweeping melodic line that spans across the first two measures of the system. The bass staff features a series of chords and single notes, with a forte (f) dynamic marking in the second measure. The second system also consists of two staves. The treble staff continues the melodic line from the first system, with a final measure ending in a double bar line. The bass staff provides harmonic support with chords and single notes, concluding with a final chord in the last measure.

Example 1.8: Bach-Brahms *Chaconne*, ending of the work.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for the ending of the Chaconne. The first system is marked **Maestoso** and features a long, sweeping melodic line in the right hand, with dynamics *f* and *ff*, and a tremolo in the left hand marked *trem. p*. The second system begins with *ff sin' al fine* and includes a section marked *allargando sin' al fine*. The third system concludes with a *trillo* in the right hand. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Example 1.9: Bach-Brahms-Wittgenstein *Chaconne*, ending.

What Brahms may have felt was that the left hand did not need to do what the two hands of the pianist normally did to be successful in performing this music. But Brahms also never came to write an original work for the left-hand piano, nor did he, as did Wittgenstein, require as specialized a repertoire for his own concert performances. If Brahms did not single-handedly define the left-hand as its own instrument, he did at least give credence to its possibility as one for future composers.

How certain composers came to define the left-hand piano as an instrument in the solo and chamber literatures will be shown by the analyses that follow. By studying the use of the left hand in works of this time period, I hope to demonstrate how a new type of thinking created new interest in how the single hand could be thought of not as “half of a performer” playing “half of a composition,” but rather as an instrument in its own right, a vehicle that could be used for its own unique type of expression. By fashioning the left hand as its own instrument, rather than forcing the left hand to make up for the perceived lack of two-handed balance—whether in pitch, in counterpoint, in melody and accompaniment, or between the performer and the instrument—these composers molded the left hand through other means, freeing it and allowing it to develop in new and unique ways.

Certain musicologists and commentators have acknowledged this very fact, but they have done little to explain just how the instrument’s reinvention was accomplished. Blake Howe, for example, mentions in an excellent article (derived from his dissertation)¹⁶ that “Franz Schmidt’s use of one-handed pianism in his chamber works show how the piano “liberated from its role as dutiful accompanist [...] weaves its way into the texture of the single-lined string and wind instruments as an equal, as a true fifth voice.” Yet he does not go into detail how Schmidt accomplishes this: it may have to do with Schmidt’s left-handed works being unavailable at the time of his research in their original versions.¹⁷ Georg Predota also mentions Schmidt’s invention of

¹⁶ Blake Howe. *Music and the Embodiment of Disability*. PhD diss., CUNY Graduate Center, 2010.

¹⁷ Blake Howe. “Paul Wittgenstein and the Performance of Disability.” In *The Journal of Musicology*. Volume 27 Number 2 (Spring 2010): p. 177.

the left-hand instrument without pursuing it further in his online article entitled “Paul Wittgenstein: The Lefty Concertos.” In it he states that in the Concerto in E-flat Major, the “natural consequence of [Wittgenstein’s] desire for artistic and musical autonomy was supported by Schmidt’s musical styles and techniques that never thought to emulate the pianistic mannerisms associated with two hands. In essence, Schmidt composed a piano part that was idiomatically tailored for Paul Wittgenstein’s left hand, and he treated the left-hand piano as a new and original instrument.”¹⁸ I believe that he did the same in the chamber works, compositions which have been little explored in their original formats, even since their publication on 2010. My research on Schmidt can thus be considered a supplement to these projects, one which I hope can elucidate and expand upon the fine research of both scholars.

Leopold Godowsky is another matter. He himself mentions that “owing to innumerable contrapuntal devices, which frequently encompass almost the whole range of the keyboard” in his Chopin Studies, “the fingering and pedaling are often of a revolutionary character, particularly in the twenty-two studies for the left hand alone.” He also called his *Suite rococo* “a most unique contribution to the piano literature, more so than any other I have made in the past.”¹⁹ These statements show that Godowsky himself felt his left-hand works to be among his most important compositions, revealing a development in his left-handed constructions throughout his left-handed pianistic career, one which spanned some four decades. These facets of his left-hand piano

¹⁸ Georg Predota, “Paul Wittgenstein: The Lefty Concertos.” Online. (February 14th, 2018) <https://interlude.hk/paul-wittgenstein-lefty-concertos/> (Accessed November 11, 2019)

¹⁹ Robert Rimm, *The Composer-Pianists: Hamelin and the Eight*. Portland: Amadeus Press, 2002: p. 81.

repertoire have been little analyzed and explored, particularly as found in his later original works, which are often overlooked by both performers and writers. To expand upon our knowledge regarding Godowsky's own statements is also a purpose of my study.

I also hope to show how this newfound way of thinking of both the instrument and the instrumentalist helped to usher in a unique type of literature centered on these two Central-European composers working in the beginning decades of the twentieth century. By reusing and re-understanding aspects of the past, they redefined the role that this unique instrument could play in music that was still happy to take part in the lineage of two-handed piano music which helped to birth it. As composers who were interested in both innovation and tradition, they were able to realize a type of music which could at once be thought of as pianistically oriented, modifying it through a series of musical innovations inherited from the past while always keeping the piano's sound and its abilities at the forefront of their musical conceptions. Their music was pianistic: just pianistic in a newfound way of understanding the instrument through the instrumentalist and through the varied sources of inspiration that helped them to craft their unique left-handed pianistic styles.

By refining and redefining the possibilities of the left-hand instrument using traditional musical language, these composers also did two things: as Bach did before them in his *Well-Tempered Clavier*,²⁰ they wrote works which came to summarize many

²⁰ Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000: pp. 226-230.

of the techniques they found in the music of other past composers, bringing them together in new and unique ways; but they also helped later composers to better understand that the left-hand piano was a unique vehicle for musical expression, one which was not better than the two-handed pianist, but one built for its own completely unique and compelling music—ways which a composer such as Ari Schönfeld may have conceived of the instrument and the instrumentalist in his above quotation. Their music thus proved to be not only culminative in regards music of the past but also foundational for the composers of the future.²¹

To start here would be impossible, though, without an understanding of how the left-hand instrument was thought of before these composers came to it and redefined it for both themselves and the future. To do so we will have to first go back in time and understand how most composers of the previous generations thought of the instrument and came to write their music for it. And for that we will have to go back in time all the way to the son of the composer who helped the later twentieth-century composers define the instrument anew: all the way back to the mid 1700s.

²¹ Frederic Meinders has stated that “one of his idols is Leopold Godowsky” particularly in the left-hand works. In regards transcription especially he has stated that: “A left hand transcription is NOT the same as the original but often you have to add some new aspect to the piece to make it a piece of art itself. The original must be respected according to the wishes of Mozart, Brahms etc., but a transcription for the left hand often has to be transposed to make it technically possible and since a direct transcription often gives very little to the piece, he - like Godowsky - gives some spice to the piece, not always - but often to make the piece appear as a new composition in itself.” See:

<https://www.fredericmeindersarchive.com/compositions-transcriptions>

He has also stated that “being a composer myself with a keen interest of piano music for the left hand alone I was amazed at this web site. And being ‘in company’ with composers like Ravel, Strauss, Britten, Godowski, Schmidt, Korngold and Prokofiev - just to name a few in this “data base” with thousands of pieces I could not be more pleased.” Notice that both Schmidt and Godowsky are listed, one right after the other. See:

<http://www.left-hand-brofeldt.dk/>

Chapter 2

A Survey of the Solo Left-Hand Piano Repertoire from the Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Century

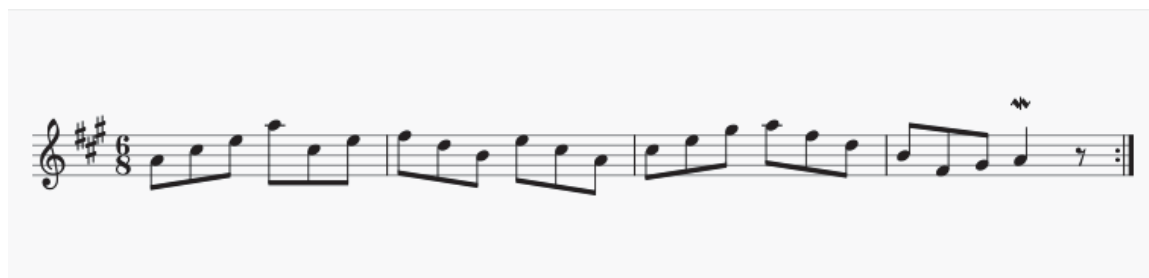
The very first known piece of music written for a solo hand was composed by C. P. E. Bach at some point between 1750 and 1770.¹ According to the musicologist Darrell Berg It is thought to have sprung from the same didactic purpose from which his monumental project *The Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* also came.² It is an unusual piece not in its general form nor in its use of figuration but in Bach's choice of instrumentation. The title of the work reads: *Klavierstück* for the right or left hand alone.³ But the work is strange for one written for either the right or the left hand: for one, it sits entirely above middle C—the lowest note being the D directly above middle C, the highest the E above the treble-clef staff. It therefore sits in the treble register most commonly and most easily performed by the right hand. But the basic figurative patterns, other than the occasional stretch of a tenth, for a right-hand exercise are hardly challenging for even the average capable pianist of the age. The fact is that it is far less challenging than virtually any of the solo movements in his solo keyboard sonatas. So, while the right hand may be an option for performance, would this truly be the hand for which Bach originally intended this work?

¹ Albert Sassmann, *"In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister" – Technik und Ästhetik der Klaviermusik für die linke Hand allein*. Tutzing: Verlegt bei Hans Schneider, 2010: p. 29.

² Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *The Collected Works for Solo Keyboard by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, 1714-1788*. Bd. V. Hg. V. Darrell Berg. New York: Garland Publishing, 1985: p. xiv.

³ *Piano Music for One Hand: A Collection of Studies, Exercises and Pieces*, selected and edited with Prefatory Notes by Raymond Lewenthal. New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1972. [Milwaukee: distributed by Hal Leonard Corporation]: p. 128.

Being left-handed himself,⁴ it is not unlikely that Bach wrote the piece initially as an exercise to show just how capable and responsive the trained left hand could be for both the player and the composer of piano music. As a member of one of the most musical of all families in Europe at the time and with the negative stigma which many Europeans held against the left hand⁵ (in Latin the left hand was referred to as *sinister* or *sinistra* from which the English word sinister originates) is it simply possible that Bach also wrote the work for himself as an exercise to embrace the abilities of his own left hand. A quick glance at the work will show this repertoire's humble beginnings:



Example 2.1: CPE Bach: Opening to his *Klavierstück* for the right or left hand alone, mm. 1-4

That Bach was thinking of the keyboardist when composing this work is evident from the type of hand positions one finds throughout the movement: most of the patterns fit within the span of a fifth or sixth, with only two instances of patterns reaching a tenth—in mm. 14 (D-A-F-sharp) and 16 (E-B-G-sharp). Though a common means of implying counterpoint through spacing was already accomplished by his father

⁴ James T. de Kay and Sandy Huffaker, *The World's Greatest Left-Handers: Why Left-Handers Are Just Better Than Everybody Else*. New York: M. Evans and Company, Inc., 1985: p. 9.

⁵ Theodor Edel mentions that in the nineteenth century left-handed people were often discouraged in using that hand dominantly; they were encouraged, rather, to train their right hand in this fashion. There is evidence this was also true in the eighteenth century. See: Theodore Edel, *Piano Music for One Hand*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1994: p. 5.

in his works for solo strings (the *Sonatas* and *Partitas* for violin and the *Suites* for viola da gamba), throughout the A-Major *Klavierstück* C.P.E. Bach keeps the type of writing squarely within the realm of his own day—a more homophonic setting using common Classical-era figural patterns. That he was little inspired to pursue more contrapuntal means can be seen especially when comparing the writing found in the present work with that found in his Sonata in A Minor for solo flute of 1747, a piece written before his piano composition. In the final movement of his flute sonata, the writing far more resembles the implied-contrapuntal writing of his father's works than does the writing found in his keyboard piece for right or left hand alone. Perhaps his own style was changing at this time as he moved beyond the contrapuntal orientation of his father's then-antiquated style. This can be witnessed through a comparison of the following example with the one above:



Example 2.2: CPE Bach: Sonata for Solo Flute, Wq. 132.

In the second example, Bach is clearly harking back to a style of composition in which polyphonic voices are implied through a rapid alternation of high and low pitches: certain notes in these clusters are held in the listeners' ears until the return to either the note or range of notes centered around a keynote. This can be seen in the example above. Witness the keynote of high D in m. 4: the following note (A) is spaced out an

eleventh below, also implying a separate voice, before a quick return to the high D. This return is not accidental: rather it implies that the note has been sustained in the listeners' ears the entire time. This is Bach using the flute's capabilities to create a sense of counterpoint in his music—something which he ignores in the keyboard work. Does he simply consider this type of writing unsuitable for the keyboard, or has his style changed over the course of some twenty years? Perhaps a bit of both.

Though Bach's piece is considered the very first work written for a single hand—whether right or left—the project did not lead to any significant body of works in these genres by either Bach or by the following generations of composers. Did this have anything to do with the overall style of composition in the late eighteenth century? Did this type of writing go against the spirit of the age, as Albert Sassmann contends—one based on a predominantly homophonic compositional style?⁶ It is valid reasoning. But surely it may have also been the uniqueness of the medium: why limit oneself to writing for a single hand? Even in the realm of music for a solo violin, a perhaps more “normal” medium than music written for a single hand on the piano, the nineteenth century produced little music outside of works such as technical etudes: the works by Paganini, some by Wieniawski, and a few by Pierre Rode are among the only examples written for the solo violin (though even the aforementioned composers' oeuvre is heavily grounded on the technical aspect of these works).

⁶ Albert Sassmann, *“In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister” – Technik und Ästhetik der Klaviermusik für die linke Hand allein*. Tutzing: Verlegt bei Hans Schneider, 2010: p. 37.

Though there were a number of composers who came to write exercises for the left-hand alone in the early part of the nineteenth century for reasons of training, not until decades later did composers consider the left hand worthy of presenting pieces in performance outside of the practice room.⁷ The eventual development of literature for the pianist's single hand was due in large part not only to compositional style but also to the piano's slowly growing musical dominance as well as the development of the instrument itself—particularly the increased change in sound, a more continuous and cantabile-like one which became important for composers in other mediums, and, importantly, the development and addition of the sustaining pedal.⁸ With the additional resources at their disposal, composer-pianists were now able to fashion a music more closely related to the pianistic idioms of their own time, notably virtuoso compositions intended to wow audiences with increased sonorities and thicker quasi-orchestral textures. Certain special textures came to define pianistic music in these years, including Thalberg's three-handed effect, in which a sustained vocal pattern resided within a more elaborate framework of arpeggios, scales, bass octaves and the like.⁹ One work that became a calling card for the composer-pianist was his *Grand Fantasie* on themes from Rossini's *Moïse* (1835), a work which culminates with this type of bravura writing

⁷ Sassmann shows a few examples by Adam, Czerny, and Kalkbrenner's fugue. All of the pieces are listed as either etudes or exercises and are short works. For a brief discussion of some of these composers and works see.

Albert Sassmann, "In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister" – *Technik und Ästhetik der Klaviermusik für die linke Hand allein*. Tutzing: Verlegt bei Hans Schneider, 2010: pp. 57-60.

⁸ Arthur Loesser, *Men, Women and Pianos: A Social History*. New York: Dover Publications, 1954: pp. 337-340.

⁹ Gerhard Winkler. "Klaviermusik für die linke Hand allein. Aspekte eines virtuosen (Virtuosen-) Genres." In Carmen Ottner, ed. *Das klavierkonzert in Österreich und Deutschland von 1900 – 1945 (Schwerpunkt: Werke für Paul Wittgenstein)*. Wien: Doblinger, 2009: pp. 40-44.

at its end. This type of figuration became popular with other composers of the day as well, including Mendelssohn (in works such as his Preludes, op. 35 no. 1 and op. 104 no. 1) and Liszt (in his *Reminiscences de Norma*—a piece written to out-Thalberg Thalberg).¹⁰

The goal for many composers of two-handed piano music at this time was to create a music of expansion, a truly orchestral model of composition on the keyboard using thicker textures, a wider range, and extreme dynamics. Some, such as Franz Liszt, seemed to transform the piano into the orchestra through other means—by suggesting (or in his transcriptions by marking) which instrument should be recalled when playing certain themes. In an interview given in 1988, the great virtuoso Vladimir Horowitz commented on his ideas of the piano when talking about certain of those Liszt transcriptions, in particular those made by Liszt of the Beethoven symphonies:

For me, the piano is the orchestra [...] I don't like the sound of a piano as a piano. I like to imitate the orchestra — the oboe, the clarinet, the violin and, of course, the singing voice. Every note of those symphonies is in these Liszt works.¹¹

¹⁰ For more information please see these sources:

Kenneth Hamilton, *After the Golden Age: Romantic Pianism and Modern Performance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008: pp. 155-160.

Arthur Loesser, *Men, Women and Pianos: A Social History*. New York: Dover Publications, 1954: pp. 371-378.

¹¹ In the same article just a little further in, Tommasini notes that Alfred Brendel also thought of the piano as an “instrument of transformation.” It permits the pianist to suggest the singing voice and the timbres of other instruments.” He ends the article by saying that, in Beatrice Rana’s recorded performance of Stravinsky-Agosti’s transcription of three pieces from *The Firebird*, “she was being not just the conductor of Stravinsky’s breakthrough work, but also every instrument in the orchestra. Horowitz would have approved. And Liszt would have been proud.”

Anthony Tommasini, “Shrink an Orchestra to a Single Piano, Keeping the Magic.” In *The New York Times*. Online. (July 4th, 2019) <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/04/arts/music/piano-transcriptions.html>

And this can be seen in many works by Liszt, not just in his transcriptions of Beethoven's symphonies, but even in works which can be found in both piano and orchestral versions such as the first *Mephisto Waltz* and the *Totentanz*. Brahms also often treated the piano as orchestra, both as performer and as composer. One only need remember Schumann's initial impression of Brahms to witness this aspect:

His name is Johannes Brahms. He comes from Hamburg, where he had been working in quiet obscurity, initiated by an excellent and inspired teacher into the most difficult canons of the art. He was recommended to me by an eminent and famous master. Even in his external appearance he displays those characteristics which proclaim: here is a man of destiny! Seated at the piano, he began to disclose most wondrous regions. It was also most wondrous playing, which made of the piano an orchestra of mourning or jubilant voices. There were sonatas, more like disguised symphonies.¹²

For many composers of the left-hand piano, this type of thinking seeped into their styles as well: it became the way in which they handled the left-handed idiom on the instrument.

One of the supervirtuosos interested in the piano as orchestra was Charles Valentin Alkan. One can witness such writing in his two-handed works, perhaps especially the gargantuan etudes from his Twelve Etudes in the Minor Keys, op. 39. The pianist Jack Gibbons has described these pieces as "the 'magnum opus' of Alkan's output for solo piano, containing as it does some of his greatest work." He continues:

Published in 1857, it was obviously designed to complement a set of 12 studies in the major keys published some 10 years earlier, but as the later set progressed Alkan's fertile imagination seems to have run riot, and the sheer range of music

¹² Robert Schumann, trans. Henry Pleasants. "New Paths (1853)." In *Schumann on Music: A Selection from the Writings*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1965: p. 199.

contained within its 275 pages is staggering: Études 4–7 develop into an entire *Symphony*, Études 8–10 form a vast *Concerto*, and Étude 11 a spectacular *Overture*. The orchestral titles of these works are no accident. The style and form of the music take on a monumental quality — rich, thickly set textures and harmonies, often spiced with influences from Jewish music, and frequently encompassing the entire keyboard — conjure up the sound world of a whole orchestra and tax the performer, both physically and mentally, to the limit.¹³

Though he took up the challenge of writing an entire movement for a single hand only once, never truly developing a single-handed style of composition, Alkan was clearly experimenting with the possibilities of a single hand's ability in creating the illusion of two hands—here even an orchestra—in his opus 76, a suite of three etudes: the first is written for the left hand alone, the second for the right hand, the third combines both right and left hands which perform the same pattern throughout (as in the finale to Chopin's Second Piano Sonata). His pianistic-orchestral writing can especially be seen in his work for left hand alone, the *Fantasie* in A-flat, Op. 76 No. 1; but this type of writing can also be seen in his work for solo right hand—an *Introduction, Variations, and Finale*, op. 76 No. 2. That Alkan's work for the left-hand—though also part of a series of etudes—was also labelled as a fantasy gives some indication of his thoughts on its worthiness for concert performance and as a composition.¹⁴

The type of writing one finds here in the *Fantasie* uses a good deal of wide spacing on the instrument, along with tremolos, large chords, sweeping arpeggios, and a

¹³ Jack Gibbons, "Charles Valentin Alkan (1813-1888)." Program Notes.
<http://www.jackgibbons.com/alkan.htm> (Accessed October 26 2019)

¹⁴ Though the suite of three etudes has rarely been performed or recorded as a whole there is at least one performance of it in its entirety by the Canadian pianist Marc-André Hamelin which was recorded live. It is spectacular. See:
Marc-André Hamelin, *Live at Wigmore Hall*. Hyperion CDA66765, 1994, Compact Disc: tracks 3-5.

careful use of the pedal to help sustain not voices, but harmonies. One can almost hear the middle-range instruments (horns, perhaps) which cut through the low tremolos of the cellos and basses in the following passage:

The musical score is for a piece in A-flat major (three flats) and common time. It is divided into three systems. The first system is marked '(Largamente)' and shows a slow, sustained melody in the right hand over a dense, tremolo-like accompaniment in the left hand. The second system continues this texture, with a crescendo leading to a fortissimo (p) section marked with a '6' (sextuplet). The third system is marked 'Allegro vivace' and 'leggermente' in 2/4 time, featuring a more active melody and accompaniment, also with a '6' marking.

Example 2.3: Example 2.3: Alkan: Fantasy in A-flat Major, op. 76 no. 1, mm. 27-31.

By the middle of the nineteenth century there were a number of piano-composers who came to write music for the solo left hand not for purposes of study but for concert performance. Most often they did so for their own use, a common practice among the touring virtuosos of the day, all in an age when a standardized literature did not yet exist in the same way as today. Among them were the Czech-virtuoso Alexander

Dreyschock (1818-1869), the first composer to not only imagine the left-hand part of Chopin's *Revolutionary* etude being performed in octaves but who actually performed it this way in concert. His specialties were the most virtuoso figurations of piano music at the time: running octaves, thirds, and sixths. And his listeners were so astonished at his left hand's abilities that even the virtuoso in Cramer (who himself had studied with Clementi) claimed that Dreyschock "has no left hand: they are both right hands."¹⁵

In the 1840s and 1850s he produced two large works for the left hand mostly using pianistic ideas found in the typical operatic paraphrases and fantasies of the day. The first was a large set of variations (his op. 22), the second, a large fantasy based on *God Save the Queen* for piano left hand. Though they were considered musically vapid by some, they show the extent to which the left-hand could be trained and how much it could accomplish on its very own. The works feature a number of sweeping arpeggios, but also Dreyschock's specialties—running octave passages and ones in thirds along with a plethora of chords and leaps. His music was not all flash, however. Even when Dreyschock wrote a simpler music, there is a noticeable feature to his writing: that he was summoning the consummate two-handed piano virtuoso through his use of range and basic figurative patterns can be seen in even the technically easier sections of his works:

¹⁵ Harold C. Schonberg, *The Great Pianists: From Mozart to the Present* (Completely Revised and Updated). New York: A Fireside Book, 1987: p. 206.



Example 2.4: Dreyschok: Variations for the left hand alone, op. 22: *Tema*, mm. 1-4.

If the two-handed idea above can be considered almost Classical in its textures and figurations—more in look, feel, and sound like a work of the eighteenth century—then the nineteenth-century virtuoso in Dreyschok would appear later in the same work, promoting the two-handed approach with even further gusto, through a wider use of range, thicker textures, and the impression of left and right hands through shifting octaves. Just witness his writing in the second variation:

Example 2.5: Dreyschok: Variations for the left hand alone, op. 22: Variation 2, mm. 1-6.

Dreyschock was not the only composer who came to write works for the left hand in a two-handed fashion. The short-lived Adolfo Fumagalli (1828-1856) was another composer who experimented with the possibilities of the solo left hand in the 1840s and 1850s. Known as the “Paganini of the piano”¹⁶ because of his accomplishment and theatrics, perhaps especially with the left hand, Fumagalli’s works have mostly been ignored since his death.¹⁷ But the six left-handed works he bequeathed to history are not only the ones which made him famous in his own day but have become the first body of works (which were not written as etudes or practical exercises) left for the medium by a single composer. In the picture below he is playing possibly his most famous transcription, his *Robert le Diable Fantasy* with his left hand while smoking with his right. Did he do so to play with his own name as fumare in Italian means “to smoke?” Perhaps so. And it worked in more than one way: when his single hand was leaping back and forth between octaves it must have surely seemed to blur one’s vision. Fumagalli himself seemed to “smoke” on the piano itself:

¹⁶ Francesco Busso, “Fumagalli Family: (2) Adolfo Fumagalli.” In *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press (accessed October 16, 2019) <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000010382?result=1&rskey=XzoLsv#omo-9781561592630-e-0000010382-div1-0000010382.2>

¹⁷ Though Fumagalli was given his own chapter in Theodor Edel’s book, not a single one of his pieces appeared in Raymond Lewenthal’s collection of works for one hand. Their exclusion may be for more practical rather than artistic reasons, though, as Lewenthal notes that “space and copyright laws (...) have necessarily placed certain strictures on my choice of pieces for inclusion. And some works which might prove interesting have been to date, despite grueling search, unfindable.” Paul Wittgenstein thought Fumagalli’s works to be less than extraordinary and played little of this music, especially after he began to commission his own works. See:

Piano Music for One Hand: A Collection of Studies, Exercises and Pieces, selected and edited with Prefatory Notes by Raymond Lewenthal. New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1972. [Milwaukee: distributed by Hal Leonard Corporation]: p. v.

Alexander Waugh, *The House of Wittgenstein: A Family at War*. New York: Doubleday, 2008: p. 151.



Example 2.6: Adolfo Fumagalli is pictured performing with his solo left hand while smoking (fumare in Italian) with his right.¹⁸

Fumagalli's most famous left-hand work was his aforementioned *Robert le Diable Fantasy*, a work of over 20 pages and of staggering difficulty. It is this work which helped him to cement his reputation as one of the great pianists of the age. And it is again the aspect of doing so much with so little—of the single hand performing the music conceived and written for two hands—which most commentators grasped onto:

The first time he played it [the *Robert le Diable Fantasy*] at the Salle Herz, the public stood up to see if it really was one hand playing with such strength and

¹⁸ Picture taken from:
<https://interlude.hk/center-musical-universe-giacomo-meyerbeer/> (Accessed October 17 2019)

sending such a cloud of notes into the air. Scudo, France's greatest critic, was fooled himself. Having arrived at the concert a little late, just as Adolfo was playing the *Robert Fantasy*, he stood in the back, behind the crowd, listening and without looking at his program. He thought he was hearing the usual piece for two hands and gave warm signs of approval, when he heard one of his neighbors say "It's impossible that this is one hand." At these words Scudo looked closely at his program, stretched his neck and saw the artist's gloved hand resting on his knee. Scudo, usually so reserved and sparing of praise could not resist shouting "Bravo!" and declaring his admiration afterwards in the pages of the *Revue des deux Mondes*.¹⁹

Though Theodor Edel suggests that the story is apocryphal as his own search for the article in the journal could not be found, perhaps another critic's commentary could be taken to account for these ideas. A. P. Fiorentino was also at the concert. He described Fumagalli as "a pianist whose force and talent are truly extraordinary" for "what astonished the listener most was the Fantasy on Robert le Diable, which he plays with the left hand alone." He finished the review by cementing that very fact: for him Fumagalli persuaded his listeners in believing that "God gave us a right hand so that we would not use it."²⁰ But a look at the music itself can give some substance to both Scudo's and Fiorentino's possible reception of the work—one based, we need always remember, on the performance itself, not simply on one's listening of it. If any composer ever tried to write a solo left-hand work which resembled the two-handed pianist, though, it was surely Fumagalli in his Fantasy on themes from Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable*.

¹⁹ Original Italian in:

Filippo Filippi, *Della vita e delle opere di Adolfo Fumagalli*. Milan: Ricordi, c. 1858 : p. 65.

Translation used can be found in :

Theodore Edel, *Piano Music for One Hand*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1994: p. 22.

²⁰ Theodore Edel, *Piano Music for One Hand*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1994: p. 22.

A look at a passage from the *Valse Infernale* section will show this in his use of a drone (here held with pedal), his repeated reaccentuation of the drone D on offbeats, and the jumps which are highlighted not only in register, but in altered articulation. This all adds to the sense that more than a single hand is performing:



Example 2.7: Adolfo Fumagalli: *The Robert le Diable Fantasy*, mm. 19-28 of the *Valse Infernale* Section.

Fumagalli, who wrote six left-handed pieces (the first was his Op. 2, the last his Op. 106), was one of the first composers to devote his attention to the possibilities of this medium. Although he died young, his logic in formulating fascinating combinations of accompaniments gave future composers ideas with which to work. If Fumagalli was known in his own day, it was for theatrics that did not outlive the pianist himself, who died at the young age of 27. His influence was also short-lived, perhaps because the type of music with which he had made his name was slowly dying out as well. By the

1860s, most pianists who had made names for themselves through their operatic fantasies had retired—Liszt, Thalberg, Herz, Henselt, and numerous others. The pianists of the second half of the nineteenth century, those such as Hans von Bülow and Clara Schumann, performed far less of this repertoire.²¹

The potential of the pianist's left hand continued to fascinate other composers, pushing them to expand their conceptions even further than previous generations. One of the strangest cases of any left-handed artist came in the story of Count Géza Zichy. Born in 1849, the son of a wealthy Hungarian magnate, he lost his arm while out with a hunting party when he was just fifteen years old. An accident with a rifle blew off his right arm directly above the elbow. While a tragedy of this caliber may have devastated another person of similar age, Zichy soon found multiple outlets for his pent-up energy, first and foremost among them music. Though he had no musical or pianistic aspirations before the accident, the tragedy seemed to spur his interest to test his abilities in a myriad of ways. He took lessons with Mayerberger and Robert Volkmann in both composition and the piano and eventually gained an audience with Franz Liszt, with whom he also later studied. Liszt was so impressed with his left-handed artistry that even he admitted that "the great pianists would be hard put to match him."²²

²¹ Edel has described Fumagalli's music in mildly approving terminology:

"The strength lies in the basic musical material: it is hard to go wrong with a good tune by Verdi or Bellini. For the most part the writing is clever, occasionally achieving the effect of two hands. The weakness lies in Fumagalli's limited sense of figuration, his adherence to the original orchestral patterns in the accompaniments of lyrical sections, rather than the invention of suitable substitutes. This creates the awkward need to be in two places at once (through very quick arpeggios and broken chords), a problem that cannot be overcome by practice." See:

Ibid., p. 54.

²² Ibid., p. 27.

Coming from a wealthy family, he could perform and travel as he willed rather than as necessary like most musicians; but travel he did, and always for the benefit of others: the money he made on his tours throughout Europe—Vienna, Cologne, Paris, Karlsruhe, Munich, Berlin, Graz, Pesth, Leipzig, Stuttgart, and many other cities— was always given over to various charities. In 1886, according to one Paris newspaper, the money he had raised totaled in excess of 1,200,000 Francs. Though he eventually stopped touring, having taken over the position of manager of the Royal Opera and later the National Theatre in Budapest, he continued to compose and remain active in musical life.

When Zichy performed in Vienna in 1882, Eduard Hanslick heard him and he was astonished. In his review he wrote that:

A pianist with one hand, Count Géza Zichy, has performed the greatest marvels of modern times on the piano. Many people can play, and some can delight their audience, but Zichy's playing works like magic. He only plays in public for charitable purposes; on this occasion he divided the considerable profits between the Billroth Rudolfiner Society and a Hungarian Institute for students.

He later commented that

Since we first heard this left-handed pianist in Vienna and then admired his playing, he has made still greater progress in his art, although this might seem impossible. When Géza Zichy lately played an Etude de concert, then a Hungarian Rhapsody of his own composition, and Bach's Chaconne arranged for left hand, the listeners could hardly believe their ears or eyes, so great was the marvellous fulness of tone, with such wonderful execution, all parts of the composition being clearly defined and interpreted.²³

²³ A. Ehrlich, *Celebrated Pianists of the Past and Present Time: A Collection of 116 Biographies with 114 Portraits*. London: H. Grevel and Co., 1895: pp. 363-364. This quote and the one before it.

He also remarked how Zichy had a whole arsenal of moves to astonish:

Lightning-like jumps, skips and glides and his polyphonic legato playing were so extraordinary that his listeners could scarcely believe their ears and eyes.²⁴

And in yet another review Hanslick once again is astonished not only at his ability to play, but his ability to overcome. Once again, the left hand does not astonish only by what it plays, but by one witnesses with one's eyes when Zichy played:

Zichy has attained a perfection as astonishing as it is dazzling. With five fingers he is able to imitate the ordinary play of ten, with the art of arpeggios adroitly worked out, by the aid of perfectly graduated nuances from piano to forte.²⁵

Zichy's contributions to the left-handed repertoire were significant not only for the number of works he left but also for the types of works on which he focused, even if some consider the writing in them uneven or "dull."²⁶ His compositions included not only a number of transcriptions of other composers' works (notably Bach's Chaconne, a work which Brahms had transcribed (published 1878) a few years before Zichy (published 1881), and one which Paul Wittgenstein would later arrange, along with Schubert's *Erkönig*) but a whole series of works in more "significant" genres. These included a piano sonata, two series of studies (ten pieces in total, including his transcription of Schubert's *Erkönig*, which are more like character pieces than mere

²⁴ Arthur M. Abell, "Count Geza Zichy," In *The Musical Courier* (July 17, 1915): p. 20

²⁵ Harold Schonberg, *The Great Pianists: From Mozart to the Present*. New York: A Fireside Book, 1987: pp. 267-268.

²⁶ Theodore Edel, *Piano Music for One Hand*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1994: p. 99.

finger exercises), some piano pieces, two fantasies (on Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and one entitled the *Liebestraum-Fantasie*), and a few transcriptions other than the aforementioned Bach and Schubert examples (Chopin's A-Major Polonaise, Liszt's *Liebestraum* No. 3 and one on the Rákóczy March). Perhaps most impressive is the very first piano concerto for left hand and orchestra (in E-flat Major) composed in 1902, two decades before any of Paul Wittgenstein's numerous commissioned works in that medium.²⁷

Zichy's left-handed music tries even harder than Fumagalli's works to sound like the two-handed pianist. Perhaps part of the reasoning had to do with his chosen genres. How else does one even attempt to transcribe a work such as Schubert's *Erkönig*, a piece composed originally not only for a solo pianist but a voice part as well? Franz Liszt had already transcribed the song earlier in his career in a virtuoso fashion. But whereas Liszt's music, no matter how difficult the passage, was playable by the two hands (two exceptions: 1. When a melodic note cannot be held for its full value due to accompanimental figures, and 2. When Liszt requires a single hand to play in two octaves at once, though this is usually, though not always, accompanied with a sign for arpeggiation) Zichy's music at times is nearly impossible to play as written, as when he asks the pianist to perform bass and soprano notes octaves apart from each other at the

²⁷ These works are listed and his life discussed in:

Theodore Edel, *Piano Music for One Hand*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1994: pp. 26-29, 98-99, and 113.

And also:

Albert Sassmann, *"In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister" – Technik und Ästhetik der Klaviermusik für die linke Hand allein*. Tutzing: Verlegt bei Hans Schneider, 2010: pp. 90-93, 342, and 354. Sassmann's book refers to a transcription of Liszt's *Liebestraum* as well as a fantasy based on its themes: Edel's book omits both of these works.

same time with no indication of an arpeggiation—this is impossible even with the aid of the pedals. The following passage from Zichy’s version (right at the point in Schubert’s song in which the son screams out “Mein Vater, mein Vater, und hörst du nicht?” (My father, my father, but do you not hear?)) displays not only a two handed approach, but one which pushes the boundaries out even further in its attempt to be not only a “normal” pianist, but a singer as well:

Example 2.8: Schubert-Zichy: *Erbkönig*, mm. 72-76 (This corresponds to the point in Schubert’s song at “Mein Vater, mein Vater, und hörst du nicht?”).

The above approach, in which Zichy attempted for the left-hand pianist to be more than a pianist with less means than Liszt had, was one which he never altered in his thinking. If the two-handed-plus aspect of the *Erbkönig* transcription seems virtually unplayable for a single hand, what is even more shocking is Zichy’s approach in his own original music—in other words, if Schubert’s song constrained Zichy in attempting to do everything which the song had done with two players, then it was Zichy who constrained himself in the approach which he took in his own original music. Theodor

Edel has found Zichy's writing in the second movement of his piano sonata to be "not more playable by the left hand than a piano piece by Schubert" and in many places to feature "uncomfortable scoring."²⁸ But if the slow movement of the sonata is "uncomfortable" in places, then some moments in the last movement—an *Allegro con brio* at quarter note = 132—seem downright impossible for a single hand to handle. The passage below comes from the middle section, a march with the tempo of quarter note = 96. Once again note the inability of the left hand to be in the two places Zichy requires it to be at the same moment without deviating from the score. Here are two examples from the Piano Sonata for the Left Hand—the first, a passage from the slow movement, the second, the aforementioned *Maestoso alla marcia* from the finale:

The image contains two musical excerpts. The top excerpt is in 6/8 time, featuring a complex passage with multiple ledger lines and a double bar line. The bottom excerpt is in 9/8 time, labeled "molto dolce, cantando" and "pp", showing a more melodic passage with a double bar line.

Example 2.9: Zichy: Piano Sonata for the Left Hand: II. *Andante serio*, mm. 11-18.

²⁸ Theodore Edel, *Piano Music for One Hand*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1994: p. 98.



Example 2.10: Zichy: Piano Sonata for the Left Hand: III. *Allegro con brio*, mm. 25-29.

Géza Zichy came to epitomize the two-handed (if not three-handed!) style of composition for the left-hand piano: his attempts show his will to overcome all obstacles, even those that seemed truly impossible. But he was not the only one, nor the most refined of composers to come to the left-handed genres in this way. Other composers in the 1870s and 1880s also began to explore the possibilities through limitation, though most of them also came to realize their music in similar ways to their forebears: always attempting to write their music using a two-handed type of thinking. And many of these composers came to write music for other pianists—not themselves—either in admiration of their left-handed pianism or for reasons of necessity due most often to temporary injury.

One such composer was Carl Reinecke (1824-1910). Though little remembered today, his musical achievements were well-noted in his own time. Born in Altona in 1824, he studied music first with his father, himself a respected music theoretician and writer of numerous textbooks. The piano became Reinecke's primary musical vehicle, and it was as a pianist that he first toured Europe in the middle 1840s. He became a

court pianist in Copenhagen in 1846, and shortly thereafter traveled to Leipzig, where he met Mendelssohn, the Schumanns, and Liszt (he impressed Liszt enough that he eventually became the piano teacher to his daughter, who spoke well of Reinecke's playing: his "beautiful, gentle, legato and lyrical touch"²⁹ particularly impressed her). He later moved to Cologne to teach at Hiller's conservatory, and in 1860 he received an appointment at the prestigious conservatory in Leipzig: he stayed there for the rest of his career, eventually becoming the school's director in 1897. During his years at the conservatory, some of the finest composers and performers of the age passed through its system: Grieg, Kretzschmar, Kwast, Muck, Riemann, Sinding, Svendsen, Sullivan and Weingartner, among many others. But Reinecke was not just an influential teacher and pianist, he was also a composer of merit: his catalogue boasts some 288 opus numbers (plus around 25 unpublished pieces) worth of compositions.³⁰

As a teacher and director, Reinecke "considered it his responsibility as director to perpetuate the example of the Classical composers." He was a "guardian of tradition" who "made it his business to foster the music of the Pre-Classical composers,

²⁹ Reinhold Sietz, "Reinecke, Carl (Heinrich Carsten)." *Grove Music Online*. 2001. Oxford University Press. (Accessed October 20, 2019)

<https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000023128?rsk=88LVQr>

³⁰ During Busoni's tenure at the NEC, Reinecke's music was also part of the advanced pianist's literature: "Beethoven's late piano sonatas and pieces by Chopin, Reinecke, Brahms, Tausig, Scharwenka and others. Conspicuously lacking from the postgraduate level list are compositions by Bach, Mozart, and Haydn, as well as compositions by Debussy and other living composers." That said, among Reinecke's composition pupils at the Leipzig conservatory in 1886 was Busoni, though he had little to do with the chosen repertoire chosen for study at the NEC when he first came. See: Erinn E. Knyt, "Ferruccio Busoni and the New England Conservatory: Piano Pedagogue in the Making." In *American Music* Volume 31 Number 3 (Fall 2013): pp. 300 and 311 note 84.

particularly Bach, even exploring as far back as Palestrina.”³¹ Though his attitude toward counterpoint as the basis for compositional awareness was imprinted on all of his pupils, as a pianist his style was based not on the style of Pre-Classical composers, but on early nineteenth-century principles and construction: if anything his music resembles the Germanic traditions of Mendelssohn, Weber, Beethoven, Schumann and Brahms. This can be seen in his only work for left-hand piano, his Sonata in C Minor, op. 179.

Reinecke’s importance lies not only in his chosen left-hand medium, but also in his chosen genre. Rather than compose a piece which sought flash and bravura in the way that many of the operatic paraphrases of the mid-century did, Reinecke chose a genre which by then had fallen out of fashion, but one which helped validate the left-handed mediums by its very use: a multi-movement sonata. Published in 1884, this was the first piano sonata for solo left hand composed in the nineteenth century,³² but it was not the last: three years after Reinecke published his work, Zichy composed and published his own example. Where Zichy’s sonata seemed unplayable in certain passages that required the pianist to be in two places at once, Reinecke’s preference for textures more in keeping with eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century pianistic styles helped him to conceive a music that was both two-handed in its layout, but also eminently playable.

³¹ Reinhold Sietz, “Reinecke, Carl (Heinrich Carsten).” Grove Music Online. 2001. Oxford University Press. (Accessed October 20, 2019)
<https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000023128?rskey=88LVQr>

³² Theodore Edel, *Piano Music for One Hand*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1994: p. 84.

In the first movement's opening measures, we can already see his approach. The sonata begins with a fully homophonic texture, filled with large chords, using a wide keyboard range, and arpeggios that help to create the illusion of not just a melody and an accompaniment, but a right and left hand. Though infused with a sense of counterpoint between the "hands," it more closely resembles a lost Beethovenian sonata than a Bachian Prelude and Fugue:

Example 2.11: Reinecke: *Sonate für die linke Hand allein* in C Minor, op. 179:
I. *Allegro moderato*, mm. 1-8

Here Reinecke is clearly summoning the two-handed pianist when writing for the single hand, as all the steep drops (sometimes three and a half octaves, as in m. 4) clearly display a musical idea first performed by the "right hand" followed by its imitation in the "left hand." This music is not contrapuntal in the Bachian sense of containing two distinct musical voices at its opening, but it makes use of imitation to fool the listener

into thinking that it is. If this is not counterpoint in the true sense of the word, it is still an instrumentally homophonic idiom that seems polyphonic. Perhaps Reinecke's love of the music of the past proved to be a turning point in the construction of music written for a single hand: though the music was still based on a two-handed model, the infusion of contrapuntal thinking into the music, along with the lighter textures found in the music of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries, offered an alternative to the idea that a single hand needed to accomplish that which the two hands had in its own repertoire.³³

Reinecke's single contribution was not enough to change this basic approach to composition. A careful study of the entire piece reveals his intent that the single hand should still be heard as the two hands of the "normal" pianist on most occasions. But the end of the nineteenth century also found other composers who took at least some interest in the left-hand piano as a medium. Perhaps the composer whose solo left-hand works are more performed than any other is Alexander Scriabin, in his set of two pieces, op. 9: the first, a prelude, the second, a nocturne. His indebtedness to Chopin can be seen not only in the choice of genres and the accompanying opus number (Chopin's opus 9 consists of three nocturnes) but also in the writing which is featured in the works. Of the two pieces, it is the nocturne which has proven to be the most popular,

³³ According to the pianist Keith Snell, "The least effective writing for the left hand, I think, is when a composer thinks in (sic) too much in a 'two handed' way, requiring the breaking of chords and constant use of grace notes from bass to treble." Reinecke's approach was not this: it seemed to use the two-handed idea, though tends, on the most part, to be more interested in using spacing with calculated pauses to create the two-handed effect, than willing the pianist to literally be in two places at once as with Zichy's approach. See: <https://crosseyedpianist.com/2012/05/14/guest-post-a-history-of-left-hand-piano/> (Accessed 10/20/2019)

one which has often been performed by two-handed pianists from the time of its writing to the present day due not to necessity but to musical substance (they include but are not limited to the following pianists who have left recordings: Josef Lhévinne, Heinrich Neuhaus, Leon Fleisher, Alexis Weissenberg, Dmitri Alexeev, Joaquín Achúcarro, among others³⁴ —of these, Fleisher was the only pianist who needed to search out left-hand repertoire for reasons of necessity due to focal dystonia).³⁵

Scriabin's story is a bit harder to pin down as it was not one incident which caused his interest in left hand pianism, but rather a lifelong affliction caused (we now believe) due to an early and persistent injury. Originally, the story went that Scriabin had injured his right hand in 1891 after he heard his classmate—one Josef Lhévinne—perform Liszt's *Don Juan Fantasy*. He too had to play it! The work is notable as one of the most challenging solo piano pieces in the repertoire due to its extreme virtuosity—passages in octaves and tenths, leaps in both directions, numerous passages in double thirds, etc. Whether Scriabin's constant repeated practice caused strain or the types of technical issues he encountered (Scriabin's reach was in general no more than a ninth) has been debated.³⁶ But more recent research has uncovered another aspect to his interest in developing the left-hand as a vehicle: while walking down the street in 1885, Scriabin was run over by a horse carriage. He survived this major accident, though not

³⁴ Ballard, Lincoln, Matthew Bengtson, with John Bell Young. *The Alexander Scriabin Companion: History, Performance, and Lore*. Lanham: Roman & Littlefield, 2017: pp. 34-35.

³⁵ Holly Brubach, "The pianist Leon Fleisher: a life-altering debility, reconsidered." In *The New York Times* (June 12, 2007). <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/12/arts/12iht-pianist.1.6104272.html> (Accessed October 2019)

³⁶ Eckart Altenmüller, "Alexander Scriabin: His Chronic Right-Hand Pain and Its Impact on His Piano Compositions." In *Progress in Brain Research* (February 2015): pp. 203-204.

without some complications: his right clavicle (or collarbone) had been broken causing him agonizing pain and, as more recent research hypothesizes, caused him major issues down the road; he was to see many doctors over the course of his career due to issues with playing and for modes of pain relief.³⁷

As Scriabin's two pieces were inspired by the pianism of Chopin, it is unsurprising that they too are indebted to the then-common two-hand layout. But whereas many composers of this repertoire at this time wrote music which was virtually impossible to perform without major alterations to the score, Scriabin was careful in his own layout: one which was rich in texture, but never attempted to pit the pianist against the music or the instrument; rather, he carefully crafted the offbeats (or agogic accents) to never obscure the melody's progression, while creating interest through a variety of textures which surrounded the melody. Chopin may have also inspired him to include a cadenza in the nocturne (Chopin's op. 9 no. 2 also features one) as a way of helping him to assimilate not just the genre but also in exploring the possibilities of the left hand in virtuoso passagework inspired by the right hand, though not dependent upon it. But Scriabin's work differed in another major way from many of his predecessors: both of the pieces written for the solo left hand were conceived not as etude-like works meant to train the left hand or to test it, to astonish listeners through feats of outward virtuosity, but rather, as "magical pieces" meant to evoke, as certain critics and audience members later testified.³⁸

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 202-203, 205-208.

³⁸ Altenmüller, mistakenly in my opinion, contrasts Scriabin's approach to Reinecke's (as seen above) and to Brahms's. He does not describe which of Brahms's works he is referring to in his description, but

Below is a passage from the aforementioned nocturne. Note Scriabin's careful manner in never obscuring the melody through impossible tasks such as being in two places at once. He here also controls the sense of which notes are placed on offbeats leaving less decision making as to how to handle the difficulties of the music. If Scriabin's work is still conceived as a two-handed piano work, it is with much skill that he handles this type of medium:



Example 2.12: Scriabin: Nocturne in D-flat Major for the left hand alone, Op. 9 No. 2, mm. 44-48

His interest in the left hand was never to wane. This is unsurprising as his left hand—especially after the accident in 1885—was the one which many writers saw as

Brahms has only one solo left-hand work: his transcription of Bach's Chaconne. To describe this work as acting in a two-handed manner is simply wrong, as Brahms's transcription is almost entirely faithful to Bach's original. If any transcriber's version of Bach's Chaconne can be labelled two-handed in idea it is not Brahms's version but those by Zichy and/or Paul Wittgenstein. Ibid., pp. 209-210.

his dominant hand when he performed. In a review of a concert that Scriabin had given of his own music in 1895, César Cui, member of *the Mighty Hand* and an important critic in the Russian lands, wrote that "Scriabin" was "an unquestionable great talent for composition" but also found Scriabin as a pianist "nervous, arhythmical, and at times unclear. He exaggerates soft and loud contrasts." But his review is important in the present discussion because he also discusses not just his pianism, but his left-handed pianism: "His left hand is stronger than his right and sometimes smothers it. He played better with one hand in the Nocturne than he did with two hands in other pieces." Cui also found, notably, that "regardless of his unsatisfactory performance, he had considerable success. In this case, in contrast with what usually happens, the composer carried the performer."³⁹

Scriabin's contribution to the left-hand repertoire, if it can be considered that at all, came mostly in his works for two hands: works which reimagined the possibilities and the demands placed on it in works using both the left and right hands. Altenmüller speculates (correctly in my opinion) that this had much to do with Scriabin's natural abilities as well as his inabilities with the right hand after his accident. This can be seen in his first piano sonata (a work which Scriabin reportedly performed only once in his career, in 1894): its "technical demands are higher for the left hand than for the right hand": it features mostly three-note chords in the right hand (spanning no more than an octave) while "chords in the left hand span up to 11 white keys, which have to be played

³⁹ Faubion Bowers. *Scriabin: A Biography* (Second Revised Edition). Mineola: Dover Publications, 1996: p. 197.

simultaneously” as well as technically challenging octave passages in the third movement, ones which Altenmüller finds “demanding an enormous endurance and strength, comparable to Franz Liszt’s legendary transcription of Schubert’s song, “The Erl King.”⁴⁰

Around the same time that Scriabin was composing his left-hand works, another composer in another land was making his first experiments with the possibilities of the left hand, also using Chopin’s music as his inspiration. This was Leopold Godowsky, who was to become perhaps the most important composer in history for the development of the solo left hand (though not perhaps any longer the composer who wrote the most works in that medium).⁴¹ He developed a style of composition using the left hand through almost 40 years of experimentation, producing around 50 of the most difficult works ever written for the medium.

⁴⁰ Eckart Altenmüller, “Alexander Scriabin: His Chronic Right-Hand Pain and Its Impact on His Piano Compositions.” In *Progress in Brain Research* (February 2015): p. 209.

⁴¹ Many composers have come to write works for the solo left hand in the years following World War II, many due to the injuries sustained during those times. But there have also been those composers who have simply found inspiration in the limitations imposed by this medium: two are Frederic Meinders (who has transcribed almost 200 works for solo left hand, in addition to composing over 25 original compositions) and Stephan Beneking who lists over 150 pieces written for solo left hand and solo right hand. See the following websites for further information regarding these two artists:

<https://www.fredericmeindersarchive.com>

<https://sites.google.com/site/benekingclassicalpiano/home>

Chapter 3

Leopold Godowsky

In Theodore Edel's words, Leopold Godowsky was a composer whose works "[stood] alone in the piano literature as the last word in complexity, ingenuity, and technical difficulty."¹ Especially in his Chopin Studies for a single hand—always the left, never the right—he pushed the pianist to the boundaries of what was possible, creating a type of music that was contrapuntally infused, figuratively saturated, and which used the full resources of the instrument. In the works written for two hands, he reinvented Chopin's piano music often by the principle of addition rather than alteration; but in the works for a single hand, the limitations of contemplating two-hand piano music for a single hand led Godowsky to reconsider the music in far more transformative ways: by assimilating all parts of the music to create a new type of piano music, one which rejected the premise that anything was missing or that the left-hand pianist needed to make up for his limitations.

Godowsky experimented throughout his career with the capabilities of the left hand more than virtually any composer before or since.² In composing works that focused on the left hand's capabilities—from roughly 1893 until his last compositions in 1930—he too refined his left-hand writing and came to realize certain aspects of it

¹ Theodor Edel, *Piano Music for One Hand*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994: p. 8.

² That statement used to be true. While his music is still considered the pinnacle of left-hand piano music in its ingenuity and complexity there are other composers who have come to challenge him in the number of works which they have written. Among them is Frederic Meinders, whose website now lists over 200 transcriptions and over 25 original works for the left hand alone. For further information see: <https://www.fredericmeindersarchive.com>.

which only a composer of technical means and musical imagination could: that the left hand could produce works all of its own nature—without the use of or even need for the right hand, without the idea that the left hand needed to make up for the right's absence. Later in life he produced a number of works in the solo left-hand medium. He later added additional right-hand parts to them not because he found them incomplete, but because the additional right-hand parts complemented the left-hand ones in the same way that his later additions to his transcription of Weber's *Invitation to the Dance* did. Though originally conceived for solo piano, he eventually expanded his Weber transcription to include first two, later three pianos, all of which added additional optional and complementary parts. The story goes:

In 1922 Godowsky adapted his solo arrangement of *Invitation to the Dance* for two pianos. When the work had been published, Rubin Goldmark looked over the score and told its composer that he could see nothing that had been left undone in the way of elaborations and amplifications and couldn't imagine how another note could be added. Godowsky smiled and answered: "Well, I shall show you that you are wrong." A few days later he invited Goldmark to hear the amended version of the work—with an optional third piano part added.³

This did not mean that one version was better than the other or more complete, but only that any piece could be enriched through additional means.

For Godowsky, a solo left-hand work was not "half of" a real composition—a two-handed piano work; it was a musical realization as complete and complex as any of his works for two or three pianos. The only difference was the number of voices

³ Jeremy Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists' Pianist: A Biography of Leopold Godowsky*. Northumberland: Appian Publications & Recordings, 1989: p. 71.

conjured up at any one time. In his Chopin paraphrases written for the left hand, his transcriptions are often all-consuming in their expansiveness and virtuosity. Though many of his works for two-hand piano used the full range of the instrument (requiring both hands to perform extraordinarily difficult figurations at the same time), his works for the left hand were not written with any sense of incompleteness: certain of his versions were only presented in left-hand-alone formats—the “Revolutionary,” Op. 10 No. 12, but also the Etudes Op. 10 No. 3, Op. 10 No. 6, Op. 10 No. 11, Op. 25 No. 10, and Op. 25 No. 12.

Leopold Godowsky: A Symphonic-Pianistic Approach

Throughout the nineteenth century—the time of the instrumental virtuoso and pianistic experimentation—there were many composers who approached the piano as an orchestral vehicle, always expanding outwards to encompass the totality of the instrument’s range: in the previous chapter, we saw this in the left-hand writing of Charles Valentin Alkan, but also later, and even more treacherously difficult, in some of Geza Zichy’s numerous arrangements. How most composers in the nineteenth century came to approach writing for the pianist’s left hand was in a two-handed fashion. After the turn of the century, on very rare occasion, it was also seen as a single-lined

instrument,⁴ as in Saint-Saëns *Moto Perpetuo* from his Six Etudes (1915) written for his friend and duet partner, Caroline de Serres née Montigny-Rémaury, who requested them after she underwent an operation on her right hand in 1912.⁵

In Raymond Lewenthal's introduction to his volume of music for a single hand he describes Saint-Saëns approach as a terribly underutilized one taken by many composers of left-hand piano composition. In the *Moto perpetuo* he relished the fact that Saint-Saëns had written a music which in its "single-note passage work" implied "its own bass and harmony," one which allowed the pianist to concentrate on the subtleties of this music:⁶



Example 3.1: Saint-Saëns: Six Etudes for the Left Hand, op. 135: No. 3 *Moto Perpetuo*, mm. 1-6.

⁴ Raymond Lewenthal, "Preface." In *Piano Music for One Hand: A Collection of Studies, Exercises and Pieces*, selected and edited with Prefatory Notes by Raymond Lewenthal. New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1972. [Milwaukee: distributed by Hal Leonard Corporation]: p. vii.

⁵ This story, like Scriabin's, has been tempered by another: "Robert Casadesus, in conversation with Dean elder, tells a different story. He was under the impression that Saint-Saëns had written the *Études* for the best students of his good friend Louis Diémer, the dedicatee of Franck's *Variations symphoniques*. Because Casadesus was the teacher's pet (*chou chou*), Diémer gave him the *Bourrée*, considered the best of the set. He played it for Saint-Saëns himself." If not particularly influential, the works were "avidly studied by Ravel before he wrote his *Concerto pour la main gauche*." See: Piers Lane, Liner notes to *Saint-Saëns: The Complete Études*. Piers Lane. Hyperion CDA67037. CD. 1998: pp. 12-13.

⁶ *Piano Music for One Hand: A Collection of Studies, Exercises and Pieces*, selected and edited with Prefatory Notes by Raymond Lewenthal. New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1972. [Milwaukee: distributed by Hal Leonard Corporation]: p. vii.

Leopold Godowsky's approach to writing for a single hand may have initially been inspired by the same goals as his predecessors in their two-handed approach; it quickly developed into something quite different. If his initial experiments with the Chopin Etudes were conceived in roughly the same way as Scriabin with his nocturne—it would be difficult to blame him if they were, as Chopin's music was two-handed in nature—his approach eventually altered as he developed his ideas further and was influenced by other sources of inspiration.

When the Chopin Etudes were first published in the early 1900s, Godowsky felt the need to explain his ideas and his goals. The left-hand compositions were given special attention. If the general purpose of the collection of etudes was “to develop the mechanical, technical and musical possibilities of pianoforte playing” and “to expand the peculiarly adapted nature of the instrument to polyphonic, polyrhythmic and polydynamic work,” a key goal was to inspire the future generations of piano composers through a careful study of these works: “The composer for the piano will find a number of suggestions regarding the treatment of the instrument and it's (sic) musical utterance in general.”⁷ The left-hand etudes brought this goal even further. By challenging the preconceptions of the hand's abilities, his goal was also to create new possibilities for the future: “If it is possible to assign to the left hand the work done usually by both hands simultaneously, what vistas are opened to future composers, were this

⁷ Leopold Godowsky, “Introductory Remarks.” In *Leopold Godowsky: Studien über die Etüden von Chopin*. Volume III Numbers 21-30. Berlin: Robert Lienau Vormals Schlesinger, 1995: p. iii.

attainment to be extended to both hands!”⁸ If Chopin most influenced his early experiments with the left hand, in later life it was Bach’s music from which he drew. But that would take some decades of experimentation and years of developing and rethinking the possibilities of the left hand as an instrument. His attitude towards the left-hand instrument would also alter significantly.

Godowsky’s left-handed experiments started with personal tragedy, although not a personal tragedy that forced him to reconsider his own career. Rather, it arose out of the need for comfort. As he tells it, Godowsky had spent some time at the World’s Colombian Exposition in June of 1893; upon returning to New York, and with the enthusiasm with which Godowsky spoke of the event, his brother-in-law and his fiancée decided to spend their honeymoon in Chicago to experience the marvels themselves.⁹ Godowsky originally planned to meet them there, this being their first real trip out of New York; but last-minute circumstances prevented him from doing so. Although Godowsky received a wire from them from Niagara Falls during their train ride there, shortly thereafter he received news that there had been a major accident outside of Battle Creek, Michigan; his brother-in-law and his fiancée were among the nearly one hundred people who died that day:

I had been practicing at the time the Double-Thirds etude of Chopin [Op. 25 No. 6]. In trying to divert my thoughts so that I would not brood over this tragic

⁸ Leopold Godowsky, “Special Remarks on the studies for the left hand alone.” In *Leopold Godowsky: Studien über die Etüden von Chopin*. Volume III Numbers 21-30. Berlin: Robert Lienau Vormalis Schlesinger, 1995: p vii.

⁹ For vivid descriptions of the Chicago World’s Fair (and a telling story of America’s first serial killer) please see the following:

Erik Larsen. *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair that Changed America*. New York: Vintage Books (A Division of Random House, Inc.), 2003.

event, I concentrated on evolving a more practical fingering for the double-notes of this Etude. After numerous experiments I succeeded in finding an entirely new succession of fingers which appeared to me most practical. I then transposed the Study to the left hand to see whether the same fingering could be applied to it: to my great surprise I found that the left hand was more amenable than the right to my experiments.

Once I realized that fact, I experimented with the other Etudes which had special mechanical problems as their object. Thus I transcribed the Black-Key Study, the Study in Sixths, the Study in Wide Arpeggios [Op. 10 No. 5, Op. 25 No. 8 & Op. 10 No. 11], etc. etc. The more I transcribed, the more I found that the left hand was as adaptable to the mechanical and technical difficulties as the right hand. Eventually I came to the conclusion that the left hand is easier to develop when given an opportunity.¹⁰

Although not all his massively difficult reworkings of the etudes were written for the left hand alone, those were the ones to which Godowsky seemed to give special attention. Not only were they among the very first experiments he envisioned, they were the ones which he felt could bring special attention to the left hand—a part of the instrumentalist which he felt had been ignored or passed over by the majority of composers, especially after the shift in the eighteenth century away from polyphonically-infused music to a more melodically-based style.

Godowsky transcribed a total of 22 of Chopin's etudes for the solo left hand, encompassing the entirety of op. 10, eight of the op. 25 etudes, and two of the three *Nouvelle études* which Chopin wrote for Moscheles's and Fétis's album of etudes entitled *Méthode de Méthodes pour le piano*, a collection of etudes envisioned as a compendium of all of the various styles of pianism then prevalent. A number of famous

¹⁰ Jeremy Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists' Pianist: A Biography of Leopold Godowsky*. Northumberland: Appian Publications & Recordings, 1989: p. 37.

composers (and some less so now) contributed to its contents: Moscheles himself, Mendelssohn, Liszt, Thalberg, Rosenhein, Döhler, Heller, Wolff, Henselt, Benedict, Méreaux, Taubert, and of course Chopin.¹¹ The table below shows the entirety of his Chopin left-hand etudes:

Etude	Original Key	Godowsky's Key
Op. 10 No. 1	C Major	D-flat Major
Op. 10 No. 2	A Minor	A Minor
Op. 10 No. 3	E Major	D-flat Major
Op. 10 No. 4	C-sharp Minor	C-sharp Minor
Op. 10 No. 5	G-flat Major	G-flat Major
Op. 10 No. 6	E-flat Minor	E-flat Minor
Op. 10 No. 7	C Major	E-flat Major
Op. 10 No. 8	F Major	G-flat Major
Op. 10 No. 9	F Minor	F-sharp Minor
Op. 10 No. 10	A-flat Major	A-flat Major
Op. 10 No. 11	E-flat Major	A Major
Op. 10 No. 12	C Minor	C-sharp Minor
Op. 25 No. 1	A-flat Major	A-flat Major
Op. 25 No. 2	F Minor	F-sharp Minor
Op. 25 No. 3	F Major	F Major
Op. 25 No. 4	A Minor	A Minor
Op. 25 No. 5	E Minor	B-flat Minor
Op. 25 No. 9	G-flat Major	G-flat Major
Op. 25 No. 10	B Minor	B Minor
Op. 25 No. 12	A Minor	C-sharp Minor
Nouvelle Étude 1	F Minor	F Minor
Nouvelle Étude 2	A-flat Major	D-flat Minor

Table 3.1: Godowsky Chopin Etudes for the Left Hand Alone

¹¹ For further information on the *Methode de Methodes* collection see: Mark Kroll, *Ignaz Moscheles and the Changing World of Musical Europe*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014: pp. 192-199.

But why the left hand rather than the right hand? How was the left hand better equipped to handle the instrument in a soloistic manner than the right? According to Godowsky, it was better suited in a number of ways. First, the left hand was far less used than the right hand—it was in less “a state of tension” than its far less relaxed counterpart—and because of this was more agile and more prone to developing its abilities further.

Another important reason was the placement of the fingers on the hand itself. In the left hand the strongest fingers (“the thumb, index and middle fingers”) are found at the top of the hand, where they are able to play the “stronger parts” including the top notes of all “‘double stops’ and chords.” But the placement of the hand on the keyboard was perhaps even more important to Godowsky, who found that the “splendid sonority, mellowness, and tonal sensitiveness of the lower half of the keyboard” is “capable of producing a tone of a more sonorous, less percussive quality, thus attaining quantity and quality with minimum effort.” The upper registers for him were useful for filigree but in general produced a far more “thin, brittle, and tinkly sound.”¹²

Although the Chopin reworkings had many critics who derided them as travesties of composition,¹³ they became—not just the left-hand studies, but all of them—a talking point for all who heard them and witnessed them in performance. For the American critic James Huneker, they would be the foundation for the newest school

¹² Leopold Godowsky, “Piano Music for the Left Hand.” In *Musical Quarterly* Volume 21 (January 1, 1935): pp. 298-300.

¹³ Robert Rimm, *The Composer-Pianists: Hamelin and the Eight*. Portland: Amadeus Press, 2002: pp. 66-67 and 82-83.

of pianists, works which might eventually be placed on a tier with the greatest means of producing the future virtuosos of the world. Writing in 1910, he claimed that “in ten years—so rapid is the technical standard advancing—they will be used in the curriculum of students.” But so difficult were they that Huneker saw in them the future pianists of the world far surpassing those of his own day. Godowsky was not writing for the ordinary pianist here, he was “writing for the next generation—presumably a generation of Rosenthals.”^{14 15}

Perhaps the easiest way to understand Godowsky’s approach in these early workings (and also his eventual development of his left-handed techniques in his later years) would be to compare his work on the Chopin Etudes with Paul Wittgenstein’s approach. Though Wittgenstein did perform some of Godowsky’s transcriptions in his debut as a left-handed artist, he eventually came to attempt two transcriptions of one of Chopin’s most famous etudes himself: the “Revolutionary” Etude in c minor, a work known already in the original as a concentrated study for rapid left-hand arpeggios and

¹⁴ Jeremy Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists’ Pianist: A Biography of Leopold Godowsky*. Northumberland: Appian Publications & Recordings, 1989: p. 39.

¹⁵ Huneker’s “generation of Rosenthals” refers to Moriz Rosenthal, a Polish pianist (though born in then Austria-Hungary) of world renown: a pupil of Joseffy, Liszt, and Mikuli (himself a pupil of Chopin’s) Rosenthal was held up in his own day as one of the great virtuosos. Eduard Hanslick wrote of him that “through many years of acquaintance with piano virtuosity I have almost forgotten what it is to be astonished. [Rosenthal’s] technique scorns the most incredible difficulties, his strength and endurance the most inordinate demands.” Anton Rubinstein would have agreed: he too “conceded that he had never known what technique was until he had heard Rosenthal.” And Godowsky in making his Berlin debut would be compared to three artists, measured by three yardsticks: Ferruccio Busoni, Eugene D’Albert, and Moriz Rosenthal. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

scales. What better a work to reconfigure for the left hand than one initially written for it?¹⁶

Where Godowsky's aim with the work was its musical coherence—through an approach in which the work is not just imagined but actually fully intelligible—Wittgenstein's was one of pure virtuosity and effect, perhaps even a type of virtuosity that came to be labeled “empty” by future generations. For Godowsky, the word virtuoso already possessed a derogatory connotation, one which insinuated flashiness and bravura over substance. He argued often that in this way, he was no virtuoso:

Virtuosity is a fault, not a virtue. And I, who detest virtuosity as such, have been branded a virtuoso, though entirely innocent. Ostentatious mastery of technic, a mastery intended merely to dazzle, I loathe. In the really great player his mastery attracts no attention. In fact virtuosity is a parvenu and genuine mastery is “to the manner born.” I can honestly say that in my compositions my aim has never been virtuoso display, but rich and beautiful development of the musical idea.¹⁷

If one could actually hear the work in Godowsky's reimagining—in which accompanimental figuration and melody are interwoven—the same cannot be said for Wittgenstein's version. In his version, the pianist seemed to be more interested in the actual figurations themselves: for him the essence of the etude was to be found in the figurative arpeggiations that covered the piano's range.

¹⁶ Wittgenstein actually left two versions of the Revolutionary Etude, the one discussed below and a perhaps even more difficult version using sixths, chords, and large jumps. Both show him attempting to make the left hand do as much as is possible; and both versions leave out the thematic material. See: *Piano Music for One Hand: A Collection of Studies, Exercises and Pieces*, selected and edited with Prefatory Notes by Raymond Lewenthal. New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1972. [Milwaukee: distributed by Hal Leonard Corporation]: Volume II, pp. 18-28.

¹⁷ Jeremy Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists' Pianist: A Biography of Leopold Godowsky*. Northumberland: Appian Publications & Recordings, 1989: pp. 69-70.

In Wittgenstein's version, the etude lost one major and important facet: the melodic aspect of its poetry, an aspect which becomes more apparent the further one looks into the piece. Where was the melody in Wittgenstein's transcription? Only in one's memory of the piece. A comparison of a few sample bars at the work's beginning suggests their very different approaches to this transcription in comparison with Chopin's original:

The image displays the first four measures of Chopin's Etude in C Minor, op. 10 No. 12, "Revolutionary". The tempo is marked "Allegro con fuoco". The score is in C minor, 3/4 time. The right hand plays a series of eighth notes, and the left hand plays a series of eighth notes. A large slur spans measures 1-4, indicating a continuous melodic line. The notation includes dynamic markings such as *f* (forte) and *sfz* (sforzando).

Example 3.2: Chopin: Etude in C Minor, op. 10 No. 12 "Revolutionary", mm. 1-4.

Allegro con fuoco ♩ = 112-126

Example 3.3: Chopin-Godowsky: Etude in C-Sharp Minor, op. 10 No. 12 “Revolutionary”, mm. 1-4.

Allegro con fuoco

Example 3.4: Chopin-Wittgenstein: Etude in C Minor, op. 10 No. 12 “Revolutionary”, mm. 1-4.

Godowsky’s version of the etude works on multiple levels: it does not bypass the idea of the two-handed layout, but it also does not require the pianist to attempt the

impossible. His left-handed ideas work because they capture the spirit of the work and both of its fundamental aspects: melody and figuration.

Godowsky's version creates interest, distinguishing itself from the original, through the addition of contrapuntal strands even at the work's opening: the added eighth notes make the passage not only technically easier to perform (due to the hand position changes and the natural pattern of accents it reveals) but which also contribute an additional layer of musical interest. In Godowsky's version nothing is left out, because for him all of the material found in the original work is essential to his reimagining of it. The figuration is neither dominant nor inferior in communicating the work's essence: it contributes to his work in multiple ways.

For Godowsky, the figurative patterns were not just accompanimental in nature, they were also structural. And to create further interest, any number of additional ideas or voices could be added to the basic texture in order to modernize it. For Wittgenstein, this was clearly not the case. In his two-handed approach the figurations have become most important—*the* defining aspect of the piece. In his mind, the etude hardly needed the melodic or contrapuntal aspects with which Chopin imbued it (or Godowsky later) to be successful in realizing his version of the etude for a single hand. Wittgenstein's version seems more in line with Saint-Saëns (the *Moto perpetuo* discussed above) in its endorsement of a single-note effect: but whereas Saint-Saëns was writing an original piece, one which could be understood on its own terms, Wittgenstein was not. Was his version then, when compared with Godowsky's, a bit like Chopin with all style and little substance?

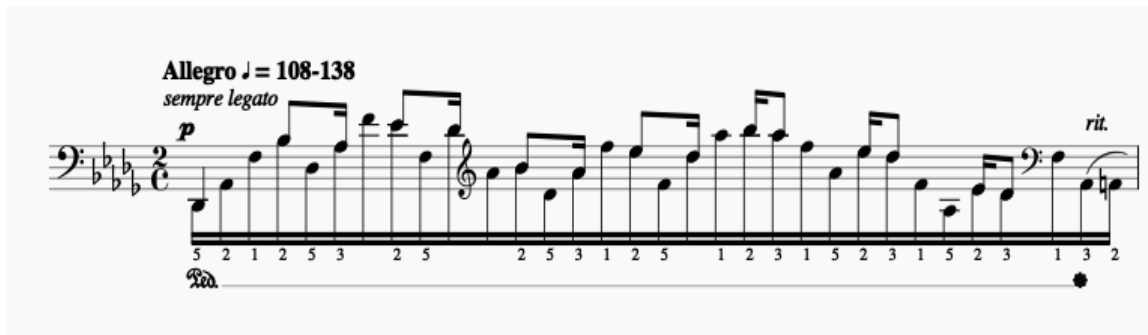
Where was the melody? It was not to be found in his version. For Wittgenstein the figuration proved to musically all-encompassing, creating enough interest through sheer virtuosity that the work's other aspects were unnecessary. Because the work was so well known, the pianist could also count on its popularity to help him in his performances. Every pianist and a good portion of the general concert audience would know it well enough for him to count on their memories to take care of what he omitted. This is where Godowsky and Wittgenstein differed: where Godowsky sought to reimagine the work musically, encompassing the totality of its melody and accompaniment, Wittgenstein sought to create spectacle—to leave his audience with the impression that nothing was in fact missing through sheer will and determination—through a performance that overcame the sense of disability, whether his own or that of the music.¹⁸

Though Godowsky disliked the term virtuosity, the way the music was laid out on the piano—the intricacy of the music's architecture—was no less an interest for him than for Wittgenstein. Godowsky was not a purely musical thinker: though he was virtually self-taught as a pianist, he was one of the great virtuosos of his day. He was also interested not just in tradition, but like Liszt, in the instrument's continued potential and perhaps even survival. He was also as much interested in science as music and often took as logical an approach to his chosen hand positions and fingerings as to his interwoven contrapuntal intricacies.

¹⁸ Blake Howe, "Paul Wittgenstein and the Performance of Disability." In *The Journal of Musicology*. Volume 27 Number 2 (Spring 2010): pp. 135-143.

His transformation of Chopin's first etude in C Major displays his logical approach to solving issues regarding the transference of material from two hands to a single hand while also adding his own unique counterpoint. In Chopin's original, the sweeping, extended hand positions of the opening flourish (C–G–C–E) are already made easier, made to fit the left hand better by a simple transposition to D-flat Major (D-flat–A-flat–D-flat–B-flat). The black notes make it easier to keep track of where the hand is on the piano as well as keeping it mostly on the same level of the keyboard (D-flat major uses all of the black keys). By later altering the material into the pattern F–D-flat–A-flat–B-flat, Godowsky has not only ensured that the material could still be performed by the left hand, but also that the material was within the comfortable performing range of the hand across the entire keyboard while leaving the basic harmonic material unchanged. The range in the first measure moves from D-flat (two octaves below Middle-C) to the B-flat (two octaves above it). This makes Middle-C truly the middle of his range: the most comfortable part of the keyboard as well as the strongest, the most powerful in tone. Compare the first measure of the Chopin with Godowsky's transformation:

Example 3.5: Chopin: Etude in C Major, op. 10 No. 1, mm. 1-2.



Example 3.6: Chopin-Godowsky: Etude in D-flat Major, after op. 10 No. 1, m. 1.

Another noteworthy feature here is the addition of Godowsky's counterpoint. Where some may find the material unnecessary or fussy, the counterpoint makes it easier (as in the Revolutionary etude above) to perform the material: if Chopin's accent comes on the beat, always at the top of the arpeggiation, Godowsky's occurs after the twist of the hand, bringing momentum and force to the following note, whether above or below the preceding one. This added drive, along with Godowsky's prescribed fingering (the second finger, the pointer, one of the pianist's strongest) on the first note of the two-note figure adds a natural accent.

These alterations were not done without reason or purpose: all such modifications were done to ensure that the material best fit the instrument on which the music was performed. In the previous example, this was not done by rewriting the material for the piano but by modifying it to fit its new setting. In Godowsky's day—and well before with artists such as Liszt and Tausig—transcriptions were often focused on fitting the material to its new setting, by conceiving of the piano as an organ in Bach transcriptions, not simply by playing the notes on the instrument as Glenn Gould did

with certain works by Sweelinck.¹⁹ Godowsky created a new pianistic work from one already conceived for the instrument by keeping the nature of the instrument which he wrote for—here the left-hand of the pianist—close in mind.

Godowsky the arranger often kept at heart not just the spirit of the work but these inner aspects of the left-hand instrument. His ideas were ones propagated not only in the left-hand compositions but in all of his music. He expanded the music outwards not simply by adding notes and filigree to certain passages, an approach he found repugnant. His music transformed the material, often by finding voices that could be easily fitted into the fabric of the original. When his own *Symphonic Metamorphoses* were compared with the virtuoso transcriptions made by the pianist-composer Eduard Schütt, he took especial offense:

My *Metamorphoses* differ from the Eduard Schütt concert-paraphrases of some of the Strauss waltzes. The Schütt paraphrases seem to me to be just what I disapprove of, shallowly brilliant drawing-room pieces of a virtuoso cast; whereas virtuosity, as such, is the least part of the *Metamorphoses*, and everything in them is developed out of Strauss's own music in an endeavour to build up a living, pulsing, colourful transformation of the simple original legitimately, by means of theme-inversion and theme development, rich and glorified instrumental counterpoint, imitation and embellishment. Hear Josef Hofmann play the *Fledermaus* symphonic metamorphosis and you will understand why the term "symphonic" is used in the title of these free fantasies.²⁰

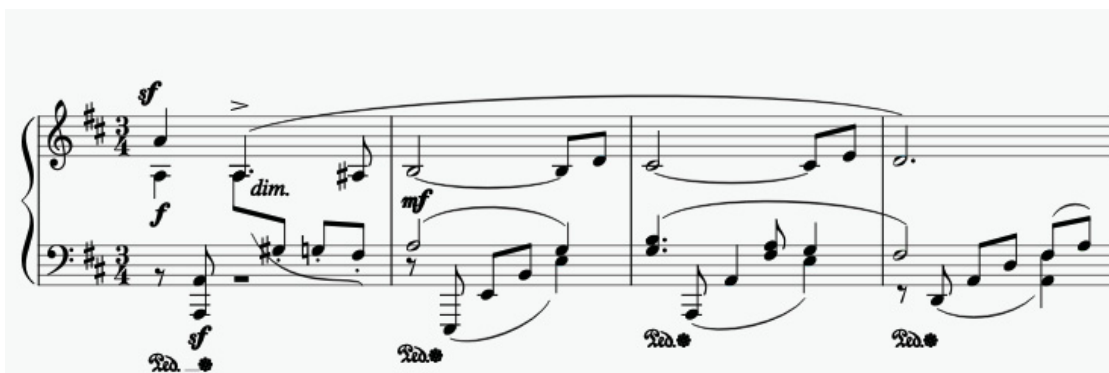
¹⁹ On for example: Glenn Gould: *Salzburg Recital 25. August.1959: Bach, Mozart, Sweelinck, Schönberg*. Glenn Gould. Sony Classical SMK 53 474. CD. 1994.

²⁰ Jeremy Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists' Pianist: A Biography of Leopold Godowsky*. Northumberland: Appian Publications & Recordings, 1989: p. 70.

His approach had to do with contrapuntal infusion and development of thematic material: adding or bringing forth voices that lent themselves to his chromatic-harmonic elaborations while also feeding off his own lyrical tendencies—transforming the themes into pianistic figurations through assimilation. These principles, which began in the Chopin Etudes, reached their heights in Godowsky's aforementioned Strauss arrangements—in works such as his *Symphonic Metamorphosis on Strauss's Schatz-Walzer themes from the Gypsy Baron*, a piece easier to reimagine in a pianistic way because it was not a piano work to begin with. Note the difference in approach between Schütt and Godowsky in their two transcriptions using Strauss's Schatz-Walzer themes. Here the same theme has been compared for ease of comparison:

The musical score is for a piano piece in 3/4 time, key of D major (three sharps). It begins with a tempo marking of 'a tempo' and a first ending bracketed with a repeat sign. The piano part is marked 'pp' (pianissimo) and 'espress.' (espressivo). The melody is played in the right hand, with a 'poco rit.' (poco ritardando) marking at the end. The bass line is marked with 'Rit.' (ritardando) and 'poco rit.' (poco ritardando). The score includes a first ending bracketed with a repeat sign and a 'poco rit.' marking.

Example 3.7: Eduard Schütt: Concert Paraphrase über Walzer-Motive von Johann Strauss.



Example 3.8: Godowsky: *Symphonic Metamorphosis* of the Schatz-Walzer Themes from “The Gypsy Baron” by Johann Strauss for piano left hand alone, mm. 152-155.



Example 3.9: Godowsky: *Symphonic Metamorphosis* of the Schatz-Walzer Themes from “The Gypsy Baron” by Johann Strauss for piano left hand alone, mm. 164-166.

By the term “symphonic,” Godowsky meant a type of pianism that was musically rich yet still based on the principles of the piano as he understood it. “Symphonic” did not mean “orchestral” for Godowsky in the way that the nineteenth century saw it: the term did not just convey sheer weight or a heightened dynamic quality. Instead it meant symphonic in the Wagnerian or even Richard Straussian way in its ability, with aid from the pedal, to produce a type of music rich in contrapuntal detail, in musical meaning, but still pianistic in the nineteenth-century way of thinking of it: for Godowsky in the way that Chopin’s music could be considered.

This was the opposite of the way that Carl Nielsen's *Symphonic Suite* was understood: a work deemed "too orchestral" in quality. One critic writing for *København* claimed that Nielsen's suite "felt more like a piano arrangement of an orchestral work than a piano piece," a sentiment perhaps similar to Busoni's who felt the work to be "badly scored."²¹ For Godowsky symphonic translated less to large-bodied or thick textured and more to musically saturated. This type of saturation is the main difference between Godowsky's transcriptions and Wittgenstein's or Schütt's.²²

Godowsky and Chopin ...or pianistic symphonicism...

Godowsky's Chopin elaborations were both steeped in tradition, founded on their principles, and also very much of his own day in regards the instrument for which he wrote. Part of this had to do with his newer conception of counterpoint itself. In 1920—almost a decade before he wrote his major late-style left-hand compositions—he took issue with all the criticisms that had been lodged against him and his music when he wrote:

I have been regarded as a kind of keyboard acrobat, and my playing of the [Chopin studies] as a bit of theatrical legerdemain. This is really unfair, as what I have accomplished is, in fact, a free musical development along modern polyphonic lines. Modern polyphony is not close-range polyphony, like that of

²¹ Daniel M. Grimley, "'Tonality, Clarity Strength': Gesture, Form, and Nordic Identity in Carl Nielsen's Piano Music." In *Music & Letters* Volume 86 Number 2 (May 2005): pp. 202-233 (quotes on: 203-204)

²² For a discussion of Wittgenstein's approach please see: Won-Young Kong, *Paul Wittgenstein's Transcriptions for the Left Hand: Pianistic Techniques and Performance Problems, A Lecture Recital, Together with Three Recitals of Selected Works of R. Schumann, S. Prokofiev, F. Liszt, M. Ravel, and F. Chopin*. Doctoral Thesis, University of North Texas, 1999. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing 9945813: pp. 28-66.

Bach. It is more spread out, more extended. Before Wagner the orchestra was compact, and had no very great range; but Wagner included in his symphonic scoring the highest and lowest registers of pitch. Take the "Prelude" in Lohengrin! Before Wagner no composer dared to set his violins tremulating way up in the soprano reaches without a medial support, nor did he use the deepest basses.

In piano writing and literature we have had the same development. Formerly we had only close polyphony and closed intervals within easy reach of the hand. In Bach's "Well-Tempered Clavichord", which is actually written for the keyboard and is not organistic, the pedal is really not needed to sustain a single note; though one may use it to beautify polyphony. But in my Chopin Studies or in my Symphonic Metamorphoses the pedal actually takes place of a third and sometimes even a fourth hand...²³

Godowsky's initial conception of counterpoint was based not only on historical models but here also on orchestral ones: an enlarging of usable space on the instrument for which he wrote and understood filtered through the pianism of Chopin. That is the key to understanding Godowsky's initial ideas in these works: symphonic as both contrapuntal but also pianistic in the Chopinistic sense of his writing. That he chose Chopin as the pianistic figure to emulate? It seems almost inevitable.

But why? Why not Liszt's pianism? Godowsky must have seen something in the writing of Chopin that he felt he could expand upon. As Godowsky was highly interested in counterpoint and the expansion of music's possibilities through its use and development, the widely spaced pianism of Chopin which features hidden voices may have captured his attention. This type of contrapuntal-figurative interplay could be found in the composer's later more mature style of composition in works such as the

²³ Jeremy Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists' Pianist: A Biography of Leopold Godowsky*. Northumberland: Appian Publications & Recordings, 1989: p. 70.

Fourth Ballade. But these ideas could already be seen in certain earlier works—in particular, the Etudes! In reimagining them Godowsky takes the style of Chopin a step further, modernizing it through this process of development and expansion. The type of writing which may well have inspired his development of ideas—in particular the contrapuntal expansion—can be seen in examples such as the following from his F-Minor Ballade. Note the voices which seem to appear out of nothing more than the figuration which twists and turns around the simple harmonic framework. Even the top note of the left-hand arpeggiation seems to spawn its own counterpoint:



Example 3.10: Chopin: Ballade No. 4 in F Minor, op. 52, mm. 175-176.

For Godowsky, then, Chopin played a key role. He was, after all, the piano composer of the nineteenth century: as Alfred Einstein has remarked, “as no symphonic composer of the 19th century could disregard Beethoven, so no piano composer after 1830 could avoid taking account of Chopin.”²⁴ This was true even for those composers who found the pianism of Liszt to be extremely important in helping to forge their own

²⁴ Alfred Einstein, *Music in the Romantic Era*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1947: p. 218.

styles. Composers such as Reger, whose pianism derives from Liszt, took special interest in Chopin as well. He not only performed his music in his concerts and transcribed a number of his works in virtuoso fashion, but took inspiration from certain of the composer's works in his own: the last composition in his *Träume am Kamin*, op. 143 not only pays homage to Chopin and his pianism, it virtually copies it—almost a D-Major reimagining of Chopin's *Berceuse*, op. 57 rather than an original composition. But Chopin did more than that for Godowsky: If Reger's pianism was mostly derived from Liszt, with some touches of Chopin, Chopin was the key to reimagining Godowsky's pianism.

Like Godowsky's music, Chopin's also rejected the orchestral approach, something which was commented upon even in his own day. Reviews from concerts Chopin gave in the early part of his career already make mention of his pianism being far apart from that of both Liszt and Thalberg.²⁵ But how so? The reviewer for *La Revue musicale* (presumably François-Joseph Fétis) found that Chopin's style revitalized the pianism of his day through the "vitality in his melody," the "fantasy in his passage-work," and through "his natural inclinations" which followed "no models whatsoever." His "brilliance and clarity" was exceptional and marked a new type of both pianism and piano music: "whereas Beethoven wrote 'music for the piano,' Chopin's music was 'for pianists.'" And he was not the only one who felt this way. Alfred James Hipkins, a fellow traveler with Chopin on his concert tours in the 1840s, wrote later in the century of Liszt

²⁵ Sandra P. Rosenblum, "Chopin Among the Pianists in Paris." In *Chopin and His World*, ed. Jonathan D. Bellman and Halina Goldberg. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017: p. 277.

as a “pyrotechnic virtuoso” par excellence, Chopin a poet. Hipkins and many later critics placed Liszt and Chopin on opposite sides of the pianistic spectrum, feeling that “one spoke his most personal thoughts to the piano, the other made the piano into an orchestra.” This difference in approach was amplified by certain critics who also found Chopin’s music and his style of performance more of the salon than of the concert hall.²⁶

What may seem an overstatement by Einstein is one which seemed to cement itself ever further into the twentieth century, perhaps even more than in the later nineteenth, by not just numerous composers, but also with performers and the general public: Chopin, for them even more so than Liszt, defined the piano.²⁷ And for two composer-pianists born in the nineteenth century, both who lived into the twentieth—

²⁶ All of the quotations following footnote 86 above can be found here: Ibid., pp. 278-282.

²⁷ Even Glenn Gould considered Chopin (a composer he claimed to detest) one of “the naturals” of the keyboard: his list included not only Chopin, but Scriabin, Scarlatti, and, oddly for many, William Byrd. See: Glenn Gould, “William Byrd and Orlando Gibbons.” In *The Glenn Gould Reader*, ed. Tim Page. Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1984: p. 13.

In his article on Chopin in Gramophone Jeremy Nicholas also stated that “More than any other, Chopin is responsible for the development of modern piano technique and style. His influence on succeeding generations of writers of piano music was profound and inescapable. He dreamt up a whole range of new colours, harmonies and means of expression in which he exploited every facet of the new developments in piano construction. The larger keyboard (seven octaves) and improved mechanism opened up new possibilities of musical expression. He possessed an altogether richer and deeper poetic insight than the myriad pianist-composers who flourished during his lifetime.” See:

Jeremy Nicholas, et al. “Frédéric Chopin – a bicentenary focus.” In *Gramophone* (September 18 2018). Online. <https://www.gramophone.co.uk/features/focus/fr%C3%A9d%C3%A9ric-chopin-%E2%80%93-a-bicentenary-focus>

This was already felt in Chopin’s own day. The critic Léon Escudier wrote after a review of one of Chopin’s concerts that “Chopin is the creator of a school of pianism and of a school of composition [...] moreover, nothing can be placed beside his works, which are full of originality, distinction, and grace. Chopin is a pianist apart, who cannot be compared with anyone.” See

Alan Walker, *Fryderyk Chopin: A Life and Times*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018: p. 443.

In addition, the website Ranker.com may offer another perspective as well (and in 2019). Of their internet survey of “The Best Piano Composers Ever, Ranked” Chopin comes out on top with 1434 votes for, 276 against. The next in line is Beethoven with 908 upvotes and 209 downvotes. See:

<https://www.ranker.com/list/best-piano-composers/ranker-music> (Accessed October 2019)

Godowsky and Schmidt²⁸—he was the composer who most naturally represented their instrument and a newer means of realizing their own compositional ideals.

What makes him an even greater key figure for Godowsky may have also been that Chopin himself participated in his own way in the Romantic Bach revival—one which took place almost a century before the German Modernists rediscovered him.²⁹ Though the reaffirmation of Bach in the 1820s and 1830s has often been overstated—it introduced his music to a new public, perhaps to a far lesser degree to many composers and professional musicians who already knew his music—Chopin’s assimilation of his techniques into his own thinking helped him to formulate his late style through the assimilation of polyphony into a homophonic (here arpeggiated) figuration.

In his article *Chopin, Past and Present*, Jim Samson points out this very aspect of Chopin’s music from his last period. He finds that Chopin’s music was always influenced by aspects of Bach’s music—in particular the counterpoint—in works as early as his First Piano Sonata, op. 4, calling these smaller sections of overt counterpoint within the larger structure “intermittent but blatant” in their appearances. His clearest example comes in the first movement of the sonata which has been deemed by some as “close to

²⁸ See Franz Schmidt’s essay “Pianist or Musician?” for his opinions on Chopin in: Alfred Jirasek, *Erinnerungen an Franz Schmidt*. Graz: Leykam-Verlag, 1975: pp. 16-21.

²⁹ For further explanation of how Chopin thought of Bach please see: Józef Sikorski, trans. John Comber, introduced and Annotated by Halina Goldberg. “Recollection of Chopin’: The Earliest Essay on Chopin and His Music.” In *Chopin and His World*, ed. Jonathan D. Bellman and Halina Goldberg. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017: pp. 73-75.

a Bach two-part invention, while several movements begin (one might say self-consciously) with explicit imitative points reminiscent of Baroque practice.”³⁰

But passages in his later music reveal the assimilation further. Here the admixture of Bachian counterpoint and figuration merge with his inherited and decidedly more nineteenth-century pianistic approach, creating the style which we now most associate with him: a truly original, novel, yet historically aware approach to both pianism and composition. It is also this type of pianism which most influenced both Godowsky and perhaps Schmidt. Samson sees this outcome as a manifestation of Chopin’s maturity and his early travels—his “great transition” as he labels it—occurring after his final year in Warsaw, to his eight-month stay in Vienna, and his final sojourn to Paris, in which

He transformed the basic elements of post-Classical pianism into a new, daringly original idio-style, albeit one still recognizably aligned to the stylistic framework of public virtuosity and popular salon music. He did this by reformulating, in terms peculiarly suited to the piano, the paradigmatic figuration and counterpoint of Bach. Through novel interactions with harmony and phrase structure, through concealed linear-contrapuntal working emerging from the figurative pattern, and through a remarkable intricacy and detail in the construction of small components in the texture, all indebted to Bach, Chopin’s figuration was invested with an unprecedented density of information.³¹

For Samson this had a transformative effect not just on Chopin’s own personal style, but also on the meaning that one found in, and the attitude that one took towards, his music: by increasing the contrapuntal component of his music—or infusing the

³⁰ Jim Samson, “Chopin, Past and Present.” In *Early Music* Volume 29 Number 3 (August 2001): pp. 381-387 (quote on p. 386).

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

figurations with it—Chopin also played down other aspects, ones which in the early to mid -nineteenth century were fast becoming hallmarks of the *Zeitgeist*:

The effect was to divest figuration of the rhetoric and bravura of the concert hall and to give it instead a quite new structural status, at time equaling that of harmony and theme (I leave aside the decorative figures that contributed to Chopin's ornamental melody, though here too Bach is a presence). In the process the figures of post-Classical virtuosity were transmuted from a performance-oriented surplus to a work-oriented essence in what amounted to a conquest of virtuosity by the musical work.³²

Chopin's gift for transforming musical figures—from cheap and flimsy to musically significant—came at an opportune time. If “Chopin's contribution here was to recover or reinstate an essentially 18th-century equilibrium between virtuosity and work character, two qualities that had developed in tandem during that century but came to be viewed as oppositional in the early 19th century,”³³ then Samson is also correct to note that this transformation occurred due to Chopin's unwillingness to let both the Baroque aspects or the Classical ones eclipse his other more Romantic tendencies: Chopin was about “figurative consistency” (perhaps especially in his etudes, less so in works such as the F-Minor Ballade, in which the figures change often every page or two) while Liszt was about “explod[ing] the figures of his earlier exercises [Samson refers to his early *Etude en 12 exercises*] into performance-oriented events, whose materials are unamenable either to figurative recycling or to thematic working.”³⁴ Liszt's music could

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 387.

be “brilliant” in the tradition of his forebearers Czerny, Pixis, Thalberg, even Weber and Hummel; Chopin’s far less so as he matured.³⁵

A comparison of Godowsky’s reimagining of one of Chopin’s etudes may prove useful in our understanding of Chopin’s impact at this time in the latter composer’s development, particularly as Godowsky proceeds through multiple arrangements of a single etude. If Godowsky’s compositional experiments always took their inspiration from the original source, his repeated reworkings often took inspiration not just from these sources, but from his own previous reworkings of the material—as, for example, in the aforementioned Weber transcription. One of the most peculiar cases comes in his three different arrangements of Chopin’s Etude in A-flat Major, Op. 25 No. 1, often called the “Aeolian Harp” or “Harp Study” (in reference to the Chopin original) because of its smaller arpeggiated typeface with the melody appearing atop this ethereal accompaniment, reminiscent of the wind-harp of early nineteenth-century notoriety. Chopin’s etude is already noteworthy for his creating a secret type of polyphony which moves throughout its simple figural arpeggiations:

³⁵ This is, of course, not always true. In works such as the Berceuse, op. 57, the types of figurations one sees can also be linked to the “brilliant” style of Chopin’s youth. Bach’s presence (or the Baroque influence) in this work can be seen in other ways: the use of a ground-bass style of variations, similar to a passacaglia, along with the continuously evolving figurative patterns that become more elaborate as the variations proceed.

Example 3.11: Chopin: Etude in A-flat Major, op. 25 No. 1 “Aeolian Harp”, mm. 15-16.
 (The voice which Chopin brings out in the figuration has been shown above through the note-heads marked by an “x” for easier reading).

In Godowsky’s version for the left hand alone he begins almost exactly as does Chopin: but whereas Chopin can divide the accompaniment between the two hands, the melody in the soprano at the opening, Godowsky’s version must accomplish this all in one hand. The solution? Transpose the music down an octave to give a richer sonority to the melody, while also allowing a more relaxed position for the pianist using only his left hand. Compare the Chopin original with Godowsky’s left-hand version:

Allegro sostenuto

p

6 6 6 6

6 6 6 6

2

6 6 6 6

6 6 6 6

Example 3.12: Chopin: Etude in A-flat Major, op. 25 No. 1 “Aeolian Harp”, mm. 1-2

Allegro sostenuto ♩ = 84-100

cantabile

dolce e mormorando

p

una corda

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

2

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

Example 3.13: Chopin-Godowsky: Etude in A-flat Major, op. 25 No. 1 “Aeolian Harp” (Version 1), mm. 1-2

If Godowsky could not re-contrapuntalize this version of the etude, adding embellishments to an already spread-out work, he still held his ideals high: the melody is placed in the most sonorous range of the keyboard, and the etude is adapted for the left hand by placing the melodic figuration in the strongest fingers while the weaker ones handle the accompaniment below.

The first version proved pivotal to Godowsky's second arrangement of the etude, for two hands: the first version laid the groundwork for the second, allowing him further leeway with his "contrapuntalization" of the material. Much as Godowsky supplied additional piano parts to his solo version of the Weber transcription, he added parts (here in the right hand) to his already "complete" version of the left-hand study above, creating a canon between the soprano and tenor parts in the process. Again, it was the process of amplification through counterpoint.

Allegro sostenuto ♩ = 92-100
molto espressivo
p dolce, mormorando e legalissimo
una corda

Example 3.14: Chopin-Godowsky: Etude in A-flat Major, op. 25 No. 1 “Aeolian Harp” (Version 2), mm. 1-2.

Godowsky used his own original left-hand transcription as—in his own words—a “cantus firmus” on which his music could be added to enhance and enrich the music which was used as a basis for his own compositions.³⁶ Godowsky’s idea of a work serving as the basis for another composition calls to mind the Renaissance composers who used the music of their predecessors to build and expand their own works—at that time, especially masses and motets. As a preface to the third version of his paraphrase on Chopin’s Etude, op. 25 No. 1, he elaborates on this very idea. This preface is notable as one of the few in which Godowsky truly explains both his musical and technical ideas in detail:

³⁶ For a more in-depth discussion of Godowsky’s methods used in his etudes based on Chopin’s op. 25/1, see:

Younggun Kim, *Leopold Godowsky’s Fifty-Three Studies on Chopin’s Études*. DMA Thesis, University of Toronto, 2017. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing 10267285: pp. 47-60.

A most sensitive and sympathetic touch, extreme delicacy and refinement, independent and even fingers, a perfect legato, a poetic soul—all these requisites are indispensable to a proper rendering of this study.

The Chopin etude is represented in an inverted form in the left hand only. The right hand has a free counterpoint consisting of an expressive melody with undulating arabesques.

The “Cantus firmus” (in this case the whole Chopin etude) must be played in a distinct and expressive way, but care should be taken to not overshadow the melody of the right hand. The figurations in the left hand and the arabesques in the right should have an ethereal character.³⁷

Note the wording: “the whole Chopin Etude” meaning for Godowsky the left-hand aspect of his work now recomposed for two hands, revealing Godowsky’s sense of completeness of material already being present in his first version. It is in this third etude for two hands, though, that Chopin’s infusion of counterpoint can most be felt in its expansion of compositional ideas:

³⁷ Leopold Godowsky, *Studies on Chopin Etudes*: Volume 3: Nos. 21-30. Berlin: Vormalis Schlesinger, (1903-1914): p. 23.

Allegro sostenuto ♩ = 80-92
dolcissimo e mormorando
p
pp
una corda
 2

Example 3.15: Chopin-Godowsky: Etude in A-flat Major, op. 25 No. 1 “Aeolian Harp” (Version 3), mm. 1-2.

Of all the left hand-etudes that Godowsky came to recompose in a contrapuntal manner—weaving a number of voices around Chopin’s basic melodic units—it should come as no surprise that those written nearer the completion of his traversal of the etudes (in his years in Vienna from 1909 to 1914) showed him at his most sophisticated. And it should also be no surprise that this occurred in etudes in which the basic metrical pulse was also the slowest, allowing Godowsky to weave his most complex voicing in the Chopin etudes. It was here that Godowsky could truly exhibit his pianistic understanding of Wagnerian-orchestral polyphony and how it can be achieved naturally on the instrument through the pianism of Chopin.

The Bachian counterpoint that Godowsky saw in Chopin’s alteration of his own style was key. If Chopin’s opinion of counterpoint was that it was (according to

Delacroix) “pure logic in music,”³⁸ his chief complaint about how it was used, learned and understood creates an even better understanding of his musical tendencies: why, he pondered, did musical education urge one “to learn the harmonies before coming to the counterpoint”? For Chopin, was the counterpoint already within the harmonies or did he consider his music contrapuntal first, only later adding the harmonic filigree around it to fill out the horizontal space? If, as Charles Rosen suggests, “in the finest Baroque work the sequence is generally clothed and covered by thematic material,” a quality he finds lacking in “even the greatest works of Haydn and Mozart,” whose filling in of horizontal space is “displayed nakedly,” appearing even to be “prefabricated in large pieces,” did Chopin solve the problem of thematically infusing and motivically saturating the figuration through a contrapuntalization of filigree or through a filling in of the contrapuntal void through the addition of harmonic arpeggiations?

In this respect, Chopin was perhaps the very first composer to fully merge the defining aspects of both the Baroque (as Rosen calls it “the vertical space”) with the “long phrases of conventional passagework”³⁹ of the Classical composers in defining his more widespread Romantic pianistic style, one he found in the composers of his own generation in works by Hummel, Weber, or Kalkbrenner. Perhaps this is what Godowsky latched onto in his own experiments. Perhaps, but perhaps not. Godowsky’s contrapuntal additions seemed to latch most onto the thinking of Chopin as a Romantic

³⁸ Jim Samson, “Chopin, Past and Present.” In *Early Music* Volume 29 Number 3 (August 2001): p. 387.

³⁹ Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (Expanded Edition). New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997: p. 71.

composer whose music was contrapuntally infused, even if that may not have been how Chopin himself felt.

Like Godowsky (and Schmidt), however, Chopin did not simply imply Bach's spirit through contrapuntal episodes (as he may have in his earlier works); rather he assimilated it into his own style (as has been shown above) through translation:

Rather than simply restating Bach's equal-voiced counterpoint, so ideally suited to 18th-century keyboard instruments, Chopin translated it into a differentiated counterpoint moulded to the idiomatic nature of the piano, where voices can emerge and recede from the texture, where there can be a clear hierarchy of voices created by dynamic shading and layering, and where the harmonic resonance of the instrument can even permit the addition or subtraction of voices while preserving a perfect illusion of contrapuntal consistency. In this free, idiomatic counterpoint (to which the more overt contrapuntalism of the 1840s merely adds a further layer) the performer is often left with several options as to where a voice first appears, or at least where it should properly emerge into the foreground of the texture.⁴⁰

If this mature pianism was the kind which most inspired Godowsky, it is through the lens of late Chopin that we mostly readily see this in these earlier works. Bach's influence, according to Samson's description, could also be related back to the solo string works in his discussion of a music which creates "a perfect illusion of contrapuntal consistency" in its use of a "free" and "idiomatic counterpoint. For Bach this was string based; for Chopin pianistic.

The "arabesques" to which he referred in the previous example can be shown to have considerably bloomed in the next one.⁴¹ So transformed is Chopin's original

⁴⁰ Jim Samson, "Chopin, Past and Present." In *Early Music* Volume 29 Number 3 (August 2001): p. 387.

⁴¹ See the example that pertains to footnote 93.

conception through Godowsky's reimagining of the contrapuntal strands (or arabesques) that the work can almost be considered an original composition rather than an exercise in transcription as in previous left-hand Chopin etude examples. If not a completely original composition, it falls within the realm of variation or fantasy on the work of another composer; and Godowsky's use of the term arabesque perfectly suits the definition now associated with that term, embracing all of the aspects of the New Grove definition at the same time. Note the composers whom the author mentions in each example:

In music the term has been implied in, if not applied to, three musical devices:

- (1) the contrapuntal decoration of a basic theme, e.g. the obbligato to the chorus 'Jesus bleibet meine Freude' in Bach's Cantata no.147, *Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben*;
- (2) an elaboration by *gruppetti*, scale figures and so on, of the theme itself which was to lead to the variation techniques of the 19th century – an excellent example is Schubert's Andante in A D604;
- (3) a rapidly changing series of harmonies that decorate, without furthering, a point in the progress of a composition, such as is found in, for example, the nocturnes of Field and Chopin.⁴²

If we compare Chopin's music with Godowsky's, we will see just how transformed the music became in the latter composer's hands, embracing especially the first and third

⁴² Maurice Brown, revised by Kenneth L. Hamilton, "Arabesque (i) (Ger. Arabeske)." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press (accessed October 2019)
<https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000001137?rskey=nrijdk5&result=2>

definitions of the term in practice and perhaps even the second in regards how the entire work can be seen.

If the pianist Arthur Friedheim described this etude as “a study in touch,” he was also careful in noting that the work is more difficult than one first imagines, in no small part due to the accompanimental figures, which “though [...] hardly polyphony, in the proper sense, nevertheless [...] demands special consideration, even where” all the parts “meet in chord-like form.”⁴³

Example 3.16: Chopin: Etude in E-Flat Minor, op. 10 No. 6, mm. 21-26.

Godowsky infuses this music contrapuntally through a repurposing of accompanimental material, made more significant through placement and through

⁴³ Arthur Friedheim, “To Étude No. 6.” In *Chopin Etudes for the Piano*, ed. Arthur Friedheim. New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1916: p. 4.

highlighting of material by note size. The bass notes below are often the ones in octaves performed by the left-hand in the Chopin (above), and the voices that seem to appear out of nowhere in Godowsky's version. These can be found throughout the more-homophonic setting of Chopin's work above—as for example the E–D, D–C combinations found in the penultimate measure of both examples: in the Chopin, the fourth and fifth sixteenth notes of each beat, in the Godowsky, the ones appearing right near the third grouping of four thirty-second notes of each half measure. Also worthy of note is how Godowsky expands upon the idea in filling out the other gaps, often chromatically shifting the pattern, as in the third measure's tenor C-sharp–C-natural–B, which in the Chopin can only be found in the form of C-sharp–B. Godowsky heightens the Chopin, building upon it, by using the “inner aspects” of its accompaniment. The below example is taken from the printed Godowsky score, allowing one to see it as the pianist sitting in front of the instrument would:



Example 3.17: Chopin-Godowsky: Etude in E-Flat Minor, op. 10 No. 6, mm. 21-26.

A work such as the above proves to be the culmination of Godowsky's left-hand techniques in repositioning music for two hands for a single hand. Here he had finally come to embrace the left hand as a vehicle in its own right: this music is not a matter of transcription of music written for two hands, it is a renewal, a realization of its potential for an entirely different medium. By taking the ideas espoused in Chopin's examples from the Fourth Ballade and the *Aeolian Harp* Etude and reconfiguring them here in an expanded format, he endows accompanimental material with even further thematic purpose. He does this not simply by placing the original melody within a new contrapuntal strand, for the entire filigree can truly be considered its own contrapuntal

strand. Godowsky thus finally realized a symphonic approach to the left hand: the figurative counterpoint (in thirty-second notes) is a line itself, but it is also made up of any number of voices that appear within it only to disappear seconds later.

After Godowsky left Vienna in 1914, and after the completion of his Chopin series, he took a break from composition for the left-hand piano until more than a decade later when he was commissioned by Paul Wittgenstein to write a work of his choosing. His *Symphonic Metamorphosis* using Strauss themes was eventually rejected by the pianist—whether for musical or technical reasons is impossible to say, though the pianist did play the work at least once; but Wittgenstein did do one thing for Godowsky: he helped to rekindle his interest in the possibilities of the left hand. This, along with Godowsky's recent transcriptions of some of Bach's works for solo violin and solo cello (large constructions for two-hand piano akin to Busoni's reimagining of Bach's Chaconne) seemed to push him in a new direction, one hinted at in the late Chopin arrangements. This will be explored in the following section.

**...becomes Godowsky and Bach
...or pianistic assimilation**

Godowsky is one of few composers whose left-hand works span an extended period of time, where a style of composition can be understood to have begun and then developed away from an initial impulse. Though Godowsky's basic musical language did not alter as radically as that of other composers of the age throughout his career—one

thinks immediately of Arnold Schoenberg or Igor Stravinsky—Godowsky’s approach to the left-hand piano did change as his emphasis shifted away from recreations, transcriptions, and paraphrases based on the works of other composers to original compositions. When this shift away from using the music of other composers occurred, so too did Godowsky’s sources of inspiration: if Chopin proved to be the obvious stimulus for his reworking of that composer’s own etudes, Bach became a new source of inspiration for the composer when he began to compose his own original music. This may be seen not only in works where one expects this type of emphasis—the *Prelude and Fugue on BACH* for the LH or the *Suite*—but also in certain (though not all) of his later works such as the *Etude macabre*, a genre little associated with Bach in any way. This is not to say that his earlier approach was abandoned, but rather that Godowsky came to see new possibilities in composing for the left-hand pianist.

His earlier music had already been labelled as Bachian for its emphasis on added counterpoint—sometimes to the dismay of listeners due to its extreme chromaticism. Even the *Symphonic Metamorphoses on themes of Johann Strauss, Jr.* had been described as “Johann Strauss waltzing with Johann Bach,” a type of “terpsichorean counterpoint” on display.⁴⁴ What especially irked Godowsky was not the criticism that questioned his contrapuntal associations but rather the idea that his music was filled with cheap parlor tricks, intended only to wow his audiences. The Bachian aspect of these earlier statements was aimed at describing not an assimilative technique (as in his

⁴⁴ Jeremy Nicolas, *Godowsky: The Pianists’ Pianist: A Biography of Leopold Godowsky*. Wark, Hexham: Appian Publications & Recordings, 1989: p. 69.

later left-hand works which will be shown) but rather his use of counterpoint to enhance the music—something not unique to Bach, but which seemed to channel his very essence when later composers used it.

If Godowsky had simply attempted to recreate what he heard in Bach (or in the previous models, Chopin) then his compositions would truly be, as Dahlhaus described nineteenth-century motets written in the Palestrina style, “‘empty husks’ of tradition,” works that suffered from a naivete based on “the belief in the timeless, unchanging substance and validity of an old style.”⁴⁵ In his own later works—closer to Frisch’s description of historicist modernism than to Dahlhaus’s retrospective historicism—he took ideas from the past and transformed them through a re-understanding of musical limitations and pianistic structuring. This can be witnessed especially in his last compositions for the left-hand piano, including those finished before his debilitating stroke: works in which I define Godowsky’s approach as pianistic assimilation, a type of musical restructuring in which an “absorption of new ideas into existing knowledge”⁴⁶ occurs. Godowsky takes the style adopted by Bach in his solo string works and reconfigures it pianistically. This is not what Brahms did in his transcription of the Bach *Chaconne* discussed previously but something far more musically embracing. This does not imagine the piano as a violin but takes in the ideas espoused by the violin music and makes them pianistic.

⁴⁵ Walter Frisch, *German Modernism: Music and the Arts*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005: pp. 149-150.

⁴⁶ <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/assimilation>

Godowsky: The Original Conceptions

Godowsky's experiments with the left hand and its possibilities in his earliest years centered around the Chopin etudes. But this did not continue past 1914—his last year in Vienna—when he completed his traversal through the complete etudes. Though his interest in the left-hand piano as a solo instrument may have subsided in the years after his departure from Europe, in his later years he came back to the instrument with renewed interest, producing a number of important works for the left hand alone.

The first such work to follow his fourteen-year left-hand solo hiatus was the aforementioned composition written for Paul Wittgenstein, one which the pianist never performed outside of a few domestic settings. After Wittgenstein's three-year stipulations of ownership of the work had expired, when no one but he could perform it, Godowsky eventually rededicated the piece to the super-virtuoso Simon Barere, whose left-hand technique was legendary. If Godowsky was disappointed with Wittgenstein's refusal to perform the work, we will never know, although in a letter to his wife, written at the Hotel Imperial in Vienna, he already felt that he had written "good music...very likely too good for Wittgenstein."⁴⁷

This work seemed to reignite Godowsky's passion for the left-handed repertoire once again, and it would spur him on in different ways. In the years to follow, he would

⁴⁷ Jeremy Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists' Pianist: A Biography of Leopold Godowsky*. Northumberland: Appian Publications & Recordings, 1989: p. 135.

write a series of original works, fully immersing himself in original compositions. In just two years he produced 23 individual movements for the left hand alone, doubling his output for the left-hand medium:

1928⁴⁸ <i>Symphonic Metamorphosis (The Gypsy Baron)</i> <i>Capriccio (Patetico)</i> <i>Intermezzo (Malinconico)</i>
1929 <i>Impromptu</i> <i>Meditation</i> <i>Elegy</i> <i>Etude macabre</i> <i>6 Waltz-Poems</i> <i>Prelude and Fugue on BACH</i> <i>Suite rococo (comprised of an Allemande, a Courante, a Gavotte, a Sarabande, a Bourrée, a Sicilienne, a Menuet, and a Gigue)</i>

Table 3.2: Godowsky Original Works for Left Hand Alone

He clarified his ideas further on the left hand’s capabilities—and his own feelings on the left hand as its own instrument—in a statement around this time. His music would still be fashioned out of his love of counterpoint and his chromatic harmony, but in comparison to his initial ideas and explanations, his opinions of the left hand as an instrument seemed to develop as well.

When he first started to publish his Chopin paraphrases, Godowsky took special care to explain his ideas on the works and his ideas on taking the Chopin etudes as his source material—according to him "the highest attainment in the realm of beautiful

⁴⁸ These years are the ones in which the works were composed, not necessarily published.

pianoforte music combined with indispensable mechanical and technical usefulness.”⁴⁹

He drew special attention to his own accomplishment in the left-hand studies, which he considered some of his most important contributions to the piano literature:

In writing the twenty-two studies for the left hand alone, the author wishes to oppose the generally prevailing idea, that the left hand is less responsive to development than the right. In its application to piano playing the left hand has many advantages over the right hand and it would suffice to enumerate but a few of these to convince the student that it is a fallacy to deem the left hand less adaptable to training than the right hand.

The left hand is favored by nature in having the stronger part of the hand for the upper voice of all double notes and chords and also by generally having the strongest fingers for the strongest parts of a melody. In addition to what is stated above, the left hand, commanding as it does the lower half of the keyboard, has the incontestable advantage of enabling the player to produce with less effort and more elasticity a fuller and mellower tone, superior in quantity and quality to that of the right hand. Another reason why the left hand is more susceptible to training than the right hand is, that it is more elastic owing to its being much less employed in daily use in general than the right hand.

A good proof of its greater adaptability is the fact, that there have been a number of compositions written for the left hand alone, while to the author’s knowledge, with one exception, none have been written for the right hand alone.⁵⁰

Godowsky continued by explaining his desire to move beyond some of the earlier examples written for the left hand alone in the nineteenth century—works which for him were technically challenging but musically vapid, arguing that “the limited number of compositions which have been written for the left hand alone show a desire on the

⁴⁹ Leopold Godowsky, “Personal Remarks” in *Studies on Chopin Etudes*: Volume 3: Nos. 21-30. Berlin: Vormalis Schlesinger, (1903-1914): p. IV.

⁵⁰ Leopold Godowsky, “Special Remarks on the Studies for Left Hand Alone” in *Studies on Chopin Etudes*: Volume 1: Nos. 1-12a. Berlin: Vormalis Schlesinger, (1903-1914): p. VII.

part of their composers to mostly develop the left hand in the direction of mere virtuosity.” His goals were twofold: to develop both the players abilities in the left hand and to bring forth new musical development—to create a new basis for future composers and new possibilities in their compositions:

Widely spaced arpeggios, weaving a net of sound about some simple melody, were in many cases the only means used to attain a superficial effect, while in this particular set of left hand studies it has been the author’s intention to assign to the left hand alone a task commensurate with the demands made by modern evolution in the means of musical expression.

The pianoforte, being apart from its strongly individual character in a sense of a miniature orchestra, should in this author’s opinion benefit from the important strides which modern composition and instrumentation have made in the direction of polyphony, harmony, tone colouring and the use of a vastly extended range in modern counterpoint.

In this way, Godowsky was a nineteenth-century artist in relation to his opinion of the piano being a virtual orchestra. But whereas the orchestral music of Beethoven may have inspired composers of the following generation, the orchestra Godowsky imagined was different: it was a body in which the abilities of the orchestra moved outward not only in mere soundwaves, but one which expanded outwards in contrapuntal intricacies. Godowsky was closer to a Straussian than a Mahlerian in his Chopin studies.

His last statement on the development of the left hand is perhaps his most interesting, for it is here that one can feel the real impetus behind his will in promoting the single hand’s development:

If it is possible to assign to the left hand alone the work done usually by both hands simultaneously, what vistas are opened to future composers were this attainment to be extended to both hands!⁵¹

Thus, for Godowsky the idea developing the left hand was only half the battle: the other half would have to be waged with the right hand—though here in an entirely different way, for it had its own unique characteristics, as he explained earlier. Or did it? Perhaps his own paraphrases on the Chopin Etudes, in which the two hands must act as four hands, represented the development of piano music in the works of future composers. The question may never be definitively answered, but one thing can be stated for sure: Godowsky never did compose a work for right hand alone. Did he not feel up to the challenge or did he view it so differently from the left that the problem would need to be reconsidered in a completely new and different way?

If Godowsky ever felt his music as orchestrally inspired—again: symphonic in his earlier statements, not orchestral, as was Liszt's music—he would come to revise his opinion on the left hand in subsequent years. In the years after 1928, when he first composed the work for Wittgenstein, Godowsky came to reconsider his earlier opinions. He began to feel that the left hand was its own vehicle for musical expression in an even more refined way than in his Chopin studies—not as tool that attempted to do what the normal pianist did with two hands (this he already rejected in those earlier works) but as one which could develop in different ways dependent on the sources of inspiration it took.

⁵¹ Leopold Godowsky, "Special Remarks on the Studies for Left Hand Alone" in *Studies on Chopin Etudes*: Volume 3: Nos. 21-30. Berlin: Vormal's Schlesinger, (1903-1914): p. VII.

In his later statement, and as can be witnessed in some of his later compositions, Godowsky found that the left hand's uniqueness allowed him to create a unique type of music. The left hand could act as its very own instrument capable of performing all alone—without judgement or comparison to a two-handed repertoire. In a letter from June 1928 to Maurice Aronson, his longtime assistant, he wrote that he had

developed an uncanny virtuosity in writing for the one hand. You will be surprised! Besides—all the left-hand pieces are really inspired, not manufactured! I intend to write a dozen of them in all. Half of them will be short waltzes of my own; the other will be two Waltz-Paraphrases, the [previously mentioned] Capriccio, a Ballad, a song without words and a study. Quite an undertaking! The difficulty of the problem attracts me. They are all polyphonic, contrapuntal, without jumps, without the feeling of compromise and emptiness; in short—one does not miss the right hand and hears at the same time music, not tricks!⁵²

Although this proposal may have been slightly altered from his original plan, he did expand upon his left-hand efforts further than even he had originally imagined. And his inclusion of two aspects discussed above is also noteworthy in understanding his later left-handed approach: the use of counterpoint—a given in his music! —but also a music “without jumps.” This is what distinguished his approach (as with Schmidt's) to his left-hand music of the 1920s and 1930s which differed so greatly from most music of the nineteenth century and even some of his own earlier compositions: if Godowsky's music was unique (as he saw it), it was in the way that he distanced himself from the

⁵² Jeremy Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists' Pianist: A Biography of Leopold Godowsky*. Northumberland: Appian Publications & Recordings, 1989: p. 135.

typical approach of virtually every composer before him who wrote in these restricted solo-hand genres.

If Chopin most influenced Godowsky's pianistic thinking in many of his earlier works, Bach was the composer from whom Godowsky later took inspiration, perhaps especially in compositions that took their motivation from Baroque models. And from both composers Godowsky seemed to be most inspired by their individual use of counterpoint. In one of his earlier statements he talked about "modern polyphony" on the piano, a type which dealt with an expansion outward on the instrument (as can be seen in his Chopin Etude based on op. 10 no. 6 above). For Godowsky

modern polyphony is not close-range polyphony, like that of Bach. It is more spread out, more extended. Before Wagner the orchestra was compact, and had no very great range; but Wagner included in his symphonic scoring the highest and lowest registers of pitch

and that

in my Chopin Studies or in my Symphonic Metamorphoses the pedal actually takes place of a third and sometimes even a fourth hand...⁵³

This was not the case with his later Bach-inspired works. Here, rather than having the pedal act as a "third or fourth hand," it was used far more for reasons of coloration and harmonic blurring than for any need to hold voices. If Bach inspired his last compositions, it was not only through the impact of counterpoint and the layout of the work, but through the type of counterpoint which was used: one far closer knit than in his Chopin works. Here Godowsky had reconsidered his own definition of "modern

⁵³ Ibid., p. 70.

counterpoint” to include a far more slim-lined and string-like polyphony, which was now embraced by the composer as being pianistic in its own way. His modernism can partly be defined by how he handled this non-pianistic aspect and transformed it into something quite pianistic.

In his *Etude macabre*, his barer style is noteworthy for its different look—the figurations are less inspired by Chopin and perhaps a bit more by Czerny in their more metrically driven straight sixteenth-note approach, one which forgoes the freer “arabesques” of the previous examples. Yet here, too, the idea of hidden voices which permeate the surface is noticeable. If the work has jumps in it, they are felt not as a single hand attempting to be a two-handed vehicle, but rather as a contrapuntally-infused one, one which feeds off not only the accented off-beats in voicing, but also in rhythm and more importantly meter at the given *Presto* tempo. If the chromaticisms of Godowsky’s harmonic style already bring him in line with the numerous composers of his own generation, then the rhythmic and metrical intricacies of this piece propel him well into the twentieth century. This is closer in look and sound to Prokofiev than to Chopin:

Example 3.18: Godowsky: *Etude macabre* in D Minor, mm. 6-11

Godowsky's symphonic thought does not seem to be at the forefront of this piece: the counterpoint is drawn seamlessly out of the closer-knit figurations. Rather than the wider-spaced filigree and hidden voices that typify many of his earlier Chopin-inspired works, here the subtlety of the voicing occurs because of the numerous octaves which lend a natural stress to certain notes. The figuration here—at least at the beginning of the above phrase—can also be related to Bach: not only is the repetitive rhythm of the etude characteristic of numerous preludes found in the *Well-Tempered Clavier* (such as the Prelude in D Minor in the WTC Book I), but the staggered imitative entries which seem to come into the spotlight before disappearing once again seem also to relate to that composer's works for solo strings. Just compare the above to a moment in the *Prelude* to the D-Minor Cello Suite found below:



Example 3.19: Bach Cello Suite in D Minor: I. *Prelude*, mm 11-18

If Godowsky's symphonic thought stemmed from the idea of expansion of material through counterpoint and motivic interplay, then one could imagine a solo left-hand version of the Bach movement which would be closer in look to my example below. Here the hidden voices are brought out through the placement of the octaves (on certain notes of which the rhythm of the Godowsky etude have been superimposed) along with a freer eighth-note accompaniment which I composed—similar to the one found in the Godowsky—making it even closer in look to Godowsky's etude above, just far less pianistic as the position changes are awkwardly drawn, at times seeming almost unnaturally conceived (they were!).



Example 3.20: Bach Cello Suite in D Minor: I. *Prelude*: mm 11-18 (with my own superimposed metric pattern found in the Godowsky example above; the eighth note pattern found in the last three measures is my own rendering of a similar pattern found in the Godowsky).

Why the sudden interest in Bach? By 1928-1929, when Godowsky was working on these left-hand pieces, he was also well immersed in Bach's solo-string compositions. Back in 1923 and 1924, while on tour he "very freely transcribed and arranged" six of those works (3 cello suites and the 3 of the solo violin works) in versions akin to Busoni's reimagining of Bach's Chaconne, although here he expanded the number of voices in counterpoint and altered their harmonies in a number of places—in essence modernizing them for concert performances.⁵⁴

These Bach reworkings may have also given Godowsky the idea to write a suite of his own for the left hand in 1929, one of his last major compositions, and together with his Passacaglia on a Schubert theme, one of the works which he considered among

⁵⁴ The six Bach works include: three Solo Violin Sonatas (based on the Violin Sonatas Nos. 1 in G Minor and 2 in A Minor, and the Partita No. 1 in B Minor, BWV 1001, 1003, and 1002 respectively) and three of the Cello Suites (Nos. 2 in D Minor, 3 in C Major, and 5 in C Minor, BWV 1008, 1009, and 1011 respectively). Though equally as challenging as the Busoni, though in different ways, they have never been as popular with pianists. For further information see:

Jeremy Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists' Pianist: A Biography of Leopold Godowsky*. Northumberland: Appian Publications & Recordings, 1989: pp. 180-184, Appendix A: 2. Paraphrases, Transcriptions, Arrangements, Cadenzas, Etc.

his very best and most mature products.⁵⁵ He felt that his left-hand works would be his “most unique contribution to the piano literature, more so than any other that I have made in the past.” His most fervent goal was to create an understanding of them as real music: “I wish to avoid the preconceived notion that because they are for the left hand they are therefore of an acrobatic nature—a virtuoso *tour de force*. The works are as far removed from that as a fugue of Bach or an etude of Chopin.”⁵⁶ But of all his left-handed works, it was the *Suite* in the rococo style in which he felt the most pride:

The entire suite is unusually homogenous (sic), notwithstanding the fact that each of the eight numbers is entirely different in character...There is much detail in [the suite], yet there is a flow, a large line, a convincing polyphony, and a melodic and harmonic inevitableness; while the form is in the rococo style, the contents are fresh and not conventional.⁵⁷

As Godowsky suffered a stroke soon after the completion of this large work in 1930, it holds a special place in the composer’s oeuvre: his great swansong along with his other left-hand pieces seen above. Though he composed a few small works and spent some of his time elaborating on his left-hand pieces for two hands, his career as both a composer and performer ended abruptly around 1930.

His last major work is notable in more ways than one. The *Suite* is composed of eight movements and is written in the basic keys of D Major and D Minor, though as always using Godowsky’s highly chromatic tonal language. Along with the customary

⁵⁵ Jeremy Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists’ Pianist: A Biography of Leopold Godowsky*. Northumberland: Appian Publications & Recordings, 1989: p. 137.

⁵⁶ Rimm, Robert. *The Composer-Pianists: Hamelin and the Eight*. Portland: Amadeus Press, 2002: p. 214.

⁵⁷ Jeremy Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists’ Pianist: A Biography of Leopold Godowsky*. Northumberland: Appian Publications & Recordings, 1989: p. 137.

four movements of a Baroque suite—*Allemande*, *Courante*, *Sarabande*, and *Gigue*—Godowsky adds four others: *Gavotte*, *Bourrée*, *Sicilienne*, and *Menuet*. The extra movements are ones which Bach also used in his keyboard suites—all save one: the *Sicilienne*. This type of dance movement is featured in only one of Bach's violin works⁵⁸—the Sonata for Solo Violin in G Minor, BWV 1001, a work of which Godowsky had also made a concert transcription when on tour in 1923-1924.⁵⁹

How much did Godowsky assimilate the solo string writing of Bach in his left-hand Suite Rococo? A good deal and not always only in matters of texture, but also thematically, if not motivically. Comparing a number of figures between Godowsky's *Sicilienne* (the movement most likely inspired by the Bach violin work) with Bach's will show a number of similarities between the two:

⁵⁸ It was pointed out to me that Bach also wrote a *Siciliano* as the second movement of his Flute Sonata in E-flat Major, BWV 1031. I had forgotten about this piece, even though I had, years before, played a transcription of the work made by Wilhelm Kempff. My sincere thanks go to Prof. Douglas Johnson for making me aware of this fact.

⁵⁹ For an interesting description of Godowsky's Bach violin transcriptions see: Carlo Grante. Liner notes to *Leopold Godowsky: Three Sonatas for Solo Violin*. Carlo Grante. Music and Arts Programs of America CD-1039. CD. 1998.

	Godowsky	Bach
Key	D Minor (1 flat)	B-flat Major (though written with 1 flat in the key signature, as per Baroque custom)
Time Signature	6/8	12/8
Number of Measures	41 (plus pickup) (with repeats 76)	20

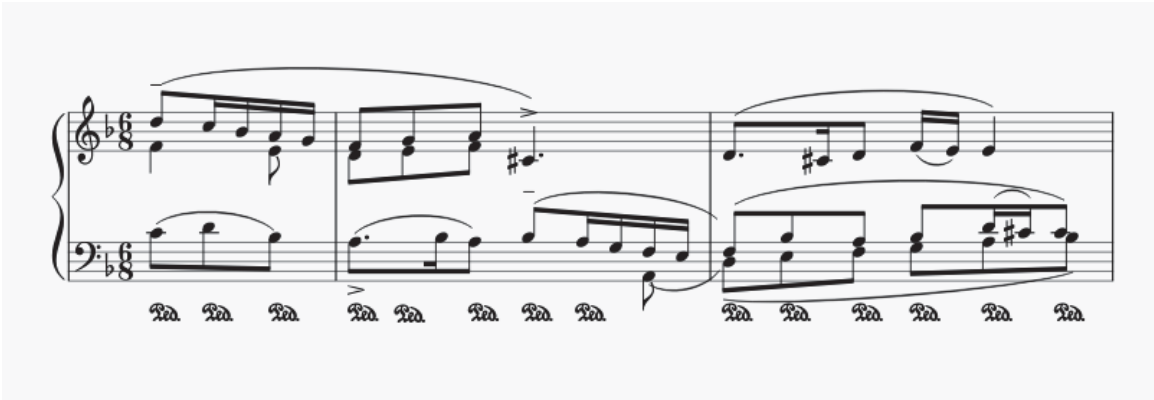
Table 3.3: A comparison of Godowsky’s *Sicilienne* and Bach’s *Sicilianna* movements.

Note the similarities in:

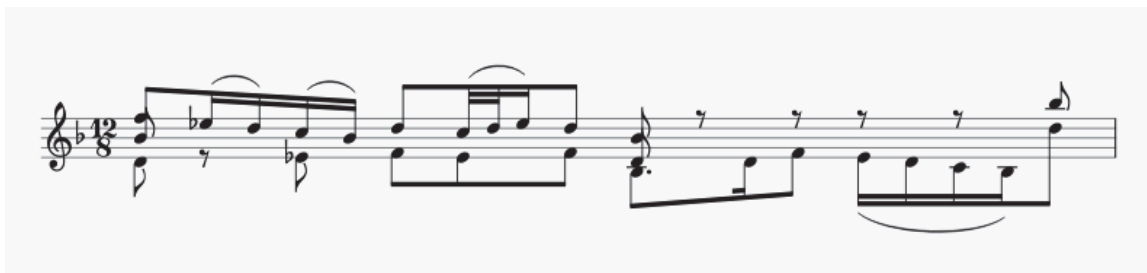
- 1. the closely related keys
- 2. the compound time signatures and beats
- 3. The numbers of measures and beats is virtually the same
(6/8 x 41 measures with 2 beats per measure = 82 total beats)
(12/8 x 20 measures with 4 beats per measure = 80 total beats)

The similarities between thematic fragments or figurative ones should also be noted, as they bring Godowsky even closer to Bach in their outlaying of material.

Compare the following passages to note the similarities:



Example 3.21: Godowsky: *Suite Rococo*: VI. *Sicilienne*, second half of m. 1-3 (fingerings omitted)



Example 3.22: Bach: Violin Sonata in G Minor, BWV 1001, II. *Sicilianna*, m. 4

Here not only are the thematic fragments similar to each other—notably the single eighth-note followed by four sixteenth-notes moving down by scalar motion—so too is the imitation found between the top and lower voices (in the Godowsky the middle voice, in the Bach the lowest), the relative distance between the top and bottom voices in their extremes (a tenth in both: Bach: D-F at the beginning; in the Godowsky A-C# at the midpoint), and also the general movement of material downwards, then back upwards—extreme in the Bach with the two-octave jump at the end, slower in the Godowsky, where the movement upward proceeds at a more leisurely pace up to the B-flat above middle C a measure later.

If Godowsky's version is more ornate in certain passages, it may simply be that rather than imagining all of the lines of music as does Bach, Godowsky's plan has to do with creating stasis: the three-voice layout is his primary texture here, as throughout most of his suite. This is yet another similarity to Bach's music: if Bach's most complex fugue voicing came in his *Ricercar a 6* from *The Musical Offering*, BWV 1079, then the three-voices per hand link him in this way as well. This is not violin music performed in the piano, it is violinistic music pianistically imagined.

Even in works such as the aforementioned *Etude macabre*, a genre more linked with Chopin than with Bach, it is the latter composer who seems to inhabit a place of honor in its outlay. And it is these two composers—or at least facets of their music—that most commentators cite when they discuss Godowsky's compositions and pianism. It is the admixture of the traits of these two composers that can most easily be seen in not just his works for two hands but perhaps especially in the works for the left hand alone. Rather than fashion his music on that of nineteenth-century two-handed principles, as did many composers who either sought to normalize the left-handed repertoire or who were simply following the models of the previous generations, Godowsky infused the left-handed repertoire with the sweeping figurations of Chopin in the beginning part of his career and with the counterpoint and—most importantly in these last works—the structural aspects of the solo string writing of Bach.

If at times Godowsky's writing may seem two-handed in effect, this has more to do with voice implication than with two-handed thinking. Especially in these late works, Godowsky synthesized Bach's solo string works to create a new form of pianism: one which did not simply copy the ideas of solo string writing, but which assimilated them, transforming them into something pianistic. One can see this trait when one compares his writing to that of another composer influenced by Bach who tackled the left-handed idiom in his own works for solo piano at roughly the same time as Godowsky was writing his Chopin studies: Max Reger's *Vier Spezialstudien* were published in 1901.

In these last works, Godowsky assimilated not just the contrapuntal ideas but the layout and textures of Bach's figural patterns within his string works, setting

them in a more modern harmonic idiom. If Godowsky's left-hand works were a bold step in a new direction, Reger's were—though great music—still further tied to late-nineteenth century principles in their sense of expansion outwards, their thickness of textures, and the huge jumps and large ranges: in essence, their two-handed qualities. In addition, Reger's figurative patterns at moments of climax almost eschew the idea of counterpoint that Godowsky had helped to define as one of the most important characteristics of his left-hand writing: a less expanded counterpoint than in the Chopin, one which was based purely on the reach of the hand.⁶⁰

If Godowsky attempted to redefine left-hand music anew—in his music he hoped that "one [would] not miss the right hand and [hear] at the same time music, not tricks!⁶¹—then Reger's music was still built upon those solid foundations of not just Bachian counterpoint, but Bachian counterpoint as composers such as Liszt (the epitome of expansiveness in the nineteenth century) saw it and felt it: as orchestral, if not organ-like in outlay, rather than as "domestic" or chamber-like. In this way, Godowsky related himself even further to the eighteenth century as a composer.

It was often said that as a performer "Popsy" (Godowsky's nickname) was always best in smaller circles—in chambers rather than concert halls; perhaps it is this quality of the performer which brought the composer closer to Bach's world as well: the

⁶⁰ For a fascinating aspect of Reger's technique in which his left-hand works are compared to his own writing for solo string instruments please see the source below. Note that Sassmann links this writing as being connected as coming from the same source of inspiration. He does not note that Reger has assimilated the violin into his pianistic writing.

Albert Sassman, *"In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister" – Technik und Ästhetik der Klaviermusik für die linke Hand allein*. Tutzing: Verlegt bei Hans Schneider, 2010: pp. 159-161.

⁶¹ Jeremy Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists' Pianist: A Biography of Leopold Godowsky*. Northumberland: Appian Publications & Recordings, 1989: p. 135.

violinist Carl Flesch said of Godowsky that he “was perhaps the only pianist since Liszt who succeeded in directing piano technique into hitherto uncharted territory, but he was one of those virtuosos who only make their mark in a room, not in a concert hall,” adding that “a mischievous colleague once said” that “Godowsky’s aura extended for just two yards.” He was not the only one. The super-virtuoso pianist Josef Hofmann remarked similarly to his pupil, the pianist and composer Abram Chasins, after they heard Godowsky play at home: “Never forget what you heard tonight ... Never lose the memory of that sound. There’s nothing like it in the world. It is tragic that the public has never heard Popsy as only he can play.” Chasins later wrote himself—after years of hearing Godowsky play in the concert hall, at home, and on recordings—that “the dramatist and colorist remained at home, to emerge fully only when Godowsky was serene in his environment.”⁶²

A comparison between Reger’s and Godowsky’s music can elucidate the difference in approach. In Godowsky’s monumental *Prelude and Fugue* on BACH—one of his most imposing works for left hand alone—he at times writes in a manner which may recall the two-handed Reger, perhaps especially in moments of octave displacement of imitative themes. Is this truly pianistic—or even only pianistic—or did Bach already use this type of writing in his solo-string compositions to also create depth and space between instrumental voices? When one compares the Bach with the Reger and Godowsky, one notes the similarities:

⁶² Ibid., pp. xvii-xix.



Example 3.23: Bach: Violin Sonata in A Minor, BWV 1003: II. *Fuga*, mm. 65-68



Example 3.24: Godowsky: Prelude and Fugue on B-A-C-H for the Left Hand Alone, mm. 18-25.



Example 3.25: Reger: Prelude and Fugue in E-flat Minor for the Left Hand Alone, mm. 31-32.

Why is Godowsky's construction one-handed in design while Reger's is two-handed? Comparing the above examples again, we find that where Reger uses distance to imply not only two voices but two hands by requiring the pianist to lift his hand and place it in a completely new register, Godowsky does so by using the middle voice found in the line in the tenor (beginning in the first measure above as A–G–B–A) as a natural pivot point: this line moves seamlessly throughout the work shifting from the thumb of the left hand when the passage work is below it to the fifth finger when the counterpoint moves above the line. The violinistic idea is preserved rather than the two-handed idea of Reger. The motion is transformed: where the passage would be impossible to perform on the violin, it is easily done by the pianist's left hand.

Where Reger and Godowsky diverge further are in passages that follow this type of sequential, imitative, yet episodic writing. Where Reger expands not just outwards, but outwards pianistically, as he would in a work such as the fugue to his monumental *Bach Variations*, op. 81, Godowsky quickly reins in the material inward as above. One can begin to see this in the last measure of the Reger above, when the lower voices drop down an octave, performing in octaves in the lower register, while a chord of accompaniment is added in the treble register. Can this too be related to string writing as seen in the Bach? It can in ways: as for example in those instances when Bach asks the violinist to perform a four-note chord, the lowest of them acting also in tandem with the moving voice as seen below:



Example 3.26: Bach: Violin Sonata in A Minor, BWV 1003: II. *Fuga*, mm. 91-93

Where Reger completely moves away from Godowsky's assimilation of string and piano writing (and indeed Bach string-writing) is in the following passages. Here Reger's writing takes on not only a two-handed sense, but an almost organ-like layout (something which in the nineteenth century might also be labelled as a type of orchestral-pianistic writing). One could almost imagine the two-handed pianist performing the following passage without altering the sound of it at all:

The musical score is for the last 8 measures of Reger's Prelude and Fugue in E-flat Minor for the Left Hand Alone. It is written in E-flat minor (three flats) and 3/4 time. The score is divided into four systems of staves. The first system shows a right hand with chords and a left hand with a continuous arpeggiated pattern, marked *ff* and *con Pedale*. The second system features a right hand with a descending scale and a left hand with a similar pattern, marked *fff*. The third system shows a right hand with a descending scale and a left hand with a similar pattern, marked *sempre fff* and *marcatissimo*. The fourth system shows a right hand with a descending scale and a left hand with a similar pattern, marked *a tempo, espressivo*, *p*, *pp*, *rit.*, and *ppp*. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics, articulation, and fingerings.

Example 3.27: Reger: Prelude and Fugue in E-flat Minor for the Left Hand Alone, last 8 measures.

Rather than finding the counterpoint in a Chopin-like fashion of weaving throughout a continuous arpeggiated sonority, or keeping it within the more restricted confines of the reach of the hand, Reger creates counterpoint through exaggerated distance; if the ending here is contrapuntal in nature, it can also be felt as

homophonically conceived: a drone-like low E-flat which tolls the bell-like sonority on top of which chords are laid bare. This looks much like a Bach-Liszt transcription of an organ work written for two hands.

In Godowsky's version the thumb/fifth finger axis became the pivot point: for him the reach of the hand was not the octave as it had been for Bach in each hand, but the octave both below and above the thumb which could be used to fill the contrapuntal space of the work. In doing so, even with these seeming limitations, Godowsky was crafting the left hand as its own vehicle for exploration; and this vehicle would not, as he previously stated, allow future composers to craft both hands in this way, allowing for unforeseen technical issues. Rather the crafting of this musical space, mostly inhabiting the middle portion of the keyboard (the most resonant and comfortable for the single-hand artist to perform in) could only ever truly be used in this way by a single hand.

This was his unique contribution to the left-hand piano's future writers: a way (and the word a and not the is important here) of defining the left hand piano as an instrument of its very own by crafting not only an independent way of thinking and conceiving music for it, but of breaking the idea of the left hand piano as one which necessarily had to take two-handed constructions (whether classically pianistic as Reinecke, organistic as Reger, or orchestral as Alkan) as its basis. Here the limitations initiated and helped to define Godowsky's mature late one-handed style. This all played into Godowsky's attitude towards most of his pieces: a right hand could be added to the

work for solo left hand, but it did not complete it—it simply accompanied or added to it as in his previously discussed Weber and Chopin examples.

The following example shows Godowsky's use of space and of construction in just these ways, now with his added fingering to show just how he envisioned the passage to be played in performance:

The image displays a musical score for Godowsky's *Suite rococo*, I. *Allemande*, measures 33-36. The score is written for piano and includes detailed fingering for both hands. The first system is marked *dolce* and *pp* (pianissimo). The second system is marked *molto agitato* and *molto cresc.* (molto crescendo). The score includes pedaling instructions and a *tre corde* marking. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#).

Example 3.28: Godowsky: *Suite rococo* in D Major/d minor: I. *Allemande*: mm. 33-36.

It also shows more: by crafting his music using not just the notes, by not just fashioning the articulation, the dynamics, and the pedaling to achieve his goal, but by also shaping the music through his chosen fingering, Godowsky has displayed that his musical conception is not only of the piano, rather than of the string instrumental works which influenced him, but of the left-hand piano in how the composer envisaged the

music from the very beginning. He crafted it in its own unique way. For him, changing any part of the work—even the fingering itself, whether with the one hand or two—was sacrilege:

The thoughtful attention given to the interpretive directions of my compositions has resulted in a profusion of expression marks, pedal indications and *fingerings* [emphasis my own]. Though they may appear on the surface as too minute and elaborate, I believe the serious student will find them essential and illuminating. To disregard or alter such indications – in the broader sense – would seem to me as much of a licence (sic) as a change of any melodic line, harmonic texture or rhythmic design. Even when all the interpretative signs are scrupulously observed, there yet remains ample scope for self-expression and individuality. To the unthinking this statement may appear paradoxical, but to those who do not seek liberty in lawlessness and originality in individualistic distortions, the truth of this assertion will be apparent.⁶³

By marking the fingering as an essential part of the music, Godowsky helped define the left hand as its own instrument, a type which, even if it could be played with two hands, should not, for it would alter the music as much as changing other fundamental aspects—in his words “as much as a change of any melodic line, harmonic texture or rhythmic design.” If Godowsky ever altered his own music, it was by addition (of other complimentary material as he did in certain of the Chopin transformations, the Weber *Invitation*, and even some of his later works such as the *Etude macabre* or *Impromptu*⁶⁴) rather than alteration of the basic musical material to fit the two hands.

⁶³ Leopold Godowsky. “Addendum to *Java Suite*.” In *Java Suite: Phonoramas, Tonal Journeys for the Pianoforte*. New York: 1925.

⁶⁴ Albert Sassmann, “In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister” – *Technik und Ästhetik der Klaviermusik für die linke Hand allein*. Tutzing: Verlegt bei Hans Schneider, 2010: pp. 175-178.

When put together, these traits all helped Godowsky to define the left-hand piano as more than just “half of a composition” and also helped him to break the mold of two-handed composition that stemmed from nineteenth century tradition. In his later works, the Bachian counterpoint—that within the reach of the hands span with only minimal help from the pedal—became an important aspect of Godowsky’s mature left-hand style. This helped him to define it in a different way than Chopin had in his earlier compositions: through assimilation of the source material.

The result in both cases created similar results using similar ideas: a development of material through the use of counterpoint, whether within an expanded pianistic figuration or through closer-knit material, which gave meaning to figurations which could otherwise be thought of as mundane or frivolous. Both methods also exploited the “splendid sonority, mellowness and tonal sensitivity” of the instrument’s middle and bass registers rather than the “thin, brittle, and tinkly sound” of the uppermost ones. By combining the “composer’s message” with the piano’s inherent nature as he saw it, he could realize the meaning of the work. It was through these restrictions that he felt his most powerful musical goals were achieved. Writing in 1935, he reaffirmed his previous opinion that

Working within self-imposed limitations convinced me that economy of means leads to a superior form of concentration, and the resulting concentrated effort produces the quintessence of human endeavor, materially and spiritually. The resourcefulness needed in dealing frugally with the means at our command often opens up unexplored and unsuspected regions of the imagination. I have been amazed at the possibilities created by the adopted restrictions.

How exactly did these limitations spark his creativity helping him to redefine the left-hand instrument? By opening up avenues which he himself may never have explored in the two-handed pianistic domain nor in other forms, whether orchestral or organistic. And rather than eschew virtuosity—music written only for display—he embraced it in new ways. These limitations, though self-imposed, allowed him to write a type of music that he saw as being in the lineage of Bach’s unaccompanied string works. And just as Bach was able

To express the intrinsic musical characteristics of these instruments individually, so I wished to give undivided musical utterance to the left hand. The concentration of my entire resourcefulness, keyboard knowledge, and musical experience on the left hand alone led me to combinations I should never have written if I had used both hands.⁶⁵

In the passage above, Godowsky specifically does not relate the piano to Bach’s use of the solo strings, but the “left hand.” That is the instrument which he helps to redefine as its very own, not as “half a performer using half an instrument.”

In 1908, two years after he had been considered for the position, Godowsky was hired by the *Imperial Academy of Music* in the role of *Imperial Royal Professor*—which also came with the title of honorary colonel and was directly answerable to the Emperor—one of the most prestigious instructional posts in all of Europe at the time.⁶⁶ Godowsky had concertized often in Vienna and after his triumphant Berlin debut was

⁶⁵ Leopold Godowsky, “Piano Music for the Left Hand.” In *Musical Quarterly* Volume 21 (January 1, 1935): pp. 299-300.

⁶⁶ Jeremy Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists’ Pianist: A Biography of Leopold Godowsky*. Northumberland: Appian Publications & Recordings, 1989: p. 77.

considered one of the leading pianists of his generation. It was then and there that he likely met another composer, Franz Schmidt, who would define the left-hand piano as its own instrument using similar ideas and ideals.

Schmidt was someone whom Godowsky knew not only as a composer but perhaps even more as a piano virtuoso. At one point Godowsky was asked who he considered to be among the greatest living pianists of his generation. In his own day, his answer might have surprised some; in our own day, his answer seems unbelievable. It was not Busoni or Rachmaninoff, Lhevinne or Rosenthal, D'Albert or Cortot, Hofmann or Friedman. He answered—one imagines with a smirk on his face: “There are only two; the other one is Franz Schmidt.”⁶⁷

⁶⁷ “Erinnerungen,” *Carmen Ottner, Studien zu Franz Schmidt V: Quellen II zu Franz Schmidt: Briefe, Autographen, Aufzeichnungen im Privatbesitz, Erinnerungen*. Wien: Doblinger, 1987: S. 86.

Chapter 4

Franz Schmidt

Though Franz Schmidt is little remembered today, he was one of the most popular composers and teachers living and working in Vienna in the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s. He was also a member of the Vienna Philharmonic before his eventual retirement from that organization and afterwards became one of the most beloved pianists and piano teachers at the *Akademie der Musik und darstellende Kunst* in Vienna (the successor to the Hochschule).¹ Schmidt worked and lived in Vienna when Godowsky was there; and his left-hand works were written almost contemporaneously with Godowsky's later works: from the early 1920s to the later 1930s. By this time their careers had greatly diverged: not only did Godowsky's stroke limit his career after 1930 in most musical ways—both as performer and composer—but the political unrest which befell Europe from 1914 until 1918 also separated these figures. Godowsky left Europe for good, settling in the United States for the remainder of his life, though travelling to Europe on tour in the years which followed the First World War.

Unlike Godowsky's, Schmidt's left-handed contributions came through the will of another, Paul Wittgenstein. The works that he produced in the final two decades of his life for the pianist—six pieces in total—were among Wittgenstein's favorite compositions, ones which he performed throughout the rest of his career in Vienna and then in the United States after his eventual move there. These works and Schmidt's

¹ Leo Black, "The Four Seasons of Franz Schmidt," *The Musical Times*, Volume 155, Number 1928 (Autumn 2014), p. 10.

contribution to left-hand pianistic construction are the culmination of Schmidt's unconventional story— from promising piano virtuoso, to cellist, to pianistic composer—a story fashioned from his love of a certain music combined with teachers who disgusted him and an instrument which he mastered yet came to loathe.²

The musician and musicologist Hans Keller considered Schmidt one of the most outstanding musicians of his day, if not the most impressive one from the perspective of both a practical performer (as both pianist and cellist) and a composer. In his words, Franz Schmidt was

the most complete musician I have come across in my life [...] I am talking about a type of musician no longer extant: under the influence of the inescapable assault on our ears which contemporary civilization confronts us with, our power of aural concentration and our quality of listening have deteriorated to an extent which, *pro tempore*, make the birth of a Franz Schmidt impossible. What am I talking about? About the simple fact that he knew, and remembered, all music. Whatever you raised, whether it was a point about a tricky passage in the Matthew Passion or John Passion, in a late Beethoven quartet, in any of the later Haydn symphonies, in a Bruckner symphony and, yes, in Schoenberg's *Transfigured Night* or *Gurrelieder*, he would jump up, waddle across to the piano, and play the passage in an instant, perfect piano arrangement, stressing the inner part you happened to be talking about. Once I noticed that this was the case, I tried my unsuccessful best to challenge his memory, to raise a point about an unwell-known masterpiece; I can't remember a single occasion on which he failed to play me the passage in question more precisely than I had remembered it.³

² For information regarding the reasons for his eventual disgust with both the piano and certain teachers, it is best to read it in Schmidt's own words. See his autobiographical statement (translated by Martin Anderson) in:

Harold Truscott, *The Music of Franz Schmidt: 1. The Orchestral Music*. London: Toccata Press, 1984: pp. 156-182.

³ Hans Keller, "Personal Recollections: Oskar Adler's and My Own." In Harold Truscott, *The Music of Franz Schmidt: 1. The Orchestral Music*. London: Toccata Press, 1984: pp. 7-8.

He was, notably, one of the finest pianists of the age according to not only Godowsky, but to the countless students⁴ he had and the members of the Viennese audiences who heard him in any number of concerts he gave around the city—whether in large concert halls or smaller apartments.⁵ But some of his students and other pianists living in the city also gave clues as to Schmidt’s relationship to the piano and his will for it to do more than the instrument was capable of. One such pianist, Karl Lahr, who performed often in Vienna, recounted Schmidt’s attitude and abilities on the instrument, attesting especially to Schmidt’s dislike of the piano, something to which he referred to as a “love/hate relationship”:

Schmidt war zwar eine einmalige Klavierbegabung, trotzdem mochte er das Klavier nicht und bezeichnete es wiederholt als seine „Haßliebe“, vor allem wegen dessen Unfähigkeit, einen Ton auszuhalten; auch gefiel ihm die Klangfarbe des Klaviers nicht. Auf die an ihn gestellte Frage, welches Klavier seiner Meinung nach vom Standpunkt des Klanges das beste Instrument sei,

⁴ For details please see the following for testimony of Schmidt’s abilities as a pianist:

Charlotte Brusatti, “Franz Schmidt: Harmonielehre.” In *Studien zu Franz Schmidt I: Ausgewählte Aufsätze*, ed. Otto Brusatti. Wien: Doblinger, 1976.

Josef Dichler, “Franz Schmidt—Der Mensch,” *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* Volume 9 (1954): pp. 384-388.

Carmen Ottner, “Erinnerungen.” In *Studien zu Franz Schmidt V: Quellen II zu Franz Schmidt: Briefe, Autographen, Aufzeichnungen im Privatbesitz, Erinnerungen*, ed. Carmen Ottner. Wien: Doblinger, 1987: 76-102.

Hans Hadamowsky, “Meine Erinnerungen an Franz Schmidt.” In *Studien zu Franz Schmidt I: Ausgewählte Aufsätze*, ed. Otto Brusatti. Wien: Doblinger, 1976.

Susi Jeans, “Franz Schmidt: A Pupil’s Memories.” *The Musical Times*, Vol. 125, No. 1702 (December 1984): pp. 702-703.

Karl Kobald, “Franz Schmidt, der Mensch und Lehrer,” *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* Volume 4 (1949): pp. 15-19.

Friedrich Wührer, et. al., “Franz Schmidt in Erinnerungen seiner Schüler und Freunde,” *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* Volume 19 (1964): pp. 115-122.

⁵ For a better understanding of his immense repertoire (and one imagines his unbelievable memory) one need only consult the programs he gave at the Stonborough residence from 1921-1923, in which he performed chamber works, solo works, and even a concerto: 44 concerts in total in which around 200 works were performed, and little repetition of repertoire took place. For details see:

Carmen Ottner, “Kammermusikabende,” In *Studien zu Franz Schmidt V: Quellen II zu Franz Schmidt: Briefe, Autographen, Aufzeichnungen im Privatbesitz, Erinnerungen*. Wien: Doblinger, 1987: S. 57-75.

antwortete Schmidt scherzhaft: „Ja, wenn Sie mich so fragen, kann ich nur eine Antwort geben: ein stummes Klavier.“⁶

[Schmidt was a pianist that one sees once in a lifetime, although he did not like the instrument, often describing his “love-hate relationship” with it especially because of its inability to hold a tone; he also did not like the sound of the piano. When asked which piano in his view was the best instrument, from the viewpoint of its inherent sound, Schmidt replied jokingly: “If you ask me that question, I can only answer: a silent piano.”]⁷

If Schmidt was to compose for the piano at all, how would the instrument function in his works? What type of writing would characterize his style? And with his immense dislike of the instrument, could the left-hand piano free him in other ways? Could it allow Schmidt to break from tradition and not only reformulate how the piano could be seen as a solo instrument but also establish a unique place for it in a medium which he favored above all others?

Franz Schmidt: A Chamber-Pianistic Approach

Franz Schmidt’s dislike of the piano as an instrument caused him to write for it only on rare occasions. Before his initial contact with Paul Wittgenstein, he had only written a few shorter works, including two piano sonatas (now deemed spurious compositions),⁸ a piano concerto-like work based on themes later used in the opera

⁶ Friedrich Wührer, et. al., “Franz Schmidt in Erinnerungen seiner Schüler und Freunde,” *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* Volume 19 (1964): p. 120.

⁷ Translation my own.

⁸ According to Frau Carmen Ottner, the Director of the Franz Schmidt Gesellschaft from 1985-2017, it is uncertain as to whether Schmidt actually composed these works. This information can be found in the email correspondence between Dr. Ottner and myself, in which she writes (in an email from June 18th, 2017): “Die Klaviersonaten sind nicht ganz gesichert, ob dies wirklich von ihm komponiert wurde.” Copies

Notre Dame (possibly a testing ground for his compositional ideas), four short works for cello and piano (of which three were later published as *Drei kleine Phantasiestücke nach ungarischen Nationalmelodien*, in which the piano did little more than accompany Schmidt's other favored instrument) and a *Romanze* for two-hand piano, written as a gift for his good friends, Geoffrey and Molly Sephton, around the same time that he began work on the first of the numerous Wittgenstein commissions.⁹ He would eventually compose a total of six works for Wittgenstein—the five major works which were commissioned by the pianist, the last, a solo work, a gift to him. The works included not only concertos (Wittgenstein's preferred genre) but chamber works as well:

of the works themselves were given to me. They came from the "Private Archive, Dr. Carmen Ottner, General Secretary of the Franz-Schmidt-Gesellschaft, 1985-2017" and were obtained during a visit to Vienna in the summer of 2017.

⁹ For information regarding the fascinating story surrounding the once-lost *Romanze* please see the following two sources:

Norbert Tschulik, trans. Angela Tolstoshev, *Franz Schmidt: A Critical Biography*. London, Glover & Blair, 1980: pp. 59-60.

Alfred Jirasek, "Eine unbekannte Komposition Franz Schmidts," *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* Volume 15, 1960: p. 420.

Work	Year Composed
<i>Concertante Variationen über ein Thema von Beethoven</i>	1923
Quintet for 2 violins, viola, cello and left-hand piano in G Major	1926
Quintet for clarinet, violin, viola, cello, and left-hand piano in B-flat Major	1932
Piano Concerto in E-flat Major	1934
Quintet for clarinet, violin, viola, cello, and left-hand piano in A Major	1938
Toccata in D Minor	1938

Table 4.1: Franz Schmidt's Works for Left Hand Piano

Wittgenstein's commissions came at an interesting time in Schmidt's career. With the failure of his second opera, *Fredigundis* (1916-1921),¹⁰ he had just recently begun to embrace the instrumental forms again more seriously. His *Romanze* was one of the pieces that seemed to point him in new directions. Schmidt's music post-*Fredigundis* changed his basic approach so much that Thomas Corfield has described the music of the 1920s (of which the *Romanze* may be considered his first composition) as "a new phase in Schmidt's development," one which he even labels as a "third period" of composition. How does he define this? He describes the music of this period as characterized by an "intimacy which contrasts strongly with the grandeur of the Second

¹⁰ One can say that not only did his opera come at a terrible time in German and Austrian history—right after the Great War—but his music seemed also to be oversaturated with ideas and especially counterpoint, almost as though he were writing an instrumental work with voices rather than an opera. Numerous critics found this to be the case. Richard Strauss even told Schmidt that "your music smothers everything like a stream of lava; I would have made four operas out of it." See: Norbert Tschulik, trans. Angela Tolstoshev, *Franz Schmidt: A Critical Biography*. London, Glover & Blair, 1980: pp. 61-73. The Strauss quote can be found on page 68.

Symphony and *Fredigundis*.” He also labels the music as being “austere” in quality, marked especially by the “stern chromatic counterpoint of the organ music” as can be seen in pieces as un-organlike as the Second String Quartet.¹¹ In this he is not wrong: Schmidt’s music was becoming more intimate in character and in genre, even in such works as the Third Symphony, his own homage to Schubert.

Though Schmidt was never as vocal with his ideas on left-hand construction or sources of pianistic inspiration as was Godowsky, it is clear when one analyzes his music that the left-hand piano was understood in a different way than the two-hand piano. He particularly loved Bach and held him in high regard. Looking at the textures and the use of counterpoint in many of his works this becomes apparent. But for him—as for many composers who came to the piano in the early 1900s—he too saw a certain lineage as being the truest to the instrument’s nature. One composer, in particular, stood out:

Diese Ausschließlichkeit der Begabung für das Klavier ist gar kein Unglück, wenn der Componist, wie eben Chopin, gar nicht versucht, etwas anderes als für das Klavier zu schreiben. Anders verhält es sich, wenn der Componist einseitig für Klavier begabt ist, aber sich auf allen möglichen Gebieten der Musik betätigt. Dann “hört man” sozusagen “das Klavier aus dem Orchester heraus” oder gar aus dem Streichquartett; das ist sehr fatal und bringt den unbefangenen Hörer auf den Gedanken, daß es doch nicht so sehr wünschenswert ist, ausschließlich “auf dem Klavier aufzuwachsen”, so daß die Musikalität vom Klavier geformt wird.¹²

[It is not a misfortune when a composer, such as Chopin, writes music exclusively for the piano. It is different though if the composer is biased towards the piano, but active in all fields and genres of music. Then “one hears” in their compositions “the piano playing against the orchestra” or even the piano

¹¹ Thomas Bernard Corfield, *Franz Schmidt (1874-1939): A Discussion of his Style with Special Reference to the Four Symphonies and “Das Buch mit sieben Siegeln.”* Part of the Outstanding Dissertations in Music from British Universities, ed. John Caldwell. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1989: p. 121.

¹² Quotation found in: Alfred Jirasek, *Erinnerungen an Franz Schmidt*. Graz: Leykam-Verlag, 1975: p. 19.

“outside” of the string quartet; that is fatal to music, as it gives the impartial listener the idea that it is undesirable “to grow up on the piano” as one’s musicality is formed by the instrument].¹³

Chopin proved to be important in formulating Schmidt’s conception of the piano’s truest nature. Schmidt defined truly pianistic music as a type in which the sound of the instrument was present in the mind of the composer from the initial moment of musical conception—one conceived through the spirit of the instrument, so much so, that its essence would be lost if transferred to another:

Von der ungeheuren Masse guter und schlechter, herrlicher und allerherrlichster Musik, die für das Klavier geschrieben wurde, ist nur ein Bruchteil wirklich echte Klaviermusik. Ich verstehe unter Klaviermusik jene Musik, die, aus dem Geiste des Klaviers hervorgegangen, auf kein anderes Instrument beziehungsweise auf keine Zusammenstellung von anderen Instrumenten übertragen werden kann, also eine Musik, die der Componist tatsächlich als Klaviermusik und nicht als Musik schlechthin in seinem Inneren gehört hat. Daß diese Spaltung in Klaviermusik einerseits und in Nichtklaviermusik andererseits in den Klavierwerken fast aller, also auch der größten Meister, ohne weiteres wahrnehmbar ist, zeigt uns ein objektiver Blick auf die Klavierliteratur.¹⁴

[Of the vast literature of music written for the instrument—good, bad, glorious, and most precious—only a small percentage can truly be considered genuine piano music. I understand this type of music as that which was written for the piano, which cannot be transferred to another medium, a music, above all, which results from the very spirit of the instrument. That this split in piano music, on the one hand, and non-piano music, on the other, is perceptible in the works of every composer—even the greatest masters—gives us an objective view of the piano literature.]¹⁵

¹³ My own translation.

¹⁴ Quotation found in: Alfred Jirasek, *Erinnerungen an Franz Schmidt*. Graz: Leykam-Verlag, 1975: p. 17.

¹⁵ My own translation.

To be pianistic, the music would need to not only be of the piano, conceived on and for it, it would need to be completely understood in its very own way. This may well have solidified Schmidt's ideas on the left-hand piano's ability to redefine the piano's role within his own oeuvre.

Among the stranger aspects surrounding Schmidt's ideas on pianism are the sources of inspiration which helped him to define the term. Chopin's pianism is notable but was not uncommon or unusual for composers of the age: his influence can be felt in Godowsky's music, but also in that of Scriabin and Rachmaninoff. In Schmidt's essay, Chopin is given pride of place, but there is another composer who Schmidt singles out: Bach. And it is not his use of polyphony which is described—the key to understanding Bach's influence on many other composers—but his understanding of the keyboards of his own day. For Schmidt, Bach's "keyboard" works—those which he wrote for the "clavier"—were ones which also, in addition to Chopin, later influenced his conception of piano music:

Um zu erkennen, welche seiner Werke echte Klaviercompositionen sind, müssen wir uns das Klavier seiner Zeit genau vorstellen. Ganz kurzer Ton, beinahe einem Pizzicato der Streicher ähnlich, dynamisch fast unmodifizierbar. Dafür eine oft sehr kunstvolle Konstruktion: mehrere Klaviaturen verschiedener Stärke, mehrere Register verschiedener Fußhöhe, dazu Coppelns usw. Das volle Werk eines solchen Instrumentes klang rauschend und prächtig ... Es ist einem beim Spielen eines solchen Instrumentes sofort klar, daß sich die meisten schnellen Sätze der französischen und englischen Suiten, der Partiten, ferner viele Stücke aus dem Wohltemperierten Klavier z.B. Cis-Dur-Präludium und Fuge aus dem I. Band oder B-Dur daselbst, natürlich vieles andere auch (ich führe nur aufs Geratewohl Beispiele an und erhebe keinen Anspruch auf Vollständigkeit), für

dieses Instrument wunderbar eignen, weil sie Bach in seinem Innern dafür hörte und darum dafür schrieb.¹⁶

[In order to recognize which of his works are “genuine” clavier works we must first understand the keyboard instruments of his time: they had a very short tone, nearly similar to a string pizzicato, and were limited dynamically. They were artfully constructed: keyboards of different strengths, along with registers, and the additional capabilities of coupling, etc. The instrument’s sound was shimmering, the effect magnificent ... It is immediately apparent to anyone who plays one of these instruments that most of the fast movements in the French and English Suites, in the Partitas, or the Well-Tempered Clavier were written for this instrument. In the Well-Tempered Clavier, such works as the C-sharp Major Prelude and Fugue in the first book, or the B Major from the same, or a great many others (these are just a few examples) were naturally composed for the instrument, as Bach envisioned these works from the start as keyboard works.]¹⁷

Like many composers of his generation, particularly the ones most influenced by nineteenth-century sources, Schmidt seemed to have considered Bach’s “clavier” music—the music that the composer originally wrote for harpsichord or his preferred clavichord—as that which formed the basis of the literature for pianists. He was not alone: Busoni found that Bach was the “foundation of both modern compositional styles and piano technique,”¹⁸ an aspect which Walter Frisch links to Liszt’s influence on later generations. But some of Schmidt’s comments may be puzzling for today’s readers, as he also senses a teleological aspect to Bach’s writing for the keyboards of his day. If Bach wrote his non-organ works for the harpsichord, according to Schmidt, it was because that instrument not only best suited the music as Bach envisioned it in his own day, but also because Bach sensed the future instrument which was to be: not only did

¹⁶ Quotation found in: Alfred Jirasek, *Erinnerungen an Franz Schmidt*. Graz: Leykam-Verlag, 1975: pp. 17-18.

¹⁷ My own translation.

¹⁸ Walter Frisch, *German Modernism : Music and the Arts*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004: p. 173.

Schmidt claim that Bach knew the piano—it is well known that he did perform on a number of developing fortepianos, particularly liking one on which he played in 1747 at the court of Frederick the Great¹⁹—but also that he knew the potential of the instrument to come. In describing this idea, Schmidt also reveals his own bias towards the piano and its perceived weaknesses:

Daß Bach die völlige Nichteignung dieser Compositionen für das damalige Klavier erkannt hat, unterliegt wohl keinem Zweifel. Warum er sie dennoch für das Klavier notiert hat? Ich glaube, vor allem darum, weil er sie für die Orgel gar nicht geeignet hielt. Und diesem seinem Herzensinstrument nichts zumuten wollte, was gegen dessen Natur ging. Daß sich diese Compositionen für das Klavier noch weniger eigneten, focht ihn weniger an, da er mit Recht annahm, daß das Klavier unmöglich auf der Stufe der Entwicklung stehenbleiben würde, auf der es damals stand. Vielleicht schwebte ihm eine noch weit großartigere Entwicklung des Klaviers vor als die, die es tatsächlich seither genommen. Ich bin dessen fast sicher.²⁰

[It is without doubt that Bach saw the inability of the keyboards of his time as a model [for the aforementioned works]. But then why were these works written for the keyboard? Above all, I believe that he thought them ill-suited for the organ. He did not want to write anything for the organ that he felt went against the instrument's nature. That they were less suitable for the clavier than his other compositions bothered him less, since he rightly saw the eventual development of the keyboard instruments of his time past their current stage.

¹⁹ Christoph Wolff writes in his Bach biography that “the motivic material of the interludes in the three-part Ricercar [from BWV 1079], significantly distinct from Bach’s other keyboard works, was inspired by and conceived for the fortepiano and its new—unlike the harpsichord’s—dynamically flexible sound.” It is impossible to say whether Bach would have significantly altered his compositional approach in writing for the fortepiano in the years to come, but at least in this work, Wolff sees a different approach taken by Bach in the transitory sections. Wolff further supports his claim in a separate essay when he states that “in his last years Bach acted as sales agent for Silbermann pianos.” Perhaps this work was used to help him in those sales, showing off the newer instrument in a style of composition which was aware of the changing aesthetics. See:

Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000: p. 429.

Christoph Wolff, “New Research on the Musical Offering.” In *Bach: Essays on His Life and Music*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991: pp. 254-256.

²⁰ Alfred Jirasek, *Erinnerungen an Franz Schmidt*. Graz: Leykam-Verlag, 1975: p. 18.

Perhaps he envisioned a greater development of the clavier than that which it actually took. I am almost certain of this.]²¹

For Schmidt, Bach's truest "keyboard" or "clavier" music—that is, music not suited for the organ—was his most fluid writing: a type that was figurative in nature (as in the C-sharp Major Prelude and Fugue from WTC Book I) or animated, highlighting the natural aspects of the keyboards of his day in its "short tone," its limited dynamics, and its "shimmering" sound. This music was not vocally inspired, not lyrical in nature, and was best suited to faster movements. When Schmidt spoke of other types of works—those using a Renaissance-like note-against-note counterpoint—he found these to be contrary to the keyboard's true nature. Bach's "keyboardisms" were therefore linked to Schmidt's redefining of pianism.²²

²¹ My translation.

²² Schmidt's linking of keyboard music written for the harpsichord or clavichord with the repertoire of the piano lasted well past his own day. The pianist, harpsichordist, and clavichordist, Rosalyn Tureck wrote that "I was not a pianist who had come to Bach via the 19th century [...] and my discovery and development of a new pianistic style has been recognized as emanating from knowledge of Bach's music and period, not from the romantic or virtuosic pianistic styles." She later states that "the clavichord is almost never employed and seldom mentioned, with the result that the larger part of audiences throughout the world who are interested in Bach and attend harpsichord performances have never heard a clavichord," insisting that "the historical facts are that the clavichord has an equal, and in Germany a greater, place in the performance of most of Bach's clavier music than the harpsichord." Therefore, "to place Bach's clavier conception mainly in the realm of harpsichord sound [...] is to limit his enormously broad vision to a single track." Further to the point of linking or grouping these instruments together, Tureck saw the piano as a perfect medium for the performance of Bach's music because the "difference between clavichord and harpsichord is actually greater than the difference between piano and harpsichord, or piano and clavichord." She found the clavichord particularly suited to this music because it "had the singing expressive attributes which the harpsichord lacked." The clavichord also had the ability to phrase inner lines through "the play with tone on one or more notes," a quality which it shared with the piano: "on the piano the possibilities of tonal accent and binding a line in legato are much closer to the ways of the clavichord than of the harpsichord." See: Rosalyn Tureck, "Bach in the Twentieth Century." In *The Musical Times*, Volume 103, Number 1428 (February 1962): pp. 92-94.

For Schmidt, as seen above, Bach misunderstood the clavier's nature in certain works. In choosing this instrument for these pieces, Schmidt found that even Bach erred in choosing the harpsichord or clavichord over other instruments. Why did Bach choose these instruments over the organ for such works as the B-Minor fugue (WTC Book I), the E-Major fugue (WTC Book II), or the C-Sharp-minor fugue (WTC Book I)? According to Schmidt—who would grant Bach virtually any leeway in explaining a music he loved deeply—he did so because he felt that this music did not fit the organ's true nature, an instrument which he felt was not only closer to him in spirit, but also to Bach.²³ For Schmidt, if one wanted to hear this music—specifically the C-Sharp-Minor Fugue—as it should sound, as Bach originally heard it in his mind, at least according to Schmidt, what was one to do if not to play it on a keyboard instrument, the one for which it had been written? Schmidt left us a clue: “one need only transcribe the work for five stringed-instruments and hear it performed.”²⁴

Here the string quartet (or quintet rather) had become the most powerful instrument of musical realization for Schmidt. Schmidt's friend Hans Keller—the musician, musicologist, and writer—recalled that at the time when he played with Schmidt in Oskar Adler's quartet sessions when he was a teenager in the 1930s, that

²³ Schmidt in his younger years always felt the organ was the king of all instruments, far superior to even the orchestra, though the orchestra to which he compared the instrument was, by his own standards, subpar as it was made up of mostly amateurs. Please see: Franz Schmidt's autobiographical statement (trans. Martin Anderson) can be found in: Harold Truscott, *The Music of Franz Schmidt: 1. The Orchestral Music*. London: Toccata Press, 1984: pp. 157-158.

²⁴ The original reads: “Wer das nicht glaubt, der schreibe die Fuge für fünf Streichinstrumente auseinander und lasse sie sich vorspielen.” The above is, once again, my own translation. For the original quote see: Alfred Jirasek, *Erinnerungen an Franz Schmidt*. Graz: Leykam-Verlag, 1975: p. 18.

Schmidt found the string quartet the most perfect vehicle for his own musical realizations. Though in his youth it was the organ above all other instruments (or vehicles of expression) that he had found was the grandest of all, by the 1930s, the chamber-sized string quartet (in which Schmidt often played) had taken over that spot.²⁵ So this would be Schmidt's challenge: how does a composer incorporate the piano, an instrument which he did not love, into an ensemble which he loved above all others? And how would this type of genre affect his pianism?

These would be the major questions that Schmidt would have to answer when he chose to write for the piano: how could a composer keep the nature of the piano in his mind—its sound, its very essence—while also allowing the instrument to seamlessly interweave into the fabric of the music of a string quartet. How could it become like a string instrument in feeling but also not unlike a piano in how it interacts with the ensemble members? He would have to resolve issues which he himself found with the nature of the piano itself: to write a music which avoided “long cantilenas” which were “impossible to produce on the piano because of the unavoidable diminuendo created after every note is struck.”²⁶ This could be done by avoiding long-phrased passages for the piano that featured melodies and by using the natural decay of the piano to the

²⁵ Hans Keller, “Natural Master: On the Creative Personality of Franz Schmidt.” In *Essays on Music*, ed. Christopher Winkle, Bayan Northcott, and Irene Samuel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994: p. 78.

²⁶ The German reads: “Es wäre ja das Klavier von vornherein unanhörbar, würden wir nicht z.B. jede Cantilene zu hören, wie wir sie hören wollen, mit schönen Phrasierungslinien und nicht mit dem physikalisch absolut unvermeidlichen Diminuendo in jedem einzelnen Ton, das aber doch in Wirklichkeit da ist.” This can be found in Franz Schmidt's essay entitled *Pianistisches* in: Andreas Liess, *Franz Schmidt: Leben und Schaffen*. Graz: Hermann Böhlaus Nachf. Ges. M.B.H., 1951: p. 148.

advantage of the ensemble: in faster, more figurative passages which allowed the piano to create an almost harp-like accompaniment. He could also avoid the two-handed construction of so many other composers who used the pedal to create a feeling of two-handedness in their music, thereby avoiding the issues he took with phrasing, the decay of long-held notes, and the need to link his piano music with that of the past—of creating new challenges through new ideas rather than recreating that which had already been accomplished.

There was already one composer who sought to capture the feeling of the string-instrument on the piano through transcription: Johannes Brahms, in his aforementioned arrangement of Bach's D-Minor *Chaconne*. Brahms was both a favorite of Wittgenstein and Schmidt and after the turn of the century he gained new notoriety for his motivic experiments through a number of his followers: through Reger's assimilation of his compositional principles and through Schoenberg's analyses of both works by Brahms and Reger (though this was still in the future). For this generation of composers Brahms became a new source of inspiration and a new height in compositional practices.²⁷

Brahms's transcription sought to do something that Schmidt did in his original compositions: to capture the essence of the string writing on the piano. Brahms did this by filling in only certain of the harmonies and restricting the general range of the progressions to the middle portions of the piano. He used the restrictions inherent in the Bach to realize the work on the piano in ways that would have pleased Schmidt:

²⁷ Arnold Schoenberg, trans. Leo Black. "Brahms the Progressive," In *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975: pp. 398-441.

choosing a figurative work and reimagining it on the piano through figurations which were based on original violinistic principles, but ones which easily and naturally fit a pianist's left hand. The only major change he made was to shift the overall layout of the music down an octave to ensure that the left hand of the pianist would not be strained and to better use the resonant sound of the piano's bass notes—here a quality of which Godowsky would have approved. This simple octave displacement thus made the work more pianistic without changing the system of delivery. Compare Zichy's far more nineteenth-century left-hand pianistic version to Brahms's arrangement to witness the difference in approach. Note that Zichy here, as in the aforementioned original compositions, often asks the pianist to perform the impossible as in the measures below when he asks the pianist to play in two different octaves simultaneously:²⁸

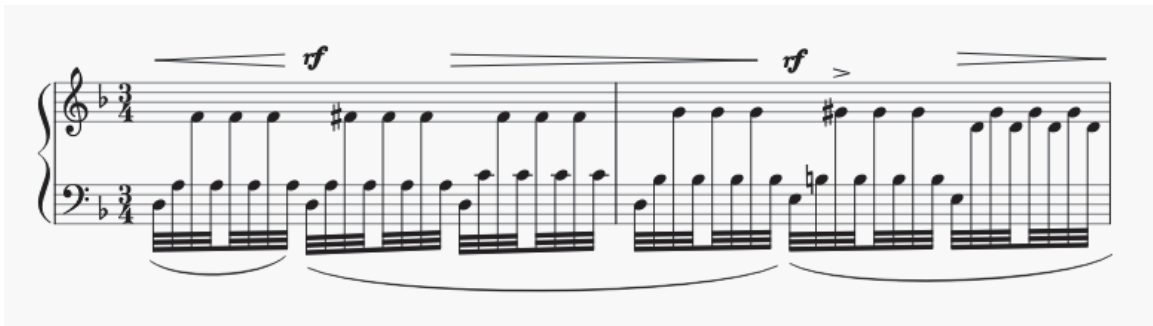


Example 4.1: Bach: *Chaconne*, mm. 108-109.

²⁸ For a fascinating analysis of traditional ways of realizing the arpeggio-markings in violin music from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries see the dissertation below. When one examines the traditional types of arpeggiations, one can easily see how Brahms came up with his version—one likely common among many of the later nineteenth-century violinists such as Joachim.

Carmelo de los Santos, *Performance-Practice Issues of the Chaconne From Partita II, BWV 1004, by Johann Sebastian Bach*. DMA Dissertation, The University of Georgia, United States, 2004.

https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/delossantos_carmelo_200405_dma.pdf



Example 4.2: Bach-Brahms: *Chaconne*, mm. 108-109.

Example 4.3: Bach-Zichy: *Chaconne*, mm. 108-109.

Schmidt's goal was different: not to reimagine a string work on the piano, but to create a new ideal of pianism which fit in with and fed off the string quartet. If this was not the same project as Brahms's, it was similar: If Schmidt were to reimagine the left-hand piano as an instrument of its very own, acting within his favored ensemble, not

trying to compete with the other ensemble instruments or trying to dominate them, while also solving his own issues with the piano as an instrument, he would have to figure out how this could be done. This was his challenge. And this he would do by transforming the left-hand piano into an instrument of its own devices, not as Godowsky did—symphonically pushing the aspect of counterpoint further out to encompass a wider range than it had ever done before in the solo literature, only later assimilating Bach’s solo string writing in a fashion far more complex than Brahms’s example on the piano—but by incorporating the piano “into” the fabric of the string quartet while keeping the figurative nature of the music at the forefront of the pianistic persona. The piano needed to capture Bach’s contrapuntal and figurative ideas using a figuration closer in conception to Chopin’s, all within a genre more closely associated with the eighteenth-century classical composers and using a decidedly more modern harmonic setting.

This idealized string quartet most influenced his pianistic writing in conception: if the piano were to fit into the ensemble it would need to take in the music of the other instruments and make it its own. The piano here became an instrument which could transform itself at will within the context of the work in which it played, as it did often in transcriptions: in the sonata-form movements in his quintets, the figurative motives used in roles of accompaniment (using ideas stemming from variational works like the Baroque chaconne, just using more modernized pianistic figuration) were countered with the more contrapuntal outlays used in places of thematic significance or importance—such as subject areas in his sonata-form movements. This gave them

further weight. Was this type of writing considered pianistic by Schmidt? That is impossible to say definitively. But as the piano was on more than one occasion the instrument on which these themes originated (the other ensemble instruments only later taking them up), it is possible that Schmidt saw the piano as the true originator of the material. If that was so—if Schmidt imagined the sound of the instrument in the thematic outlay of the material—then it would be defined as pianistic for him. At least if we take his word at face value.

If Schmidt did not see the left-hand piano developing into its own instrument through assimilation of the solo string medium nor through the expansiveness of Godowsky's symphonic approach, in what ways would he define the left-hand piano as its own instrument in these ensemble works? In at least two ways which I have defined as integration and pianistic interplay; a third way which combines these two aspects has been described as culminative.

Schmidt's Three Quintets: An Overview

The G-Major Quintet (1926) was the first of Schmidt's chamber work composed for Paul Wittgenstein, but not the first work written for him by the composer. Though Wittgenstein took issue with the earlier *Beethoven Variations* for piano and orchestra of 1922-23, it brought him some of his greatest success as a left-handed artist.²⁹ He may

²⁹ Alexander Waugh, *The House of Wittgenstein: A Family at War*. New York: Doubleday, 2008: pp. 163-164.

have later complained of Schmidt's writing—calling it “childish”³⁰—but he nevertheless continued to commission him throughout the next decade and a half. In the G-Major work he was given a piece optimistic in tone. It has the most standard number of movements and instrumentation: it is written for the normal string quartet (two violins, viola, and cello) and piano, left hand and contains the by-then standard four movement classical-symphonic layout. Beginning with a large sonata-form movement, the work proceeds through a calm but increasingly animated tripartite slow movement, a scherzo movement, and a lively and light-hearted finale. The whole work lasts approximately 40 minutes in performance.³¹

The second quintet, in B-flat Major, was written in 1932. It is roughly contemporaneous with Schmidt's Fourth Symphony, written in 1932-1933. It is a somber work, a B-flat Major that is one of quiet reflection and deep thought—similar in character to Schubert's last piano sonata or Mozart's last piano concerto. The aforementioned symphony was written as a requiem, dedicated to his daughter (she died during childbirth in 1932), and this work inhabits the same darker sound world: it too could function as a requiem, so serious is its character. Written in three movements—a slowly paced sonata-form movement, a middle movement contrasting slower sections with more animated ones, and a rondo-like finale—it is different in tone from its predecessor. It is also different in its instrumentation: here, rather than a string quartet, Schmidt replaces one of the violins with a clarinet: the unusual instrumentation

³⁰ Ibid., p. 179.

³¹ Franz Schmidt, *Quintet in G Major*. 1926. Vienna: Josef Weinberger, 2010. Print.

is perhaps one of its more modern features. The work takes around 30 minutes to perform.³²

If the second quintet was darker in tone, the last one contains only hints of that more somber mood; it is on the whole far lighter in tone. It is also the longest of the quintets, having five movements in total, one of them, the second movement *Intermezzo*, written for solo left-hand piano:

I. *Allegro moderato* (SF)—II. *Intermezzo*—III. *Scherzo*—IV. *Adagio*—V. *Variations*

Lasting almost nine minutes in performance, Wittgenstein worried over such a long solo in the middle of the chamber work. Schmidt obliged him by writing a second slow movement: the fourth movement's *Adagio*. Wittgenstein confessed to Andreas Liess (a musicologist and one of Schmidt's future biographers) that:

I feared quartets would take exception to this movement for solo piano in a chamber music work, something for which there is no precedent except for one violin sonata by Bach. This fear later turned out to be groundless, but at the time I was concerned about it, and so I went to see Schmidt at Perchtoldsdorf in the spring of 1938 and expressed my doubts. At first he was rather offended and said, 'I thought that it would please you', to which I replied that it had. Eventually we agreed that he would write a second slow movement for all five players, as an alternative, so to speak. Consequently these two slow movements were thought of as 'either or', not as 'both and'. If a second *Adagio* were inserted, the piece, which is already long, would undoubtedly exceed the length suitable for a chamber music work.³³

³² Franz Schmidt, *Quintet in B-flat Major*. 1932. Vienna: Josef Weinberger, 2010. Print.

³³ Norbert Tschulik, trans. Angela Tolstoshev, *Franz Schmidt: A Critical Biography*. London, Glover & Blair, 1980: p. 86.

How Schmidt envisioned the final version of the work is problematic. Did he regard the fourth-movement *Adagio* as a replacement for the second-movement *Intermezzo* as Wittgenstein claimed? Or was it conceived as an addition to his original four-movement plan as the autograph scores in Vienna and Hong Kong show? With Wittgenstein's input, did he reconceive the work as a five-movement structure?³⁴ That answer may never be known.

With all five movements performed the work should last, as per the timing in the score, 57 minutes,³⁵ though many recorded performances come in closer to around 70 minutes. Whether or not Schmidt imagined both movements being performed or whether Wittgenstein's opinion should be prioritized cannot be stated with certainty. But standing at the one-hour mark, the piece's length is hardly unusual: there are a number of other chamber music works which come close to that timing.³⁶ By performing all five movements a type of symmetry is also given to the piece: the

³⁴ Robert Pascall, "Franz Schmidts Klavierstil für Paul Wittgenstein." In *Studien zu Franz Schmidt Band XVI: Das Klavierkonzert in Österreich und Deutschland von 1900-1945*. Wien: Doblinger, 2009: pp. 78-79.

³⁵ Franz Schmidt, Quintet in A Major. 1938. Vienna: Josef Weinberger, 2010. Print.

³⁶ Schubert's Octet often takes over an hour to perform. Max Reger's D-Minor String Quartet, op. 74 lasts almost an hour in most performances as does Schubert's C-Major String Quintet. Among the over-50-minute works are (or can be): Rachmaninoff's D-Minor Piano Trio, Schubert's E-flat Piano Trio, Tchaikovsky's A-Minor Piano Trio, Brahms's A-Major Piano Quartet, and Beethoven's B-flat Major String Quartet (with the Grosse Fuge movement used as finale). While Schmidt's Quintet using all five movements would be long, it would not be an unheard-of length. Most interesting is the actual timing of the first movement in the printed score vs. the timing per the Linos Ensemble's version of the work: 14:45 in the above book vs. 17:23 in the actual recording. Noteworthy is that the Linos Ensemble performs the work without the repeat. With the repeat the first movement would come closer to 23:30 as the group takes roughly 6:05 for the Exposition alone. 17:23 + 6:05 comes out exactly to 23:28. The Linos Ensemble's recording (w/o the Exposition repeat) comes out to a total timing of 1:03:42. Franz Schmidt, "Quintet in A Major for Piano left-hand, Clarinet & String Trio." 1938. Linos Ensemble. CPO 555026-2. CD.

substantial movements on the outside, with the slower ones surrounding the more light-hearted middle movement.

This last quintet is also the very last major work Schmidt finished before his death. It can be viewed—written in the key of A Major and having a prominent clarinet part (for a clarinet in A)—as a continuation of great clarinet quintets, all written late in each composer’s life: from Mozart (1789), to Brahms (1891), and Reger (1915-1916). Brahms’s work is the only work not in A Major: it is written for a clarinet in A, but in the home key of B Minor. The only work which was completed after this was the D-minor Toccata, a gift to Wittgenstein for all of the commissions and the high regard he always showed the composer. Schmidt was for Wittgenstein one of the greats of his age, if not of all time.³⁷

The Integration of the Piano into the Ensemble

Certain ideas shape our understanding of the roles which certain instruments play in any given genre. In those chamber genres of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which feature the piano, there is often the sense that the piano does not accompany or blend with the other ensemble instruments, but that it dominates them. In her book dedicated to chamber music, Lucy Miller Murray describes a series of chamber works featuring the piano in ways which shape our listening to them: in her

³⁷ Wittgenstein called Schmidt “the greatest Austrian composer of the last twenty years.” See: E. Fred Flindell, “More on Franz Schmidt and Paul Wittgenstein and their triumph with the E-Flat Concerto” In *Empty Sleeve: Der Musiker und Mäzen Paul Wittgenstein*, ed. by Irene Suchy et al. Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2006: p. 133.

description of Beethoven's early E-Flat-Major Piano Quartet "the piano dominates in the [...] *Allegro, ma non troppo*, much in the way of Haydn piano trios." Similarly, Murray's description of Arthur Foote's Piano Quintet reveals that "as expected in piano quintet form, the piano is offered many soloistic and virtuosic moments but not at no cost to the other instruments," while in Brahms's A-Major Piano Quartet, op. 26 it is "the piano" which "dominated the first movement."³⁸

Hans Keller, whom we have met through his association with Franz Schmidt, felt similarly regarding those chamber-music genres which included the piano. As a string-quartet member himself he knew the problems one often sees in the layout and balancing of textures in the numerous works which he played. In an article dealing with Mozart's chamber works, he states this as the truest and greatest problem a composer needed to solve in order to successfully write a chamber work with piano, for

In chamber music [...] textural problems are at their acutest – above all that of the combination of piano and strings. As every justifiable string player knows, the problem is intrinsically insoluble – or would be thus considered, had Mozart not succeeded.³⁹

It was in his G-Minor Piano Quartet that Keller found Mozart most successful. In the E-flat Piano Quartet⁴⁰ he found that Mozart "inclines towards a mini piano concerto" which "indicate[d] his awareness of a problematic area that had to be

³⁸ Lucy Miller Murray, *Chamber Music: An Extensive Guide for Listeners*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015: pp. 71, 94, 161.

³⁹ Hans Keller, "Mozart – The Revolutionary Chamber Musician." In *The Musical Times* Volume 122, Number 1661 (July 1981): pp. 465.

⁴⁰ This statement is curious in ways: according to Keller's testimony, one imagines that Mozart wrote the G-minor work after the E-flat composition in order to make up for the deficiencies in texture which he found the major-keyed quartet to possess. This is not the case: Mozart wrote the G-minor work first (it

avoided.” In the G-Minor Quartet Mozart did “not avoid anything,” presenting “unproblematic textures where other composers, at their greatest, solve what seem intrinsic problems.” In Mozart’s G-Minor Quartet Keller found that he had written “the first and last ultimate masterpiece in the medium – which, if Mozart’s ear had been a little less of an unparalleled abnormality, would have developed into an all-powerful genre, with Mozart as its celebrated founder.”⁴¹

Though Keller regarded Beethoven as Mozart’s only successor, the “first and the last” as he says, to “heed Mozart’s textural advice,” even he could not rise to the levels of a Mozart in these regards. But the way in which Keller describes the deficiencies in texture that he finds in many chamber works for piano and strings seems similar to the way in which Friedrich Wührer would describe the way that his teacher, Franz Schmidt, came to understand the left-hand piano as a vehicle which could easily solve the major problems of the piano-chamber genres. And it was only after he had arranged the works for two-hand piano that Wührer realized Schmidt’s genius in balancing the piano and the other ensemble members, of creating a “transparency” and clarity in his original version:

I soon learned from the scores that none of the works has been harmed by the restriction of the piano part to one hand. On the contrary, the transparency of the piano part, which is treated as a real fifth voice with few merely accessory

was published in 1785) while the E-flat work was written, some speculate, around six months later (it was not first published until 1787 due to a cancelled publishing contract). For the history of these pieces see: Basil Smallman, *The Piano Quartet and Quintet: Style, Structure, and Scoring*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994: pp. 11-12.

⁴¹ Hans Keller, “Mozart – The Revolutionary Chamber Musician.” In *The Musical Times* Volume 122, Number 1661 (July 1981): pp. 465.

notes, makes the piano quintets model examples of an ideal solution to the problem of chamber music with piano.⁴²

Rudolf Klein, the German composer, musician, and teacher, agreed with the assessment that the music written for piano and other instruments often suffered from imbalance due to its sources of inspiration and that the single hand of the pianist could help to solve this through carefully crafted compositional subtleties. He even found that

Piano music for one hand is not necessarily to be regarded as incomplete, that great masters have elevated it, through self-restraint, to a means of expression of the greatest originality and precision. Through this manner of playing the piano has retired from its prominent position back into the ranks where, among other instruments, it has found its way back to equality.

And that

[...] in chamber music the piano was rediscovered as an instrument which, without having to restrain itself, was able to enter into equal partnership with violin and cello. In both forms of music [he refers to chamber music and concertos here] a capacity which had been hammered out of existence by Liszt's brilliance was discovered: the capacity for delicate transparent ornamentation.⁴³

Not every composer who came to write left-hand-piano chamber music embraced this aspect in their writing: some did not restrain the left-hand in texture, range, or dominance. They wrote music which appealed to the pianist in Wittgenstein through its relationship to music of the past and through its two-handed nature. Two of the works dedicated to Wittgenstein—the Piano Quartet by Hans Gál and the Suite for two violins, cello and left-hand piano by Korngold—serve as examples of the type of

⁴² Norbert Tschulik trans. Angela Tolstoshev, *Franz Schmidt: A Critical Biography*. London, Glover & Blair, 1980: p. 86.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

writing which Hans Keller may have considered problematic due to the piano's dominance of musical texture. They also highlight the reliance of these composer's nineteenth-century pianistic thinking.

In the first work, the Piano Quartet by Hans Gál—a composition which Wittgenstein described as “nothing remarkable”⁴⁴—the composer at times creates a sense of uniformity between his chosen instruments. The piano here acts in an ornamental capacity, adding a variety of colors to the music as it flows through its range. One sees this often at the beginning of his movements, such as in the first movement's *Vivace ma non troppo*. Here the piano virtually takes the place of the violin at the works opening. The violin enters only after the piano has handed the theme off to it:

⁴⁴ Waugh, Alexander. *The House of Wittgenstein: A Family at War*. New York: Doubleday, 2008: p. 171.

Vivace ma non troppo ($\text{♩} = 138$)

The musical score is for the first movement of Gál's A-Major Quartet, measures 1 through 8. The tempo is 'Vivace ma non troppo' with a quarter note equal to 138 beats per minute. The key signature is A major (three sharps). The score is written for a quartet of Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Piano. The first system shows measures 1-5. The Violin part is mostly rests. The Viola part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The Violoncello part has a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The Piano part has a more complex melodic line with some triplets. Dynamics include *f*, *mf*, and *f ben tenuto*. The second system starts at measure 6 and continues the piece. The Violin part enters with a melodic line. The Viola part continues its rhythmic pattern. The Violoncello part continues its accompaniment. The Piano part continues its melodic line. Dynamics include *mf* and *f*.

Example 4.4: Gál: A-Major Quartet: I. *Vivace ma non troppo*, mm. 1-8.

But Gál's approach soon changes. In the next example, the piano part almost requires the pianist to be in two places at once. In these instances, Gál displays his reliance on nineteenth-century pianistic techniques, particularly ones which require both a sustained melody and an expanded broken-chordal accompaniment as would be performed by the two-handed pianist. When comparing the passage below from the Gál Quartet to one from Brahms's C-Major Piano Quartet, op. 60, it might prove difficult to distinguish which one was written for the left-handed pianist and which for the two-handed one. The giveaway is simple—Brahms's example requires the pianist to perform a large chord in the right hand simultaneously while the left begins a widespread arpeggio in the lowest ranges of the instrument:

Violin

Viola

Violoncello

Piano

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

3

5

3

3

3

8

ff

mf

mf

f

6

5

Example 4.5: Gál: A-Major Quartet: I. *Vivace ma non troppo*, mm. 54-56.

By shifting the figurations by a quarter note from the strong third-beat chord to the fourth beat, Gál creates the same pianistic effect as Brahms does below, just in a way in which the left-hand pianist can literally perform it. This is a type of pianism which not only looks two-handed, but which feeds off if this type of thinking:

The image displays a musical score for Brahms' C-Major Piano Quartet, op. 60: I. *Allegro non troppo*, measures 154-156. The score is written for four instruments: Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Piano. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The Piano part is particularly complex, featuring triplets and sextuplets, and is marked with *ff* (fortissimo). The other instruments provide harmonic support with chords and single notes.

Example 4.6: Brahms: C-Major Piano Quartet, op. 60: I. *Allegro non troppo*, mm. 154-156.

Gál relies even more on two-handed structures in the slow movement of the quartet: the third movement's *Adagio, dolce ed espressivo*. Oddly, rather than balancing out the left-handed piano part using the other instruments, better incorporating it “into” the quartet as does Schmidt, Gál pushes the pianist’s left hand to its limits, creating a part which is not only two-handed in its nature but virtually impossible to play with a single hand. He does this even at times when the other instruments perform with the piano, times in which they could assist the piano in more easily delivering the

musical material. Instead he triples down on the same musical theme in violin, viola, and cello, leaving the piano to cope with balancing the thorny writing:

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system features staves for Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Piano. The Violin, Viola, and Violoncello staves are currently empty, indicating a rest. The Piano staff shows a complex, thorny melodic line with many accidentals and a wavy line, suggesting a difficult passage. The second system shows the Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.) staves, each playing a simple, sustained note with a slur. The Piano (Pno.) staff continues with a complex, thorny melodic line, marked with a *p* dynamic. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 3/4.

Violin

Viola

Violoncello

Piano

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

p dolce

p

The image displays a musical score for a quartet, specifically Example 4.7: Gál: A-Major Quartet: III. *Adagio, dolce ed espressivo*, measures 26-37. The score is arranged in two systems, each containing staves for Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Piano (Pno.). The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The first system (measures 26-37) features a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The second system (measures 38-49) includes a crescendo (*cresc.*) leading to a forte (*f*) dynamic. The piano part is particularly complex, with dense chordal textures and arpeggiated figures. The string parts are more melodic and expressive, with long, flowing lines.

Example 4.7: Gál: A-Major Quartet: III. *Adagio, dolce ed espressivo*, mm. 26-37.

Erich Wolfgang Korngold's writing is, in general, far more manageable than Gál's writing above; but it still shows off his will for the pianist's identity to be differentiated from the other ensemble instruments in importance and outlay rather than feeding off

of them. This is nowhere more apparent than in the first movement's fugal section. If any musical form (or musical texture) could be described as being well-suited for equality of part writing the fugue would be it.

Instead of embracing this equality—using the left-hand piano part to bring balance to the four-part texture—Korngold asserts the piano's dominance by making it counter the entire ensemble. And he does this by creating a left-hand piano part which relies on its range (and the sustaining power of the pedal) to capture the spirit of the two-handed pianist—he does this even when the integrity of the theme could otherwise be compromised as in the example below, when the thematic subject in the bass region is countered with chordal writing in the higher registers. Compare the theme (as first performed by the cello) to the bass-most part in the piano in the passage which follows, noticing the difference in articulation which must occur. Notice how the piano part is altered and enlarged every time the theme is performed again, eventually giving way to a homophonic version in which the other ensemble instruments strengthen the piano part rather than strengthening the fugal texture:



Example 4.8: Korngold: Suite for 2 Violins, Cello, and Piano (Left Hand): I. *Fuge*, Theme as first performed by the cello, mm. 40-48.



Example 4.9: Korngold: Suite for 2 Violins, Cello, and Piano (Left Hand): I. *Fuge*, Piano Part, mm. 49-57.

Mit intensivem Ausdruck

Steigernd Nachlassend

Steigernd

Example 4.10: Korngold: Suite for 2 Violins, Cello, and Piano (Left Hand): I. *Fuge*, piano only, mm. 67-74.

The image displays a musical score for a section of Korngold's Suite for 2 Violins, Cello, and Piano. It consists of four staves. The top two staves are for Violins (Vln.), the third is for Cello (Vc.), and the bottom two are for Piano (Pno.). The Piano part is specifically for the left hand. The music is in a key with one flat (B-flat) and features a complex texture with many triplets and sustained chords. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4. The score is marked with a double bar line and a repeat sign at the end.

Example 4.11: Korngold: Suite for 2 Violins, Cello, and Piano (Left Hand): I. *Fuge*, mm. 75-82.

Was this just an isolated example of his two-handed thinking, or did this occur in other movements as well? As with Gál, Korngold also reveals his preference for two-handed textures further in the slow movement. Titled *Lied*, the movement is actually based on one of Korngold's songs from his previous opus 22: the first (of three songs) *Was Du mir bist...* What is particularly intriguing about the song is that at times the two-handed pianist is treated like an entire ensemble: Korngold also uses held grace-note-chords to hold a harmony while other voices are performed by the two-handed pianist. What is particularly strange about his writing in the suite, however, is how he wills the left-hand pianist to perform passages which are virtually unchanged from his two-handed version in the *Lied*. This is nowhere more apparent than in the opening to the movement. Here the cello accompanies the left-hand piano; but rather than taking over

some of its duties in the bass register, allowing the left-hand piano room to absorb the vocal line, Korngold instead writes a new, sustained part for the string instrument. The left-hand piano is left to cope with the two-handed part virtually unaided, and only slightly altered to help it absorb the vocal line. Compare the opening of the song with that of the suite:

Schlicht und innig. Nicht zu langsam

Voice

Was - Du mir bist? Der Aus - blick

Piano

p espress. *espress.* *p*

Vo.

in ein schö - nes Land, wo frucht

Pno.

Example 4.12: Korngold: *Wie Du mir bist*, op. 22 no. 1, mm. 1-10.

Schlicht und innig. Nicht zu langsam

Violoncello

Piano

Vc.

Pno.

Example 4.13: Korngold: Suite for 2 Violins, Cello, and Piano (Left Hand): IV. *Lied*, mm. 1-10.

In comparison to the examples above, I have come up with the term “integration” to describe Schmidt’s compositional process in incorporating the piano into the fabric of the string quartet. The term works particularly well in that it does not simply mean to “bring together” but also implies a coming together of disparate aspects or people; according to vocabulary.com, the primary definition of the word integration is “the act of combining into an integral whole,” further described by the website as “an act of bringing things together,” such as the example of “the integration of African-American students into mixed-race schools after segregation was outlawed in the 1950s, or the integration of computers in businesses that had previously only used

paper-based record-keeping.”⁴⁵ Both definitions imply not only a coming together—an invasion—but a transformation of the original into something new and whole: one greater than the sum of its parts, almost in one of the ways that the nineteenth century defined the term organicism.⁴⁶

But how does Schmidt integrate the piano into the sound-fabric of the string quartet without the loss of the pianistic persona? One of the ways he does this is by choosing a common range for all instruments and by keeping his issues with the piano as an instrument on the forefront of his mind while choosing textures. If the piano—the updated “clavier” of his day—cannot produce a pure legato to Schmidt’s liking, it can produce a “shimmering” and bouncy sound akin to the plucked strings. By choosing textures which highlight the piano’s figurative nature along with choosing a comfortable range for the string instruments, he has ensured that the strings have not lost importance in helping to creating the musical fabric. But by sounding the piano first, by letting that sound resonate in our ears before the strings have played, he has also ensured that the piano’s sound is put forward as the true originator of this sound-world. Just witness the magical opening to his A-Major Quintet:

⁴⁵ <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/integration> (Accessed October 30th, 2019)

⁴⁶ D. C. Phillips, “Organicism in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries.” In *Journal of the History of Ideas* Volume 31, Number 3 (July - September 1970): pp. 413-432.

Allegro moderato

A Clarinet

Violin

Viola

Violoncello

Grand Piano

Example 4.14: Schmidt: A-Major Quintet: I. *Allegro moderato*, opening measures.

Schmidt's use of range is equally important not just in the similarity shared between the instruments—with them moving generally in sync with each other up and down—but also in the overlapping of tones. In the second measure of the work (see above) note how the piano literally weaves itself in and through the range of the violin and viola, how each eighth note chord produced sounds different than the one just heard through the placement of instruments first below, then above, then within the range of the others. This creates a seamless fabric through the simplest of means. But it is a most effective one.

Schmidt sought to integrate the left-hand piano into the ensemble, assigning it a variety of functions: in melodic outlay; as accompanist; as contrapuntal partner; or as musical intensifier through figural patterns which we will later see. The piano's ability to transform itself becomes an important aspect of its functioning within any

number of textures—whether as an expanded violin, a cello, or even at times, an entire string section. This ability to transform and take in any number of parts (always in a reduced way, never overpowering the other instruments and always within the span of the hand) makes it into an ideal instrument for Schmidt’s chosen genre: the quintet, a medium with an odd number of instruments. Here the piano functions to balance out the awkwardness that one finds in a five-voiced medium.

In the first movement of the G-Major Quintet, Schmidt shows off this very quality when he attempts to balance out the four strings with the piano in a contrapuntal format. By using the piano in this way, he ensures two things: first, that the piano’s true nature is being respected—the non-legato quality of the instrument of which he complained in its inability to produce a pure legato (he described it as a diminution which was produced after a note was sounded)—and second, that the piano integrates itself into the ensemble’s musical fabric by becoming like one of (and in the example below into two of) the other ensemble members. Here, unlike in the example from the A-Major Quintet above, the piano integrates itself into the fabric in two ways: through instrumental dialogue (with the violins and viola in mm. 25-26) and through the completion of the musical statement (in mm. 27-28):

2 **Etwas ruhiger**

Violin *pizz.* *p* *arco*

Violin *p*

Viola *pizz.* *p* *arco* *pizz.*

Violoncello *pizz.* *p*

Piano *p*

Vln. *pizz.* *arco* *poco cresc.*

Vln. *pizz.* *arco* *poco cresc.*

Vla. *pizz.* *arco* *poco cresc.*

Vc. *pizz.* *arco* *poco cresc.*

Pno. *pizz.* *arco* *poco cresc.*

Example 4.15: Schmidt: Quintet in G major: I. *Lebhaft, doch nicht schnell*, mm. 25-28.

Is Schmidt's theme above pianistic in origin or is it string-like? Perhaps in his mind it is both. But it is telling that when the theme returns in the first movement's

recapitulation section, the roles of all of the instruments have been reversed—the piano now plays the theme at the beginning, while the other instruments follow it. If the small arpeggiation performed by the piano at the end of the last section was pianistic in his thinking, what is it when the little fragment is now performed by the cello in the passage below? Is this music pianistic in origin or is it string-inspired? We cannot say for sure; but what the comparison between passages displays is important for our understanding of not just Schmidt's use of the piano, but his compositions in general: that the thematic material may be more fluid than an either/or approach may reveal. Perhaps by integrating the piano into the texture of the string quartet he has also integrated the other instruments into assimilating aspects of the piano:

15 Etwas ruhiger

Violin *ff* *p*

Violin *ff* *p*

Viola *ff* *pizz.* *p*

Violoncello *ff* *pizz.* *p*

Piano *dim.* *p*

Vln. *poco cresc.*

Vln. *poco cresc.* *arco*

Vla. *poco cresc.*

Vc. *p*

Pno. *poco cresc.*

Example 4.16: Schmidt: Quintet in G Major: I. *Lebhaft doch nicht schnell*, mm. 162-165.

At times Schmidt takes the idea of integration even a step further than in the above examples. In the example below he does not mix the piano into the ensemble

through single note infusion, nor through instrumental dialogue or phrasal completion, but through complete immersion, even absorption of the other instruments. But how can he do this without giving up the idea of the string quartet being the body into which the piano must be integrated? Is he playing the pianistic card for his commissioner in order to satisfy Wittgenstein here? Hardly. Here the piano takes in not part of the ensemble but the whole ensemble in what may at first seem a two-handed manner of compositional thought:

13

B \flat Clarinet

Violin

Viola

Violoncello

Piano

pp

sempre pp

p

Example 4.17: Schmidt: Quintet in B-flat Major: I. *Andante tranquillo*, mm. 124-126.

A closer look at the above passage from the B-flat-Major Quintet reveals a different way of hearing and understanding the music though: if the treble passage in m. 124 seems like a pianistic chord at first glance, could it not also, and perhaps better be

heard as the piano's absorption of the three treble instruments performing together (the octave doubling can be ignored here) thus melding their sound to create a seamless musical fabric. The bass part would then act as the cello, giving weight and body to the entire passage. Schmidt enhances this effect through the use of the violin and viola in m. 124. His doubling of the musical material not only gives weight to the passage but also ties their very sound into the musical texture, one which is highlighted not only through the notes themselves (the string instruments both play the notes within the chord, not the melodic material) but also through the octave displacement of the string material: the notes are both within the chord, but also outside of it.

How do we know that this passage was not conceived in a two-handed manner of thought? Through a closer look at the passage which follows it. The identities of the piano and the string instruments are once again mixed up in new ways, as can clearly be seen in the following measures. The cello (with help from the viola) now performs the drone *pizzicato* (the piano bass part) section from above: but rather than altering the part—placing the cello and viola on the first beat, thereby regularizing the meter, which the pianist's left hand physically could not do by itself—the strings continue to perform the passage as it had been initially by the piano. If the piano has taken over the layout and sonority of the string quartet in its positioning of notes, then the string quartet has also developed itself as a reflection of the piano throughout the work's development. Here the strings have become almost piano-like:

Example 4.18: Schmidt: Quintet in B-flat Major: I. *Andante tranquillo*, mm. 127-129.

In another example from the B-flat-Major Quintet, Schmidt once again shows an aspect of integration, though here highlighted through its close proximity to a pianistic rendering of a motive performed at the same time by the violin. Not only does he define the piano part as being different than the violin through his chosen figurations—one need remember Schmidt’s notion that the piano was incapable of creating a true sense of a legato line, except through false means such as pedaling—but here also through the shift from ensemble-like duet-partner with the violin at the beginning of the following passage to fully-fledged string-quartet member in the measures which follow:

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a quintet. The top system includes staves for B♭ Clarinet, Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Piano. The bottom system includes staves for B♭ Cl., Vln., Vla., Vc., and Pno. The music is in 6/8 time and B-flat major. The Piano part is particularly prominent, featuring a complex, arpeggiated texture in the right hand and a more rhythmic pattern in the left hand. The Violin and Viola parts have melodic lines with slurs. The Violoncello part has a melodic line with a 'loco' marking. The B-flat Clarinet part is mostly rests.

Example 4.19: Schmidt: Quintet in B-flat Major: I. *Andante tranquillo*, mm. 45-49.

This type of writing—in which Schmidt creates a quartet-like texture—had already been thought of as pianistic by him in his only work for solo two-hand piano: the aforementioned *Romanze*. In the passage below, Schmidt had already imagined these

later textures, ones which were to be used to even greater effect in the quintets through expanded possibilities, as early as 1920-1921, before he had received any commissions from Paul Wittgenstein. They are also ones which he may have come across in a number of pieces from the standard piano literature, ones which he knew intimately, especially from the works by the composers below:



Example 4.20: Schmidt: *Romanze*, mm. 24-26

Example 4.21: Schubert: *Fantasy in C Major, op. 15 "Wanderer": II. Adagio*, mm. 14-15

Example 4.22: Beethoven: *Sonata in C Minor, op. 13 "Pathétique": II. Adagio cantabile*, mm. 9-12

This texture is also a one which he favored in his actual string quartets, even the one in A Major, written before any of the quintets were to appear. Again, his pianistic and string thinking become linked in ways which will only truly develop to their potentials in the works which mix these two genres. They will also help him to define the left-hand piano in new and intriguing ways:

Example 4.23: Schmidt: String Quartet in A Major, II. *Adagio*, mm. 13-14.

A final mode of integration to be considered may be called transformation: sustained notes in a theme originally presented by a string or wind instrument are altered or adorned in ways that accommodate the limited sustaining power of the piano. We have already seen an occurrence of this in the passage above from the B-flat Quintet, in which the piano alters the violin writing by changing long-phrased eight notes performed by the string instrument into the running sixteenth notes on the piano (Example 4.19). Compensating for the inability of the piano to sustain the long notes,

Schmidt begins by having the piano enliven the texture with a layer of sixteenth note arpeggiation. That layer persists as the piano proceeds to double the violin's thematic presentation an octave above. The thematic line, enriched by the doubling, is also coloristically transformed, owing to the chromatically inflected figuration that now animates the musical space between the piano and the violin.

This approach differs from Godowsky's in a major way: for Schmidt this is not an act of assimilation through absorption of an outside material's look and feel in the way Godowsky translated the solo violin works pianistically, but a shift in form, shape, or appearance which pianistically captures the spirit of the other instrument.⁴⁷ One can witness this in moments when Schmidt translates significant thematic material from one medium to another: he alters it enough to keep the sense of the theme's significance, but only in a way which makes that significance more instrumentally idiomatic. He often highlights this transformation through placement of material, through figurative variation, and in the following case, through the use of an extended cadenza within the fabric of the A-Major Quintet's first movement, one which takes up a good portion of that movement's development section. Witness the main theme as it is first performed by the clarinet:

⁴⁷ For definitions see:

<https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/transformation>

<https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/assimilation>



Example 4.24: Schmidt: A-Major Quintet: I. *Allegro moderato*, mm. 6-10. The theme as first performed by the clarinet.

Note the phrasing in the above example and how long these are as well: a dotted-quarter note tied to a quarter note. When the piano subsumes the thematic material a short while later, it does not disregard the long-held note values of the theme itself, rather it transforms it—it makes it pianistic through a re-transitioning of material—in which the length of the long-held note is transformed through pianistic setting. By filling in the gap—one which according to Schmidt would simply decay without any ability for it to be held continuously or crescendo upwards—Schmidt has solved the issue of giving the piano thematic significance without altering the essence of the theme itself. Note how the role of the piano changes from simple accompaniment at the opening of the passage below, to one in which the piano's limitations are highlighted through its well-thought-out transformation:

A Clarinet

Violin

p dolce espr.

Viola

pp dolce

Violoncello

pp

Piano

p dolce

A Cl.

pp

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

The image displays a musical score for a quintet, specifically measures 23-25 of the first movement of a quintet in A major by Schmidt. The score is written for five instruments: Alto Clarinet (A Cl.), Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Piano (Pno.). The key signature is A major, indicated by three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The tempo is marked 'Allegro moderato'. The piano part is particularly prominent, featuring a complex, rhythmic figure in the right hand, while the other instruments provide harmonic support and melodic lines. The violin part is noted for doubling the piano's melody an octave below.

Example 4.25: Schmidt: Quintet in A Major: I. *Allegro moderato*, mm. 23-25.

In the above, the success of the passage is not only delivered through this transformation but also through the use of the other instrumental voices that carry the theme through this pianistic figuration: note the use of the violin, which doubles the melody just an octave below the piano part.

The Piano Acts Figuratively (or Pianistic Interplay)

As can be seen above, Schmidt used a number of different techniques of integration and transformation to help him to define the role of the piano within his chamber works: what one notices from all of the above examples is how Schmidt rarely, if ever, thought of the left-hand piano as trying to do what the two hands of the

“normal” pianist did in his works. Rather than define his unique pianism using techniques from the two-handed world, he instead used his favored chamber genres to help him craft a new identity for the instrument: a sort of string instrument with the capabilities (or limitations) of the piano, one which made him rethink and reformat his music to best fit the instrument especially in thematically significant areas.

But Schmidt also—and one thinks not only to satisfy Wittgenstein, though this was surely a factor—allowed the piano to wander, to figuratively noodle around the piano’s full range, in moments of less significant thematic areas. Often (though not always) these moments occurred at times and in places given meaning through the very figurations summoned: in variation formats, such as that which end the A-Major Quintet or in those such as the *Adagio* in the G-Major Quintet (an ABA form which uses variational principles on its return). In these moments, the piano defines its role not just in thematically significant ways but also by summoning its brilliance, creating a “shimmering” effect through the contrast which its figurations create through the different textures and approach the instrument takes.

Here are the first four bars of the theme as it appears at the beginning of that *Adagio* movement played by the strings. Note the sixteenth-note running accompaniments in the second violin and viola—these values are important as they are the fastest values of running notes which will be given to the string instruments in this movement (the only faster values are the thirty second notes which act as part of the double-dotted eighth note, thirty second note pairing beginning in m. 32):

Adagio

The musical score is for a quintet in G major, second movement, Adagio, measures 1-4. The score is written for Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Piano. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is common time (C). The first system shows the Violin and Viola parts. The Violin part starts with a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. The Viola part starts with a half note G3, followed by a half note A3, and then a half note B3. The second system shows the Violoncello and Piano parts. The Violoncello part starts with a half note G2, followed by a half note A2, and then a half note B2. The Piano part is silent. The third system shows the Violin and Viola parts. The Violin part starts with a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. The Viola part starts with a half note G3, followed by a half note A3, and then a half note B3. The fourth system shows the Viola and Violoncello parts. The Viola part starts with a half note G3, followed by a half note A3, and then a half note B3. The Violoncello part starts with a half note G2, followed by a half note A2, and then a half note B2. The Piano part is silent throughout.

Example 4.26: Schmidt: Quintet in G Major: II. *Adagio*, mm. 1-4.

This second movement has been labeled by one listener as possessing a “nursery-rhyme vein” whose tune “could infiltrate your brain, driving you crazy.” But for that listener the movement was highly successful in its poetic implications. He described

it as summoning T.S. “Eliot’s condition of complete simplicity / costing not less than everything,” a movement whose “final deep repose is worthy of Bruckner.”⁴⁸ But what of the pianistic interplay in this movement? Does this play a part in helping to create this very child-like simplicity which eventually encompasses more than just the beguiling tune does at the work’s opening?

It surely does. In this movement, the piano is defined not only in its ability to integrate into the ensemble through various means which we have already discussed—in m. 11 as an enhanced violin performing the theme; in m. 17 acting the part of the second violin and viola at the opening; in m. 29 as the sixteenth-note accompanying counterpoint; or in mm. 45-49 where it performs instrumental dialogue with the three treble instruments before falling into the range of the cello to play its part—but also in more “pianistic” ways. And pianistic for Schmidt was as much related to the faster movements of Bach as it was to the way that Chopin handles the instrument. But how to write pianistically for the left hand in a slow movement? By allowing the piano to “shimmer” with its “brilliant” sound by not altering the final statement of the theme but rather by adding to it. Here the piano’s role is defined not by empty virtuosic figurations, but thorough a gentle murmuring effect created through a type of figuration which only the piano could perform in this way. Compare the passage at the beginning of the movement (Example 4.26) to the one later in the movement with the added left-hand piano part to witness the difference:

⁴⁸ Leo Black, “Review: Franz Schmidt: Piano Quintets.” In *The Musical Times* Volume 134, Number 1803 (May 1993): p. 282.

Violin *p* *espr.*

Violin *pp*

Viola *pp*

Violoncello *pp*

Piano *pp*

This musical score is for measures 195-197. It features four staves: Violin (top), Violin (second), Viola (third), Violoncello (fourth), and Piano (bottom). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is common time (C). The Violin part begins with a half note G#4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. The Violin part begins with a half note G#4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. The Viola part begins with a half note G#3, followed by a half note A3, and then a half note B3. The Violoncello part begins with a half note G#2, followed by a half note A2, and then a half note B2. The Piano part begins with a half note G#3, followed by a half note A3, and then a half note B3. The Piano part begins with a half note G#3, followed by a half note A3, and then a half note B3.

Vln.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

This musical score is for measures 195-197. It features four staves: Violin (top), Violin (second), Viola (third), Violoncello (fourth), and Piano (bottom). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is common time (C). The Violin part begins with a half note G#4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. The Violin part begins with a half note G#4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. The Viola part begins with a half note G#3, followed by a half note A3, and then a half note B3. The Violoncello part begins with a half note G#2, followed by a half note A2, and then a half note B2. The Piano part begins with a half note G#3, followed by a half note A3, and then a half note B3. The Piano part begins with a half note G#3, followed by a half note A3, and then a half note B3.

The musical score is for a quintet in G major, second movement, Adagio, measures 70-73. It consists of five staves: Violin I (Vln.), Violin II (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Piano (Pno.). The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system (mm. 70-73) features a crescendo, with markings 'cresc.' and 'poco cresc.' under the strings. The second system (mm. 74-77) features a decrescendo, with markings 'dim.' under the strings. The piano part is a continuous arpeggiated figure in the right hand, while the left hand is mostly silent.

Example 4.27: Schmidt: Quintet in G Major: II. *Adagio*, mm. 70-73.

By adding the piano part to this passage, Schmidt enables the piano to enhance the passage without overpowering the rest of the ensemble.

Near the end of the movement (mm. 169-176), we find Schmidt using his pianistic resources with maximum restraint and subtlety, grounding the passage on the instrument's low B–F-sharp sonority (mm. 169-70), which will blend with the cello's descending arpeggiation. Rather than having the left-hand piano part develop into an active, independent presence here, he simply allows it to dissipate. As the piano falls silent, the role of the bass foundation passes to the cello, whose open fifth, now an octave higher, reanimates the sonority initiated by the piano and turns it into a sustained, low-register backdrop for the legato discourse of the clarinet, violin, and viola. Its understated treatment notwithstanding, the left-hand piano plays a key role in establishing the character of the passage and the ensemble relationships it embodies:

A Clarinet

Violin

Viola

Violoncello

Grand Piano

A Cl.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

Example 4.28: Schmidt: Quintet in A Major: IV. *Adagio*, mm. 169-176.

The special ensemble effect that Schmidt conceives for the closing measures of the movement underscores both the novelty and the subtlety of his approach. The

musical materials involved are simple but striking: sustained tonic harmony, momentary darkening of the tonal color from major to minor, a diminuendo in all parts, and a shimmer of piano figuration that spans more than six octaves, falling and then rising before eventually dying away on a top F-sharp. Dynamically understated, yet rich with harmonic resonance, this technically challenging flourish unites perfectly with the rest of the ensemble in achieving closure and liquidation, despite its elements of radical contrast in rhythm, register, and timbre:

A Clarinet

Violin

Viola

Violoncello

Grand Piano

dim.

dim.

dim.

sempre dim.

A Cl.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

perdendosi

Example 4.29: Schmidt: Quintet in A Major: IV. *Adagio*, mm. 187-189.

Culmination

Perhaps Schmidt's fullest definition of the left-hand pianistic persona came not from these individual factors—either the integration of the piano into the ensemble or the pianistic rendering of the ensemble's music through its own means—but through a broader recontextualization of both. Rather than examining the nature of the piano part at individual moments of the work, it may be more revealing to look at a longer passage in which the music can be analyzed not only vertically but horizontally as well.

When Schmidt's approach towards realizing a pianistic persona within the ensemble takes on this sense of culmination—of taking in and transforming the other instrumental parts into another version of themselves—the effect is even greater due to its infrequency and its uniqueness in his compositional approach. In combining not one but all of the factors above, it becomes a way of understanding these moments of pianistic integration and pianistic figuration as serving the same purpose. When Schmidt combines these two aspects, he most clearly demonstrates his understanding of the role of the piano within the chamber ensemble here—in particular how the left-hand piano can be defined as its very own instrument.

Though the writing may be more hidden in these moments than in the above examples, it also proves itself more comprehensive in outlook. Rather than simply act the part of the three other instruments as the piano does for example in the following passage—here the piano plays all of the notes of the clarinet, violin, and viola, only melodically assimilating the cello part at the end of m. 25—Schmidt's capturing of the essence of the ensemble proves to be the height of his left-hand pianistic

understanding. In measure 23 below, one can see the piano take in the violin part while adding a slurred accompaniment that typifies Schmidt's pianistic idiom in the use of smaller phrase groupings. The two-note slur, as musicians know from experience, naturally has the musician exaggerate the first note, allowing the second one to assume a less important function in three ways: through less weight, through less dynamic force, and through the application of an up motion rather than a down motion of the fingers and the arm:

Example 4.30: Schmidt: Quintet in A Major: I. *Allegro moderato*, mm. 24.

In the following measure Schmidt has a different, more cumulative take on the piano's role within the passage. Rather than absorb the role of only one instrument, adding a bit of Schmidt's realization of the pianistic persona through the added slur, Schmidt's pianist now adds his personality through arpeggiation while also pulling in all

of the melodically sounding instruments by the end of the passage. Here the pianist has integrated the ensemble while also figuratively “acting” the role of the pianist:

Example 4.31: Schmidt: Quintet in A Major: I. *Allegro moderato*, m. 25.

This is only one small part of one individual measure. It is hardly cumulative in how it approaches the creation of the piano’s persona on a grand scale. Whereas the term cumulative may at first lead one to believe that such a passage in Schmidt’s A-Major Quintet may arise from the piano expanding outwards—as in the left-hand piano compositions by such exponents as Reger in his fugue for solo left hand piano—Schmidt’s culmination does not occur through vertical expansion but rather horizontally.

This occurs through the lessening of forces rather than through the expansion of any pianistic sonorities. Instead of having all of the instruments perform at the same time, Schmidt “recontrapuntalizes” the music by giving each instrument an important

fragment to play. Each fragment is then recontextualized by the piano through absorption—whether in the rare case a type of “Augenmusik” when one looks at the clarinet, or more often through actual tonal mirroring (the blue notes are the first type, the red, the more prevalent second). This absorption though is not on a small level, taking in the other instrumental parts for a mere fragment of a measure, but for an entire phrase.

As the piano responds, absorbing elements from the clarinet, violin, viola, and cello, it ornaments them, recasting them as pianistic through a type of figuration that we have already seen in the works of Chopin. By performing these notes in conjunction with the entire ensemble, a natural culmination ensues: the piano has become a fully integrated member of the ensemble without giving up its own unique personality. The left-hand piano here allowed Schmidt to fully integrate the instrument into the ensemble: to reconfigure and to bring a new understanding of the piano as a member who does not lie “outside of the string quartet” but which resides right in the very heart of it:

A Clarinet

Violin

Viola

Violoncello

Piano

p

p poco espr.

p espr.

poco a poco cresc.

A Cl.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

p

pp

poco espr.

A Cl.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

p espr. cresc.

cresc.

Example 4.32: Schmidt: Quintet in A Major: I. *Allegro moderato*, mm. 27-31.

The piano as seen above not only mirrors the contrapuntal lines in the clarinet and strings, it is the pianistic realization of this music in its full glory: the piano has been elevated to an instrument of thematic importance in the work as well as an instrument

that is allowed to perform as it should, according to Schmidt, “naturally.” This pianism is realized by the incorporation of eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century ideas and ideals. Though the work seems to be a clarinet quintet in everything but name—the key and instrumentation clearly recall previous models by Mozart, Brahms, and Reger, though here with the added piano—passages such as the one above in this quintet give the impression that it is far more than that for Schmidt: the quintet becomes a marker of his most mature pianistic style, incorporating his love of chamber music and counterpoint and realizing it all on the instrument that he claimed to hate.

Toccata in D Minor: A Pianistic Encore

The Toccata in D Minor holds a special place in the Schmidt’s oeuvre: not only was it his last completed composition, it was also the only solo piano work he wrote for the left-hand.⁴⁹ Written in 1938, the toccata was given to Wittgenstein in gratitude for the numerous commissions he had requested from Schmidt over the years and for the high regard in which he held most of those works.

After Schmidt’s death, his widow Margarethe wrote to Wittgenstein that she could not in good faith implement a ban of the performance on Schmidt’s works commissioned by him for the sake of her deceased husband’s future legacy. This

⁴⁹ The Intermezzo for solo left-hand piano is the second movement of the A-Major Quintet and was written as the original slow movement. Though it can be performed alone it was not originally intended to be performed outside of its chamber setting.

angered Wittgenstein to no end: in his mind it was his idea which gave birth to the works and his money which funded them. It was also stipulated in his contracts. But when Wittgenstein left Austria in 1938 for good and a new government took over, those contracts became null and void. Even if Margarethe would not stop the arrangements of the quintets, though, there was one case in which she would make an exception:

After the most serious examination of my conscience I do not find it improper that these works should be played in Germany. In America they are certainly performed by nobody but you. So it does you no harm, and we do not have to do without them. Only in a single case have I declared an explicit ban, namely on the performance of the Toccata, because it was a present from Franz Schmidt to you, most honoured Herr von Wittgenstein.⁵⁰

Though the ban should have prevented the arrangement and performance of this work, it failed to do so. In 1940, just two years after Schmidt completed the toccata and sent it to Wittgenstein, Schmidt's former pupil—Friedrich Wührer—once again got to work arranging and performing the piece in public. To make matters worse, he often performed it in Schmidt's and Wittgenstein's own city of Vienna. And whenever Wührer came to play Schmidt's compositions in public—concerto, quintet, or solo work—he always performed them in his own two-handed arrangements.

What marks the work as important in Schmidt's oeuvre is its realization of Schmidt's style in this genre: one can see aspects of his earlier *Romanze*, yet also that he developed over the course of the years he spent writing his quintets. It is here where Schmidt once again unites all that is important to him as composer into a single six-

⁵⁰ Norbert Tschulik, trans. Angela Tolstoshev, *Franz Schmidt: A Critical Biography*. London, Glover & Blair, 1980: p. 88.

minute movement: the logic of sonata form, the intricacies of counterpoint, the brilliance of his own pianism, and the incorporation of string quartet thinking. The pianist Paul Badura-Skoda claims that Schmidt reveled in the challenge of writing a work for left hand that sounded as though it were actually played by two hands.⁵¹ But that statement is, at best, only marginally true, as we have seen in his other works: Schmidt was not attempting to write a two-handed work—his own history with the instrument proves this. But perhaps the two-handed aspect of the work was the one which still resonated with performers of left-hand works and were capable of performing two-handed works as well.

Schmidt's biographer Carl Nemeth claimed to hear the toccatas of Schumann and Czerny in Schmidt's toccata;⁵² and this is certainly true with regard to the repetitive figurative nature of the themes, the incessant drive of the movement, and the formal designs—both Schumann's toccata and Czerny's example can be analyzed using sonata-form principles. But I also believe that one can hear Bach in a number of ways: the key, the layout, the type of figurative patterns favored, and not least of all the genre.

In the Toccata, the figurative aspects found in Schmidt's quintets are expanded even further: the entire range of the piano is used, though always with the sense of the piano acting as an expanded string instrument in which counterpoint still rules the day. If the idea of counterpoint through figuration can be linked with Bach's solo string

⁵¹ For Badura-Skoda's comments and a slightly sloppy performance of the work (though taken at breakneck speed by a pianist at the age of 85!) see:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZTtqbE4e64> (Accessed 19 March 2018)

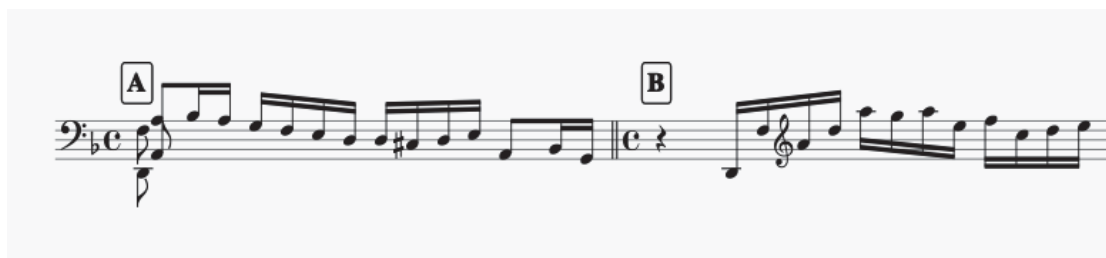
⁵² Carl Nemeth, *Franz Schmidt: Ein Meister nach Brahms und Bruckner*. Zürich: Amalthea-Verlag: 1957: p. 228.

works, the figuration is still pianistically oriented, as witnessed in changes of hand position on each beat in the opening measures:

The image shows the first four measures of Schmidt's Toccata in D Minor. The tempo is 'Molto Vivace'. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The first system consists of two measures. In the first measure, the right hand plays a rapid ascending scale starting on D4, and the left hand plays a descending scale starting on D4. Both hands are marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The second measure of the first system continues the scales. The second system also consists of two measures. The first measure of the second system continues the scales. The second measure of the second system features a 'chord' on beat two, which is a D minor triad (D4, F4, A4) in the right hand and a D minor triad (D3, F3, A3) in the left hand. The tempo marking 'sempre un poco legato ma non troppo' is written above the second measure of the second system.

Example 4.33: Schmidt: Toccata in D Minor, mm. 1-4.

How Schmidt realizes the “chord” on beat two in the second measure is also notable. Here Schmidt is clearly evoking Bach’s cello works in range and in texture. This becomes more evident when one compares this example to one from the *Allemande* found in Bach’s D-Minor Cello Suite, BWV 1008:



Example 4.34: A comparison between [A] Bach's *Allemande* from his D-Minor Cello Suite (m. 1) and [B] Schmidt's *Toccata in D Minor* (m. 2). Note the similarities in approach: not just the key, but the expanded chord featuring all of the notes of the D-Minor triad at the opening and the descent from the A that ensues. The differences? Differences include Schmidt's more modal-sounding scale pattern, featuring a C-natural instead of the C-sharp, and the expanded range of the piano's initial tonic-chord presentation. Although the cello could still perform this passage from the toccata, the range at the beginning is extreme for that instrument.

Here, far more than in any of the quintets, Schmidt relies on the type of counterpoint he could most easily realize—not a closely-spaced configuration based on the reach of the hand, nor even the type that Godowsky fostered in many of his earlier works through the use of the pedal. Rather, Schmidt's counterpoint is entirely based on linear implication and chordal arpeggiations. This approach could be regarded to some extent as string-like even if not entirely as voice implication was a technique used in one of Bach's most famous fugues—that found in his D-Minor Toccata and Fugue for organ, BWV 565.

The type of writing found above at the beginning of the toccata is not cello-like or at least it is not purely cello-like. More to the point is the pianistic manner by which the chords move from one hand position to the next. One can imagine using the fingers 5-2-3-1 on every beat. This would naturally allow for an easy opening pattern to a virtuosic work. The ability to simply move the hand using the same fingering to perform running passagework is a technique taught by both Hans von Bülow and Ferruccio

Busoni.⁵³ This was deemed pianistic for the ease of execution even in passages where the fingering seemed odd at first.

This “pianistic” persona is evident once again a measure later by its closeness to the Bach passage above: here the left-hand piano is not re-defined by the cello, but the cello passage allows it to summon its other persona, one used by Schmidt in his quintets to define it as an expanded string instrument. Though inspired by the cello, it is nevertheless assimilated as pianistic by its arpeggiation, taking a full beat to accomplish what the cellist could do with a single stroke of the bow on the four strings of the instrument.

If Schmidt cannot integrate the left-hand piano into an ensemble that does not exist here, he is still able to create a pianistic persona through a back and forth, a juxtapositioning of different elements that recalls the left-hand pianistic persona of his quintets, which involved thematic sharing with the string instruments but also pianistic figurations in which a type of filigree dominated the piano parts in sections of the quintets where the ensemble members adhered to the sustained sonority. If one looks closer one can even imagine the various instruments used by Schmidt in his quintets performing this music in conjunction with the piano here. The following passages from the Toccata may be compared with one from the A-Major Quintet shown below:

⁵³ In their article the subject of the passage refers to using the thumb and/or the fifth finger on black keys, a trait which was often discouraged by composers and teachers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. This may have stemmed from harpsichord technique. By the end of the nineteenth century this quality had changed.

Richard Parncutt, John A. Sloboda, Eric F. Clarke, Matti Raekallio, and Peter Desain. “An Ergonomic Model of Keyboard Fingering for Melodic Fragments.” In *Music Perception* Volume 14 Number 4 (Summer 1997): p. 359.

espr.

cresc.

mf

Example 4.35: Schmidt: Toccata in D Minor: mm. 33-38.

A Clarinet
 Violin
 Viola
 Violoncello
 Grand Piano

The score for measures 311-314 shows the A Clarinet, Violin, Viola, and Violoncello playing sustained notes with a *p* (piano) dynamic, which then fades to *dim.* (diminuendo). The Grand Piano part features a more active melodic line, starting with a *p* dynamic and also fading to *dim.* by the end of the passage.

A Cl.
 Vln.
 Vla.
 Vc.
 Pno.

This section continues the musical material from the previous system. The A Cl., Vln., and Vla. parts maintain their sustained notes. The Vc. part also sustains its notes. The Pno. part continues its melodic development, ending with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic.

Example 4.36: Schmidt: A-Major Quintet: V. *Finale*, mm. 311-314.

Example 4.37: Schmidt: Toccata in D Minor: mm. 15-18.

At the end of the development section, where Schmidt highlights both the highest and lowest registers of the instrument, the impression is not that of the two-handed pianist performing. On the contrary, the low D-A-D-chord (the last sixteenth-note of measure 60) rings in our ears like a drone-chord played by the cello in one of Bach's suites. Schmidt then shifts up, some five octaves, into the highest register that we have yet heard, invoking a violin reaching up into the highest registers. Invoking both the cello and the violin, the effect is that of a duet that connects with Bach's cello idiom as well as the violin writing in his solo string works:

Example 4.38: Schmidt: Toccata in D Minor, mm. 60-63. The end of the Development Section.

Taken together, the four measures above can be felt in another way: as a miniaturized chamber work. This passage—with the cello’s implied pedal point⁵⁴ below the figuration in a soprano instrument, along with the measure before acting as the other two inner ensemble instruments—seems related once again to his chamber writing: not just that found in the left-hand piano, but one which encompasses the entire string quartet. Even when Schmidt wrote music for only the piano (left hand) he still seemed to want to have the piano sounding “within” the string quartet, something which he had already shown in his *Romanze* for two-hand piano. He did this by having the left-hand piano act the part of the entire ensemble so that it became its own instrument through assimilation and transformation. The example below compares a

⁵⁴ Throughout Schmidt’s writing one can find a high use of the drone or pedal point to create stasis on top of which Schmidt can create interest through his chromatic figurative wanderings. For more information please see:

Thomas Bernard Corfield, *Franz Schmidt (1874-1939): A Discussion of His Style with Special Reference to the Four Symphonies and ‘Das Buch mit sieben Siegeln.’* New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1989: p. 282.

passage from the A-Major Quintet with a similar one in the measures quoted above
from the Toccata:

The musical score is for the final section of the A-Major Quintet, V. Finale, measures 315-317. It is written for five instruments: A Clarinet, Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Grand Piano. The key signature is E major (three sharps) and the time signature is common time (C). The A Clarinet, Violin, Viola, and Violoncello parts consist of long, sustained notes (pedals) marked *pp* (pianissimo). The Grand Piano part features a melodic line in the right hand that ascends through the octaves, marked *pp* at the beginning and *dim.* (diminuendo) towards the end. The bottom section of the score shows the same instruments (A Cl., Vln., Vla., Vc., and Pno.) in a similar texture, with the piano part continuing its melodic ascent.

Example 4.39: Schmidt: A-Major Quintet: V. *Finale*, mm. 315-317.

Though the passage comes in a different setting than the Toccata (the passage from the toccata occurs at the end of the Development section of the sonata form while the above passage comes in the last of a set of variations) the writing is similar in sound and effect: the long held notes of the strings (and here clarinet) act as the huge bass D-A-D in the toccata, resounding in one's ears, while the left-hand piano is allowed to wind its way up through the octaves turning into a whisper. The Toccata attempts to capture the essence of this passage using similar means just reinterpreted by the piano.

Conclusions

We began this study with a quotation from one of the composers who has come to embrace the left-hand piano as a vehicle for musical exploration in the twenty-first century, Ari Schönfeld, who found that not only was the left-hand piano “another kind of instrument,” it also possessed its own unique “language, its own dialectics and even its own harmony and technique.”¹ When considering the history of the repertoire—beginning with a simple work by C.P.E. Bach that could be played by either the right or left hand and encompassing nineteenth-century works of staggering difficulty—there was always one aspect that linked all of these works together: whether etude, technical exercise, operatic paraphrase, variation, or sonata, they all endorsed the idea of the two-handed pianist in their construction. How could the left-hand piano be an instrument of its own if all it attempted to do was recreate a repertoire that could be played better with two hands?

This was the predicament that composers after the turn of the twentieth century faced: if one was to write music for a single hand, whether through one’s interest in exploring the possibilities or limitations, through temporary or permanent necessity as a performer, or through the will of another, could the left-hand piano be more than an instrument that attempted to do the work of two hands? Could it truly be its own instrument capable of playing a type of music written for it? And if so, how?

¹ Albert Sassman, “‘...alles, was nur möglich ist, aufzufinden und auszugraben.’: Paul Wittgenstein und die Klavier-Sololiteratur für die linke Hand allein.” In *Empty Sleeve: Der Musiker und Mäzen Paul Wittgenstein*, ed. Irene Suchy, Allan Janik, Georg Predota. Innsbruck, StudienVerlag, 2006: p. 127.

Leopold Godowsky was prompted to explore the possibilities of the left hand by a personal tragedy that stimulated him to explore its capabilities in search of expanding the possibilities of the combinations of both hands. As he wrote when he first published his Chopin Studies,

If it is possible to assign to the left hand alone the work done usually by both hands simultaneously, what vistas are opened to future composers, were this attainment to be extended to both hands!²

Godowsky's ideas were pursued by only a few composers after his death. And though he felt even in his earliest days that the left hand could do the work of two hands, it should be noted that this was achieved—as can be seen in works such as his version of Chopin's Revolutionary Etude—not through leaps and bounds, in which the single hand acted the part of two, but through contrapuntal infusion: his desire for the left hand to be both melodist and accompanist, and to achieve a union between these two facets. In his mind, both parts were essential to his compositions.

Only later in his career did Godowsky realize, perhaps by accident, that he had come to define the left hand as an instrument of its very own. This was a slow process, first attempted by fusing elements of nineteenth-century pianistic figurations with symphonic counterpoint inspired by composers such as Wagner. But this changed over time—or at least his sources of inspiration shifted. When Bach became his model (not

² Leopold Godowsky, "Special Remarks on the studies for the left hand alone." In *Leopold Godowsky: Studien über die Etüden von Chopin*. Volume III Numbers 21-30. Berlin: Robert Lienau Vormal's Schlesinger, 1995: p. vii.

Bach through Chopin but through the solo-string works), as for example in works such as his *Suite rococo*, his *Prelude and Fugue on B-A-C-H*, or his *Etude macabre*, so did his emphasis on expansion through symphonicism change to a more assimilative process, one in which the left-hand piano adapted the cello and violin writing he found in the suites, sonatas, and partitas, and transformed it into something pianistic.

Franz Schmidt's story is different. Although he was a piano virtuoso of the very highest caliber, he was reluctant for various reasons to compose for the piano before the first commissions from Paul Wittgenstein came his way; and the limitations of the left-hand instrument seemed to spur him on. But even if he detested the idea of the piano and the cheap parlor tricks of many pianists of his day, he understood the instrument in a way that only one who had mastered it could.

Proceeding to define the piano according to his pianistic abilities, he came to integrate the instrument into the ensemble, ensuring that it played neither "against" the orchestra nor "outside" the string quartet. Hans Keller remembered that in his last decade, Schmidt cherished the string quartet over all other genres. And by integrating the piano into the ensemble that Schmidt loved above all others, he did not do what Godowsky did in the process of assimilation: if Godowsky took the properties of the individual string instruments, transforming them pianistically through range, figurations, contrapuntal possibilities, and his chosen fingering, Schmidt's integration had not only to do with assimilating these aspects into the left-hand piano, but in forging an organic or cohesive whole. If Godowsky's left-hand pianism took in the characteristics of the

single string instrument, Schmidt's took in not only the individual members of the group but at times the entire ensemble.

Schmidt too was a pianist trained in the nineteenth century who loved not only Bach and Handel, but Mozart, Chopin, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Liszt, Brahms and others. Their music inspired him in his own pianistic filigree, an aspect equally important in defining the piano's role in the string quartet. By integrating the piano into the ensemble, he also allowed the piano to define itself through these patterns: if the piano had limitations with regard to tone production and staying power, how better than to define the piano through what it did best? In this Schmidt used the piano to intensify passages through a kind of figuration that could only be performed by the piano, a type in which any kind of passagework could be easily performed in any octave, whether in arpeggiated forms, scales, or double notes.

Whereas Godowsky came to model his earlier style on Chopin, and then later on Bach, Schmidt seemed to work in reverse: if Bachian counterpoint always remained an important aspect of his composition, he regarded Chopin as the most pianistic of composers to emulate. By incorporating counterpoint into figuration in ways that Chopin had done in smaller doses in his ballades and etudes, Schmidt not only integrated the ensemble members into the realm of the piano but allowed the piano to take on characteristics of the other members of the ensemble as well. This was pianistic culmination: one of the ways to define the piano as being "within" the string quartet.

In the only solo work he wrote for the left-hand piano, the late Toccata in D Minor, a gift to Paul Wittgenstein rather than a commission, Schmidt seemed to

incorporate everything he learned in the chamber quintets into achieving a style of composition that he used to define the single-hand instrument: if the synthesis he achieved in the quintet involved integrating the ensemble instruments into a pianistic setting, in the Toccata Schmidt seemed to conjure an ideal ensemble that was never there to begin with. Here his left-hand pianistic style was solidified through the reimagining of the (left-hand) piano not as an orchestra but as Schmidt's two favorite instrumental media: the organ (I imagine that when Schmidt chose the toccata he was harking back to Bach's organ toccatas and not the music of Schumann or Czerny) and the string quartet.

Ari Schönfeld's quotation once again comes to mind: that the "piano played by left hand alone is another kind of instrument, which has its own language, its own dialectics and even its own kind of harmony and technique." This can be seen in the ways that Godowsky and Schmidt came to see the left-hand piano's potential in realizing a type of music that only it could perform. How they defined the left-hand piano may have been different in the sources of inspiration from which they drew, yet the similarities are many: the use of counterpoint to enhance the music (whether the expanded symphonic kind or that which lay within the reach of the hand); the implication and assimilation of other instrumental techniques and ideals absorbed and transformed by the piano; an idiomatic approach to the hand with regard to range, types of figurations, and melodic placement (the strong fingers often perform the main material); and not least of all, the cultivation of a harmonic language modernized through chromaticisms, drones, and unexpected harmonic twists.

Both Leopold Godowsky and Franz Schmidt died before the Second World War—Godowsky in 1938, Schmidt in 1939. This is yet another commonality between the two figures. What they could not foresee in their mature years were all of the radical ways that composers would come to approach musical composition in the years that followed. And like many composers who came before them, their music would be swept under the carpet of history. But their importance is now slowly beginning to be recognized, their music more often performed, and their works appreciated in scholarly circles for their musical achievements. In helping to define the left-hand piano as an instrument in its own right, they broke with the two-handed tradition that most composers of this repertoire often took: the approach even taken by composers who became champions of modernism in other ways such as Scriabin and Bartók.

Benjamin Britten, from whom Wittgenstein commissioned a concerto in 1940—a work that would eventually take its final form as a set of variations entitled *Diversions*, op. 21—described his attitude toward the perceived limitations of writing for a single hand and how he met the attendant challenges:

I wrote this work in Maine in the summer of 1940 at the suggestion of Mr. Paul Wittgenstein. It takes the form of eleven straightforward and concise variations on a simple musical scheme, which is announced by the orchestra without any preamble [...] in writing a work for this particular medium [...] in no place did I attempt to imitate a two-handed technique, but concentrated on exploiting and emphasising the single-line approach. I have tried to treat the problem in every aspect, as a glance at the list of movements will show; special features are trills and scales in the Recitative; wide-spaced arpeggios in the Nocturne; agility over the keyboard in the Badinerie and Toccata; and repeated notes in the final Tarantella.³

³ Benjamin Britten, *Britten On Music*, ed. Paul Kildea. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003: p. 369.

Was this aspect of one-handed writing a given for Britten in this composition? Did he foresee from the time of Wittgenstein's commission that this is the way he would handle the issue of writing for the single hand? Perhaps. But it is noteworthy that Wittgenstein sent along a copy of at least one of Schmidt's concertos (I imagine the E-flat Concerto, as it was a favorite of Wittgenstein's) for Britten to look over, study, and use as a model for his own composition.⁴

Whether or not Godowsky and Schmidt ever thought of their compositions as noteworthy in the history of left-hand piano music, their influence on subsequent endeavors cannot be overstated. As it redefined the scope of the instrument, their music formed the foundation for many left-handed works that followed. One present-day composer who links his music within the legacy of these artists is Frederic Meinders, who has surpassed even Godowsky in the number of transcriptions and original works he has written for left-hand piano. He has reveled in finding himself "'in company' with such composers like Ravel, Strauss, Britten, Godowski, Schmidt, Korngold, and Prokofiev," for this fact gives his "work both significance and merit."⁵

Could one not say that about any famous composer who worked in similar genres? A look at his works for piano left-hand reveal something more. That his *Sonata im Stile von Johann Sebastian Bach* and *4 Bacchianas* for left-hand piano⁶ could be performed equally well by solo cello, perhaps, shows us just how far the idea of the left-

⁴ Benjamin Britten, *Letters from a Life: Selected Letter of Benjamin Britten*, Volume 2: 1913-1976, ed. Donald Mitchell and Philip Reed. London: Faber and Faber, 1991: p. 843.

⁵ <http://www.left-hand-brofeldt.dk>

⁶ For samples of the works along with his oeuvre which has these pieces listed as both left-hand piano works and solo cello works, see:

<https://www.fredericmeindersarchive.com/compositions>

hand instrument has come in the years since the time of Schmidt and Godowsky: in this music there is no will for the left-hand piano to act the two-handed pianist; it would rather be a cello here than a two-handed piano. And that Bach is once again at the heart of these works shows his lasting impact on every piano composition, whether for a single hand or for two or more hands. In showing just how malleable the left-hand instrument had become, how different from the two-handed prison it seemed to occupy when both Schmidt and Godowsky came to it, Meinders's music affirms that the left-hand piano could be defined as something other than a single-handed vehicle attempting to be something it was not. In this, Godowsky and Schmidt paved the way for future composers.

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Websites of Interest^{*}

A website dedicated to Leopold Godowsky featuring his performances, photographs, letters and postcards and other relevant information:

<http://www.theartofthelefthand.com/Society/index.html>

The Cross-eyed Pianist Blob by pianist, writer, and music lover, Frances Wilson. The site offers a wide array of article about a variety of musical subject, many seen through the eyes of a professional pianist:

<https://crosseyedpianist.com>

Composer and Pianist Frederic Meinder's website. He has dedicated a good portion of his repertoire to works for the left hand. His website lists almost 200 transcriptions of music for solo left hand along with over 25 original works:

<https://www.fredericmeindersarchive.com>

Interlude: Various essays about musical subjects from a variety of contributors:

<https://interlude.hk>

The left-hand specialist Keith Porter-Snell's website, featuring performances of many left-hand works:

<http://www.keithsnellpianist.com>

An archive dedicated to listing and describing the vast literature for the left-hand pianist, maintained by the composer Dr. Hans Brofeldt:

<http://www.left-hand-brofeldt.dk>

A website dedicated to the promotion of the left-hand piano featuring performances of many of these works by the pianist Takeo Tchinai:

<http://lefthandpianomusic.org/?p=2805>

The Musikverein Concert Archive detailing concerts in which Franz Schmidt's music was performed and in which Paul Wittgenstein was a featured performer:

<https://www.musikverein.at/en>

^{*} All websites were double-checked last in November of 2019 and found to be active.

Composer Stephan Beneking's website. He is a German composer who has written, according to his website, "more than 150 Piano Pieces for one hand alone (79 for the left hand alone and 79 for the right hand alone)." For more information see:

<https://sites.google.com/site/benekingclassicalpiano/home>

A website dedicated to the free access of public domain scores, useful for research but also for the procurement of scores for performers:

https://imslp.org/wiki/Main_Page

An online dictionary used in the dissertation for word meanings:

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A performance by Krystian Zimerman of the Bach-Brahms *Chaconne*:

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A performance by Paul Wittgenstein of his version of the Bach-Brahms *Chaconne*:

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsHcjYdPChQ>

A performance of Godowsky's Etude based on Chopin's opus 10 number 6 by Marc-André Hamelin:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZwYvSJYD2U8>

A performance of Godowsky's Prelude and Fugue on BACH for the left hand by Marc-André Hamelin:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5128I-Wgm3E>

A performance of Godowsky's Suite for the left hand (complete) by Chu Chang-Chi:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtkdaARV_7o

A video performance by Paul Wittgenstein of Raff's *La Fileuse*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lgk1gOp4vF4>

A performance and description of Schmidt's Toccata in d by the late Paul Badura-Skoda:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZTtqbE4e64>