

PARTIAL ANALYSES OF F. CHOPIN'S ETUDE No. 3, Op. 10 in E major

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This etude of Chopin is the most famous (at least the melody that is even known by non-musicians) of his etudes and for sure one of the most beautiful. And it offers very strong contrasts between the dreamful melody-part and an almost brutal eruption. This eruption is not only hard to take emotionally but also hard to play. In this "workshop" I want to analyse the "Tritonus-Part" (I created that name because of the massive use of tritonus double stops) appearing from bar 39 until the end of bar 42:

Bar 39

Klavier

The image shows a musical score for the piano part of Chopin's Etude No. 3, Op. 10 in E major, specifically focusing on bars 39 to 42. The score is written for two staves (treble and bass clef) and is labeled 'Klavier'. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 2/4. The music is characterized by a complex texture of tritone double stops. Dynamics include *p* (piano), *sf* (sforzando), and *ff* (fortissimo). An *8va* (octave) marking is present in the right hand starting at bar 41. The score is written on two systems of staves.

Not the ideal stuff for the first piano lesson I guess! Even advanced players fear this part. But what looks and sounds so chaotically holds a clear and intelligent construction idea which shows us the great composer Chopin from a cool calculating side - in polarity to the intensity of his melodies.

Once you've understand this "plan" you might feel more comfortable with this part and you can save a lot of space on the haddisc in your head.

I will inspect the hands seperately, starting with the right hand followed by some practicing tips.

Then I will show you some ways of getting both hands together.

And finally you will find a blue sheet of the naked basic structure of these bars.

THE RIGHT HAND

It's easy to see that the right hand plays tritonus double stops continuously. We want to find the system of their arrangement. To get the view more clear we leave off the lower voice. The line we get now shows us an interesting detail: there is a chord hidden in it on the eighth-pulse:

The first system of musical notation shows a right-hand line starting at measure 6. The notes are c#, e#, a, and c#. Above the notes, the chord analysis is given as $c\#$, a , $e\#$, $c\#$ = $C\# +$. The bass line is empty.

It is an augmented triad on $c\#$ (written as $C\# +$). Each chord note is "introduced" by the note a half-tone above - what means that they create the chord $d - f\# - a\# - d = D +$. I consider the $C\# +$ chord as the **basic chord** because of it's metric position on the eighths. In the next bar (40) we discover the same structure built a half-tone below:

The second system of musical notation shows a right-hand line starting at measure 40. The notes are c, e, g#, and c. Above the notes, the chord analysis is given as c , $g\#$, e , c = $C +$. The bass line is empty.

And again a half-tone deeper in bars 41 - 43...this time walking through 2 octaves:

The third system of musical notation shows a right-hand line starting at measure 41. The notes are b, d#, g, b, and d#. Above the notes, the chord analysis is given as b , g , $d\#$, b , $d\#$ = $B +$. A dashed line labeled 8^{va} indicates an octave shift. The bass line is empty.

As we can see the system is an arrangement of three augmented triads in falling chromatic order: **C# + / C + / B +**

EXERCISE 1:

Once you feel comfortable with this exercise, add the voice a tritone below (I suggest using the 2. and the 1. finger). Don't use a score for that.

Additional exercises:

2

The first exercise consists of a single measure in a treble clef staff. The key signature has four sharps (F#, C#, G#, D#). The notes are: F#4, C#5, G#4, D#5, C#5, G#4, F#4. The bass clef staff contains a whole rest.

Practice all exercises with the C+ and B+ figures in the same way.

Exercise 3

Exercise 3 consists of two measures in the treble clef staff. The key signature has four sharps. The notes for the first measure are: F#4, C#5, G#4, D#5, C#5, G#4, F#4. The notes for the second measure are: F#4, C#5, G#4, D#5, C#5, G#4, F#4. The bass clef staff contains whole rests for both measures.

Exercise 4

Exercise 4 consists of two measures in the treble clef staff. The key signature has four sharps. The notes for the first measure are: F#4, C#5, G#4, D#5, C#5, G#4, F#4. The notes for the second measure are: F#4, C#5, G#4, D#5, C#5, G#4, F#4. The bass clef staff contains whole rests for both measures.

Exercise 5 starts at measure 25. It consists of two measures in the treble clef staff. The key signature has four sharps. The notes for the first measure are: F#4, C#5, G#4, D#5, C#5, G#4, F#4. The notes for the second measure are: F#4, C#5, G#4, D#5, C#5, G#4, F#4. The bass clef staff contains whole rests for both measures.

At this point I want to put your attention on another helpful detail.
 Have a look at the right hand on the beginnings of bars 40 and 41: as a mathematical consequence the next sequence starts with the same double stop notes as the last sequence ended - just one octave below...

...which leads us to **the left hand**.

The left hand's job is easy to explain: it has to play chromatic falling tritonus double stops.

And again we find an interesting detail on the beginnings of bars 40 and 41 (marked with *): when we've reached the lowest double stop of a sequence we take the bottom note and put it an octave higher while the originally upper note of the double stop stays the same and now becomes the lower note and from this double stop again we start our next chromatic downwards ride.

Watch out for the end of bar 42: on the last 16th note the left hand leaves the tritonus range and plays a clean fourth c# - f# and ends this sequence on a clean fifth b - f# in bar 43 (**)...while the right hand releases the tritonus on the last 16th of bar 42 into the tierce b - d# (***)

Getting the hands together

Beside the classical practicing advice like "start playing slow" I want to give you some tips for getting both hands together that worked well for me and perhaps for you....
What makes this section so hard is the fact that both hands move in opposite directions which means that you cannot watch them both (except you've got chameleon eyes) and each hand has to do a complex job...

The fingerings are just suggestions.

Exercise A

First system of Exercise A. The right hand plays a sequence of notes with fingerings 5, 4, 5, 4, 5, 4, 5, 4, 5, 4, 5, 4, 5. The left hand plays a complex accompaniment of chords and moving lines.

Second system of Exercise A. The right hand continues with fingerings 4, 5, 4, 5, etc. and includes an *8va* marking with a dashed line. The left hand continues its accompaniment.

Exercise B

First system of Exercise B. The right hand plays a sequence of notes with fingerings 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2. The left hand plays a complex accompaniment of chords and moving lines.

Second system of Exercise B. The right hand continues with fingerings 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, etc. and includes an *8va* marking with a dashed line. The left hand continues its accompaniment.

Exercise C

1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 1 2 1 2 1 2

2 1 2 1 etc

svb

Exercise D

4 5 4 5 4 5 4 5 3 4 5 4 5 4 5

49 5 3 4 5 4 5 4 5 4 5 4 5 4 5 5

sva

BLUE SHEET OF THE "TRITONUS - SEQUENCE"

Measure: 4/4 Key: E - Major Tempo: Lento, ma non troppo (eighths ca. 60)

Bars 39 - 43

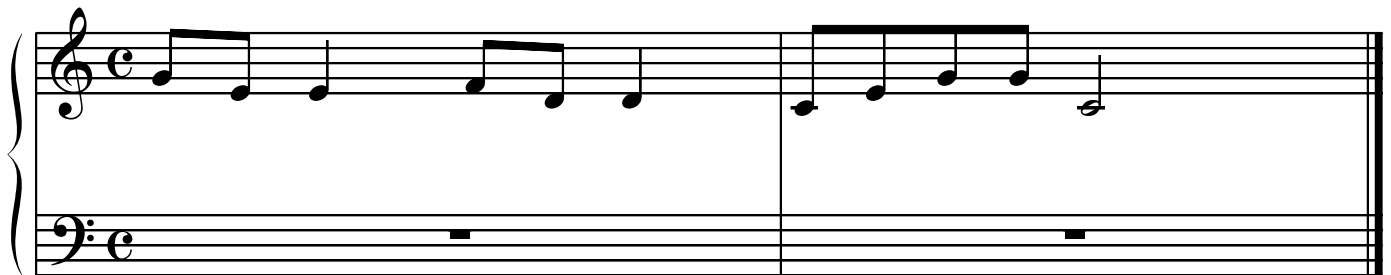
LEFT HAND: chromatically falling tritonus double stops in 16th notes.

1. sequence: (upper note of the double stop) b - e
2. sequence: a# - d#
3. sequence : a - F# (with F# + C# as double stop before last and B1 + F# as last one)

RIGHT HAND: tritonus double stops in 16th notes

1. sequence:(upper note of the double stop) C# + chord: c#2 - e#2 - a2 - c#3 with tritonus double stops a halftone from above
2. sequence: C+ chord: c2 - e2 - g#2 - c3 simile
3. sequence: B+ chord: b1 - d#2 - g2 - b2 - d#3 - g3 - b3 - d#4 (with third d#4 + b3)

For relaxing:



Hope you enjoyed this one.

You are always welcome to send me an email: wolfi@terradrummica.de