

Bochsa Revisited

40 Easy Etudes, Op. 318

Volume I

Etudes 1 through 20,

with an additional 20 Etude Variations
that expand on the original etudes

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for Lever Harp

Preface

What do you think of when you hear the word *etude*? Something that is fast and difficult? What you're thinking of is called a *concert etude*, which is a piece written in the style of an *etude*, but is intended to show off an established and advanced technique. The most famous concert *etudes* are the ones for piano by Chopin. *Teaching etudes*, like the ones in this volume, are neither fast nor difficult. They are simply pieces of music that focus on one particular aspect of technique at a time and work it in a variety of ways.

The Bochs Op. 318 *etudes* are one of the best ways of learning and developing harp technique, and they're fun to play. They cover a wide variety of patterns, and they are all short and quick to learn. In this volume, all of the *etudes* and *etude* variations are just two pages long, except for *Etude Variation XII*, which is four pages.

There are some shortcomings to the original *etudes* though. They reflect how the harp was played when they were written in the 1820s. At that time, the harp was thought of as a right-handed instrument, and many of the *etudes* are for the right hand, with no equivalent workout for the left. Also, most of the *etudes* are written in two or three octaves in the middle of the instrument, without ever using the lowest or highest parts of the harp.

Harp music and harp technique have evolved over the past two hundred years, and for that reason I felt it was time to adapt these wonderful *etudes* to the way the harp is used today. In this volume, all of the original *etudes* are present. After each one, there is an *etude* variation built on the original *etude*. For those *etudes* that are primarily for the right hand, the *etude* variation puts the same technical material in the left. In many of the *etude* variations, I have expanded the range of the instrument used in the original *etude*. I have also added some elements that make the *etude* variation somewhat more difficult than the original *etude*. To cite a few examples: In the first *etude* variation, the right hand has octave jumps while the left hand plays the technical material of the original *etude*. In *Etude Variation IV*, which is already a left-hand *etude*, I've made the scales go in both directions, rather than only ascending or only descending scales as the original does. In *Etude Variation XII*, I've made the scales much longer than in the original *etude*, and alternated the fingering so that some scales cross 3 under, while others cross 4.

There are numerous goals to be achieved and lessons to be learned by studying these *etudes*. The basis of good harp technique is a stable hand and arm position that will work for anything you want to play, and finger motion that is the same no matter what the pattern or the direction in which you are playing. These *etudes* will teach you patterns that constantly come

up in the music you play and provide a format for learning good, consistent, and dependable technique. If you study these *etudes* carefully, and therefore learn the patterns well, you will learn pieces much faster and more easily, and play them with more confidence and control. Also, because the *etude* variations cover a larger area of the instrument, you will learn to move around the instrument more easily, and to read music better, including ledger lines above and below the staff.

But remember, *etudes* are just a format for learning technique. They don't teach you good technique by themselves. To get maximum benefit from these *etudes*, you have to study them with a good teacher guiding you. Where technique is concerned, your teacher should be demanding and exacting, a combination of a drill sergeant and schoolmarm, insisting that you use your fingers, hands, and arms in a way that will work for any repertoire you play, regardless of the difficulty. Without that guidance, you can just as easily learn bad technique as good.

What Is the Advantage of Etudes over just Playing Pieces?

The key to learning any musical instrument is a phenomenon called muscle memory. We live our lives on muscle memory. When we tie a shoe, sign our name, or even simply walk upright, we do it on muscle memory, and muscle memory comes from doing something over and over again until the brain creates a circuit for that specific activity. If you want to see someone trying to do something without any muscle memory, watch a baby learning to walk. The baby wobbles and struggles and falls down because he has no muscle memory for walking.

So the key to learning to play any musical instrument is developing muscle memory for the various patterns that one will encounter: scales, arpeggios, octaves, jumps, chord patterns, etc. You will encounter those patterns when playing a piece of music. But you won't encounter them enough times to develop the muscle memory for them, and as a result, you will spend way too much time learning a piece because you have no reservoir of muscle memory patterns to draw on. Each *etude* in this book focuses on one pattern and works it to death, so that by the time you have learned the *etude*, you will have learned and developed the muscle memory for that pattern.

If you learn all of the *etudes* and *etude* variations in this book, and learn them correctly and well, you will have a technical foundation that will allow you to play any kind of music you want, and to learn it more easily and quickly than simply learning pieces without the benefit of *etudes*.

The Etudes

There are a number of technical points that run through all of the etudes, and there are others that are specific to a certain etude and pattern. One of the most basic and important points that runs through all of these etudes and etude variations is to use your fingers in exactly the same way, and to keep your hands and arms in the same position, no matter what the pattern you are playing, or which direction you are playing on the instrument. Your teacher will guide you in this and point out where you are altering your hand position or finger movement, so that you can correct it.

In many of these etudes and etude variations, the hand that is not doing the technical work is often doing a lot of jumping, and independent hand motion is an important lesson as well. The technical point here is to learn to move the hand making a jump while the other hand is playing, and get the jumping hand where it needs to be **ahead** of time, so it is sitting over the next notes it has to play, not over the last notes it played.

Lastly, pay close attention to the musical indications. Being able to make a gradual *crescendo* or *decrescendo*, an *accelerando* or a *ritardando* is also an important part of technique. Etudes are an excellent place to work on these nuances.

Here is a short synopsis of each of the etudes and etude variations.

Etude I is for the most part a right-hand etude. The main technical point is using all four fingers the same way, pulling the fingers down into the bottom of the palm each time, and articulating the thumb (bending it over the index finger) no matter what the finger combination. Whenever the thumb is used, there should be a slight rocking motion of the wrist, away from you as the thumb is played, and towards you as one of the fingers is played. But the motion is very slight and is meant to keep the whole hand and wrist relaxed and supple.

Don't ignore the left hand. Those two-note chords have to be played clearly and cleanly. The biggest mistake students make with the left hand in this etude is to play something, and then leave the left hand there until the next chord or octave has to be played, rather than preparing the next material as soon as possible. The result is that the left hand is always late getting to the new material, with endless stops and starts throughout the etude. Use this etude to learn to move the left hand out of time with the music to get to the next thing it has to play ahead of time! A good way to make your octaves sound resonant is to squeeze the fingers (1 and 4) together on the strings slightly before releasing them, pressing the fingertips into the strings and then plucking the string.

Etude Variation I moves the technical material into the left hand. In addition, the two-note chords and octaves, now in the right hand, have octave jumps. This means that, throughout this etude, the right hand is in constant motion and has to get quickly to the next material while the left hand is playing. In this variation, it is now the turn of the right hand to learn to move out of time with the music and get to the next material ahead of time. If you find the jumps too difficult initially, leave out the higher notes and just play the lower ones. You can always go back later on and add the upper chords and octaves.

Etude II is again primarily a right-hand etude and focuses on the pattern that is the basis for the scale, with a four-note pattern that is both ascending and descending. It is important to keep the same hand position no matter which direction you are playing, and to always pull the fingers into the palm in exactly the same way. The left hand should get to the next material as quickly as possible after playing something so you don't have to stop to hunt for the next notes.

Etude Variation II puts most of the scale material into the left hand, and uses melodic line, chords, octaves, and jumps in the right hand to keep that hand in constant motion. This variation also has both hands playing the scale pattern in a wider range of the instrument, and also has the hands spread farther apart. As with the right-hand version, be consistent with your hand position and how you use the fingers, pulling them down into the bottom of the palm.

Etude III is a right-hand etude focusing on thirds played by a variety of finger combinations. As with the previous etudes, it is important to use the fingers exactly the same way no matter what the finger combinations or the direction of the music (up or down). Focus on getting a nice even sound from all the fingers and finger combinations. For example, make sure the thumb does not play louder than the second or third finger when they are played together. Where 4 and 2 are played together, and alternate with 3 and 1, make sure the notes are played exactly together.

Etude Variation III puts much of the technical material into the left hand, but also has the right hand jumping octaves in the accompaniment. The left hand also has some octave jumps. In both cases, make sure to get to the next material fast after playing something. Each hand should be hovering over the next notes in advance, ready to play, so that you don't have to stop and hunt for an octave or chord.

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Op. 318
Volume I

NICOLAS-CHARLES BOCHSA
Etude Variations composed by Carl Swanson
Edited by Carl Swanson

Etude I

Moderato

The musical score for Etude I is written for piano in common time (C). It consists of five systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The tempo is marked 'Moderato'. The score includes various fingerings (e.g., 2 1, 1 2 3 1 2, 3 2, 3 2 1 3, 2 1, 1 2 3, 4 3 4 1 4 3 4 1 3, 2 1, 2 1, 2 1 2 1, 2 ' 4 3, 4 3 4 1 4 3 4 1, 2, 3, 1 2, 3) and dynamics (p, pp, f, cresc.). The score is marked with a large 'D' watermark.

System 1 (Measures 1-4): Treble staff starts with a half note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. Bass staff has a half note G3. Dynamics: *p*.

System 2 (Measures 5-8): Treble staff continues with eighth notes. Bass staff has a half note G3. Dynamics: *p*.

System 3 (Measures 9-12): Treble staff continues with eighth notes. Bass staff has a half note G3. Dynamics: *pp*, *cresc.*

System 4 (Measures 13-16): Treble staff continues with eighth notes. Bass staff has a half note G3. Dynamics: *f*.

System 5 (Measures 17-20): Treble staff continues with eighth notes. Bass staff has a half note G3. Dynamics: *f*.

Etude Variation I

Moderato

The score is written for piano and bass. The tempo is Moderato. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature is common time (C). The score consists of five systems of two staves each. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4. Dynamics include *p*, *cresc.*, *mf*, *pp*, and *f*. There are two asterisks (*) and two double asterisks (**) marking specific measures.

System 1 (Measures 1-4):
 Treble: *p*, *cresc.*, *p*, *cresc.*
 Bass: *p*, *cresc.*, *p*, *cresc.*

System 2 (Measures 5-8):
 Treble: *p*, *cresc.*, *mf*
 Bass: *p*, *cresc.*, *mf*

System 3 (Measures 9-12):
 Treble: *pp*
 Bass: *pp*

System 4 (Measures 13-16):
 Treble: *mf*, *cresc.*
 Bass: *mf*, *cresc.*

System 5 (Measures 17-20):
 Treble: *f*
 Bass: *f*

* If the jumps are too difficult, leave them out and just play the lower chords.

** This lever change is only if you are continuing on. Do not make this change if you are making the repeat.

Etude III

Andante

$\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$

mp dolce

5

$\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$

9

f

13 *

$\frac{1}{3}$ $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{1}{3}$ $\frac{2}{4}$, , , , $\frac{1}{3}$ $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{1}{3}$ $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{1}{3}$

$\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{1}{3}$ $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{1}{3}$,

mp

* These can be played either in groups of two (as written), or completely connected by replacing $\frac{1}{3}$ as $\frac{2}{4}$ is being played.

Etude Variation III

Andante

The musical score is written for piano and consists of 16 measures. It is in 3/4 time and marked 'Andante'. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score is divided into four systems of four measures each.

- Measure 1:** Treble clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *mp*. Bass clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *mp*. Fingering: Treble (2, 1), Bass (1, 2).
- Measure 2:** Treble clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *mp*. Bass clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *mp*. Fingering: Treble (4), Bass (1, 2).
- Measure 3:** Treble clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *mp*. Bass clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *mp*. Fingering: Treble (2), Bass (1, 2).
- Measure 4:** Treble clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *mp*. Bass clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *mp*. Fingering: Treble (2), Bass (1, 2).
- Measure 5:** Treble clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *mp*. Bass clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *mp*. Fingering: Treble (1), Bass (1, 2).
- Measure 6:** Treble clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *mp*. Bass clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *mp*. Fingering: Treble (1, 2), Bass (1, 2).
- Measure 7:** Treble clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *mp*. Bass clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *mp*. Fingering: Treble (1, 2), Bass (1, 2).
- Measure 8:** Treble clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *mp*. Bass clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *mp*. Fingering: Treble (1, 2), Bass (1, 2).
- Measure 9:** Treble clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *f*. Bass clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *f*. Fingering: Treble (4), Bass (1, 4).
- Measure 10:** Treble clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *f*. Bass clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *f*. Fingering: Treble (4), Bass (1, 4).
- Measure 11:** Treble clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *f*. Bass clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *f*. Fingering: Treble (4), Bass (1, 4).
- Measure 12:** Treble clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *f*. Bass clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *f*. Fingering: Treble (4), Bass (1, 4).
- Measure 13:** Treble clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *f*. Bass clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *f*. Fingering: Treble (1, 2), Bass (1, 2).
- Measure 14:** Treble clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *f*. Bass clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *f*. Fingering: Treble (1, 2), Bass (1, 2).
- Measure 15:** Treble clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *f*. Bass clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *f*. Fingering: Treble (1, 2), Bass (1, 2).
- Measure 16:** Treble clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *f*. Bass clef has a half note chord (F#, C#) with a dynamic of *f*. Fingering: Treble (1, 2), Bass (1, 2).

* These can be played either in groups of two (as written), or completely connected by replacing $\frac{1}{3}$ as $\frac{2}{4}$ is being played.

Etude X

Grazioso

p

5

9

13

17

21

rf

f

pp

rf

Etude Variation X

Grazioso

p

4

2 4 2 3

2 4 2 3

9

13

17

f

2 3

rf

1 2

21

pp

rf

Etude XVI

Moderato

ff

4

7

10

p *cresc.*

13

p

16

cresc.

Etude Variation XVI

[illegible]