

A man with short grey hair and a beard, wearing a striped shirt and a dark vest, is sitting next to a large, ornate piano. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The piano is dark wood with gold-colored decorative scrollwork on the fallboard. The keyboard is visible, and the piano is set against a dark background.

Méthode des méthodes de Moscheles et Fétis

Daniel Grimwood
London Erard Piano

Méthode des méthodes Op.98

Ignaz Moscheles et François-Joseph Fétis

Ignaz Moscheles (1794-1870)

[1] Prélude Op. 73 No. 1 in C major.

Allegro con fuoco 0:36

From Exercices Élémentaires et Études Progressives

[2] Rondino in C major for 4 hands 2:45

(with Emily Worthington)

[3] Exercice in doubles 0:27

[4] A la Valse et Trio in C major 2:20

[5] Prélude Op. 73 No. 38 in E flat major.

Presto – Adagio 0:47

[6] Étude progressif No. 1 in E flat major.

Allegro energico 1:54

[7] Étude progressif No. 2 in B flat major –
dans le style lié. Allegro energico 1:16

[8] Prélude Op. 73 No. 46 in G major.

Animato 0:54

[9] Étude progressif No. 23 in G major. Morceaux

Expressive pour l'étude de la cadence 1:36

[10] Prélude Op. 73 No 5 in A major. Maestoso 0:23

Études de Perfectionnement

(Moscheles)

[11] Étude in A major L'Enjouement.

Andantino quasi allegretto 2:50

[12] Daniel Grimwood: Improvised modulation 0:36

Moscheles

[13] Étude in G minor L'Ambition.

Con moto, agitato 3:46

[14] Grimwood: Improvised modulation 0:40

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

[15] Étude in F minor. Andantino 2:02

[16] Étude in D flat major. Allegretto 1:54

[17] Étude in A flat major. Allegretto 2:06

[18] Grimwood: Improvised modulation 0:25

Sigismond Thalberg (1812-1871)

[19] Étude in E flat major. Allegretto moderato 3:32

[20] Grimwood: Improvised modulation 0:21

Thalberg

[21] Étude de la Cadence in A minor. Allegro 2:18

[22] Grimwood: Improvised modulation 0:18

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

[23] Étude in F minor. Presto agitato 1:44

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

[24] Étude in E major. Presto impetuoso 2:01

[25] Grimwood: Improvised modulation 0:13

Jakob Rosenhain (1813-1894)

[26] Étude in D major.

Allegro molto e con agitazione 1:59

Theodor Döhler (1814-1856)

[27] Étude in F major. Allegretto 2:38

[28] Grimwood: Improvised modulation 0:27

Döhler

[29] Étude in B minor. Allegro 1:55

[30] Grimwood: Improvised modulation 0:18

Stephen Heller (1813-1888)[31] Étude in E flat major. La Chasse.
Prestissimo 3:17**Édouard Wolff** (1816-1880)

[32] Étude in E flat minor. Allegro passionato 3:22

[33] Grimwood: Improvised modulation 0:46

Wolff

[34] Étude in C sharp minor. Allegretto 2:40

Adolf von Henselt (1814-1889)[35] Étude in G flat major. La Gondola.
Allegro non troppo 2:19

[36] Grimwood: Improvised modulation 0:45

Julius Benedict (1804-1885)

[37] Étude in A flat major. Allegro assai 2:02

Jean-Amédée Lefroid de Méreaux (1802-1874)[38] Étude in C sharp minor. Élégie.
Andante patetico con moto 3:50**Wilhelm Taubert** (1811-1892)[39] Étude in F sharp minor Op. 49 No. 1.
Allegro serio 4:30[40] Étude in F sharp major Op. 49 No. 2.
Molto presto e sciolto 1:17**Henselt/Vladimir de Pachmann** (1848-1933)

[41] La Gondola in G flat major 2:42

Taubert[42] La Nayade. Pièce concertante in F major Op. 49.
Andante con moto 6:38**Daniel Grimwood****London Erard Piano**

Method and Mastery: The Méthode des Méthodes of Moscheles and Fétis

In 1840, two of the most respected musicians in Europe embarked on an almost impossibly ambitious project. Ignaz Moscheles – pianist to Prince Albert, teacher of Mendelssohn, and by common consent the elder statesman of modern piano playing – joined forces with the Belgian theorist and critic François-Joseph Fétis, director of the Brussels Conservatoire, to produce a "Method of Methods": a single, encyclopaedic treatise distilling everything of value from the great piano pedagogues who had come before them. The result, published in French, German and English, moved from the very first lesson at the keyboard to the outer limits of virtuosity, and culminated in something no method before or since has quite attempted: a set of *Études de Perfectionnement*, commissioned from a roll-call of the era's greatest pianist-composers – Chopin, Liszt, Thalberg, Mendelssohn, Henselt, and others less celebrated today but no less admired in their own time.

It is these *Études* that form the heart of this recording. Taken together, the *Études de Perfectionnement* are less a technical drill-book than a group portrait of the mid-century piano world – a community bound by friendships, rivalries, and shared craft, each composer invited to distil what they considered the essence of refined playing into a single miniature. And what a close-knit and influential community this was: Moscheles taught Thalberg in the summer of 1828 declaring he had nothing to teach him; Thalberg, who famously piano-duelled with Liszt, was the inventor of an entirely new way of treating the ever expanding piano keyboard – the so-called “three-handed technique”; Henselt – named “Chopin of the North” by Schumann may be credited with the foundation of the Russian piano tradition, after eloping with Goethe’s physician’s wife, Rosalie, and settling in St Petersburg where he taught the Tsar’s children; Chopin’s friend, Amédée Méreaux, composer of possibly the most physically difficult piano music ever conceived: Hungarian Stephen Heller’s *La Chasse* was in Liszt’s concert repertoire and he was the teacher of Edward MacDowell, Isidor Philipp, and Lady Randolph Churchill (mother of Winston Churchill); Polish Edward Wolff, uncle of the Wieniawski brothers and teacher of Emanuel Chabrier, who recalled “he was an excellent musician, made me a good pianist, was strict, hit my fingers, but at 15, I played his etudes [op. 20] perfectly. I will never forget this strange and intense man”; Benedict, student of Weber and Hummel, who was knighted by Queen Victoria and taught at the Royal Academy of Music; Döhler, student of Benedict and Czerny, who recalled that he did not possess “an equally dazzling talent [as Liszt], he substituted for it an iron self-discipline and strict, obedient attentiveness”; Taubert, student of Ludwig Berger who also taught the Mendelssohn siblings, composer of over 300 songs and no fewer than 6 operas.

This was an illustrious company of musicians. Moscheles himself opens the set with two character studies, *L'Enjouement* and *L'Ambition* – playfulness and ambition – whose deceptively modest titles mask real difficulty: awkward hand-crossings, wide leaps, and a melodic language tinged with the harmonic colour of his Bohemian

homeland. Chopin's contribution, the *Trois Nouvelles Études*, remains the only music from the entire *Méthode* to have found a permanent home in the concert repertoire – a set of cross-rhythms, polyphonic shading, and simultaneous legato-and-staccato writing within a single hand, each piece a masterclass disguised as a miniature. Thalberg, the great rival of Liszt offers two pieces of surprising reticence, neither of them exhibiting his three-hand technique, saving his famous sonorous inventions for elsewhere. Mendelssohn (agitated), Liszt (almost unplayable), Henselt (ravishing), Döhler (entertaining), Rosenhain (songful), Méreaux (the most bleak in the collection), Wolff (extremely difficult, and as strange and intense as Chabrier suggests) and Taubert (why do we not know more of this composer?) complete the collection, each contributing a study that is at once a technical proving-ground and a fully-formed piece of art – turning octaves, tremolo, double notes and cross-rhythm into music of real expressive weight rather than dry mechanism.

Alongside these *Études*, this recording includes a handful of pieces drawn from the earlier, less-explored reaches of the *Méthode* – the *Exercices Élémentaires* and *Études Progressives* that carry the student from their very first lesson through to the threshold of the *Études de Perfectionnement* themselves and the mysterious 'La Nayade' by Taubert, who's *Études* appear only in the German edition. These are the only contributions in the set with an opus number – Op. 49, which is shared with this quite moist *Pièce Concertante* – was it originally intended for inclusion? All of the included pieces from the Elementary and Progressive sections were composed by Moscheles expressly for the volume, marked in the original print with a footnote to that effect, and they are worth hearing in their own right – even the tiny 8-bar long exercise in double notes where brevity is far outweighed by beauty. In the little *Rondino* for four hands I am joined by my co-worker, supervisor, and most importantly friend, the clarinetist Emily Worthington. This is an ear-worm which I am gifting to you, dear listener; you may never stop whistling it! The *Exercices Élémentaires* contain music of great charm and I follow them with a selection from the *Études Progressives* aimed at more advanced students; these begin to demand real virtuosity – including one *Étude* prefaced with a warning that it should not be attempted by hands not yet fully grown. Placed beside the *Études de Perfectionnement*, these earlier pieces reveal the *Méthode*'s guiding conviction: that technique and musicianship were never meant to be learned as separate disciplines, but cultivated together from the very first note.

This distinction – between what nineteenth-century musicians called the "correct" style and the "fine" style – sits at the centre of how I have approached this recording. The correct style is the faithful, literal delivery of the text; the fine style is what a true artist brings beyond it: colour, rubato, the freedom to animate the printed page. The *Méthode* text wrestles openly with this tension, insisting in one breath on fidelity to the composer's intentions and in the next on the liberating, improvisatory freedom that true musicianship demands. Nowhere has this paradox come alive for me more vividly than in the pianist Vladimir de Pachmann's astonishing account of

Henselt's contribution to the set, "La Gondola." De Pachmann was among the very last pianists alive to have known the world of Chopin at first hand, and his performance – captured for the Welte reproducing-piano system in 1925 or 1926, and preserved via a 1959 transfer made on his own Baldwin Welte instrument¹ – stands as the only surviving recorded performance of any *Méthode Étude* not by Chopin, and quite possibly the most extravagantly, extemporaneously ornamented piano recording to have come down to us from that generation. I have gone through the recording note by note, transcribing de Pachmann's embellishments as faithfully as I am able, and I present this transcription here as well as its unadorned, published form. Learning it by ear and by hand has been a way of taking a piano lesson from a man long dead – a direct transmission from a pianist who needed no permission from any *Méthode* to make the music sound as though it were being invented on the spot.

That spirit of invention extends, in this recording, to what happens between the pieces as well as within them. Preluding – brief improvisation to settle the hands, establish a key, or ease the transition from one piece to the next – was taken for granted as part of a nineteenth-century pianist's craft, and Moscheles himself left many models of how it might be done: the rhapsodic opening of his *Étude de Concert* Op. 111 No. 1 reads almost as an improvisation written down, while a short passage bridging his *Études* Op. 95 Nos. 11 and 12 is marked expressly as a transition "should it be played immediately after the above." The practice reaches back further still, to Frescobaldi's advice that a toccata's passages be conceived so that a player "without the necessity of finishing them all will be able to end them wherever it will most please him,"² – and it persisted through Mozart's private *Prémambula* for his sister, through Clementi, Hummel, Kalkbrenner and Czerny, down to pianists trained in the nineteenth century – Backhaus, Lipatti, de Pachmann among them – who can still be heard preluding and modulating on their own twentieth-century recordings. I have followed this practice in my own performances for some years now: it settles the room, absorbs the inevitable cough or unwrapped sweet, and knits pieces in distant keys into something resembling a continuous musical thought rather than a series of unconnected exhibits. I have both improvised freely myself, but also used notated examples from Moscheles's *Preludes* Op. 73.

It is worth noting that the chapter of the *Méthode* devoted to improvisation survives only in the French edition – the English print omits it entirely, perhaps a small sign that by 1840 the practice was already falling from favour on this side of the Channel. Reception of my own attempts at this on record echoes something of that old divide: continental reviewers have tended to welcome the practise, while British critics have been warier. Wearing my researcher hat, this invites me to postulate that the extent to which our national artistic paradigms may have been set far further back in time than we realise. Playing, as I do, in what one might call "das Land ohne Improvisation" I have chosen not to be discouraged, and have followed Moscheles's own example throughout this disc, using improvised modulations to bind these often very brief pieces into more continuous narratives.

To bring these works closer to the world that birthed them, I have recorded on the University of York's 1856 Erard concert grand – an instrument built to a similar specification to that owned by Moscheles himself, and tuned to a historical circulating temperament rather than modern equal temperament. Nineteenth-century musicians believed deeply in the expressive character of individual keys – that E-flat major spoke of devotion and strength, A-flat major of the grave, E minor of innocent, tearful love – and an unequal tuning restores some of the subtle friction between key and mood that these composers wrote into their music. Chopin's excursions into the "spicier" flat keys, in particular, take on a new restlessness and colour when heard this way.

Here is a scene from my imagination: In late 1840 – the year Queen Victoria married Prince Albert, the province of Canada was created by the Act of Union, the Chimney Sweepers and Chimneys Regulation Act prohibited the employment of children under 21 as sweeps – it was the tail end of the Little Ice Age and the weather was exceptionally cold. Ignaz and Charlotte Moscheles invited some friends to 3 Chester Place, London to celebrate the publication of the *Méthode*. A merry fire danced in the grate, guests arrived, port and sherry were poured, pipes were lit, jokes were shared, and a cordial atmosphere prevailed. Moscheles spoke with his friends about attitudes to teaching music to children, and his 4 year old daughter Clara and he demonstrated a couple of the duets he had invented for this purpose with her sitting on his knee at the Erard piano. Some of the composers of the *Études* in the *Méthode* were there and performed their contributions for one other. It was a great party and a good time was had by all. Perhaps, just perhaps the above actually did happen! And this is what I had in my mind whilst planning and recording this unique collection. The *Méthode des Méthodes* has waited nearly two centuries to be heard again as its creators may have intended on an instrument they would have recognised: not as isolated exercises and *Études*, but as a single, richly varied musical fresco, painted by an entire community of virtuosi at the height of their powers, and framed – as their first audiences would likely have expected – by the living, improvised air of the moment. This recording is born of my desire to let that fresco speak again, in its own colours, on its own terms, with an attempt at the freedom its first performers would have taken for granted.

©Daniel Greenwood

¹ Nettheim, Nigel. Recording files of Vladimir de Pachmann.

² Lester, Richard. "Frescobaldi Unmasked: Unravelling complexities of interpretation within the toccatas." *Harpichord and Fortepiano*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2009), pp. 10–19.



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Daniel Grimwood

Photos Emily Brown

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[7] Étude progressif No. 2 in B flat major 1:16

[8] Prélude Op. 73 No. 46 in G major 0:54

[9] Étude progressif No. 23 in G major 1:36

[10] Prélude Op. 73 No 5 in A major. Maestoso 0:23

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Daniel Grimwood, London Erard Piano