

On Learning Wilhelm Ferling's Forty-Eight Studies, Opus 31 (and Cyrille Rose's Thirty-Two Studies for Clarinet)

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It seems to me that, in these days of formidable competition, musical values have been bullied into the background by the modern demands for technical proficiency, and our cultural heritage is thus being lost. The music must come before those black spots on the page. You must somehow be able to search out what the composer had in mind, and not be a secretary who mindlessly bats out a letter-perfect product. This search requires more time, thought, musical sensitivity, patience and guidance than you are perhaps able to muster when faced with the exigencies of a Zimmermann Oboe Concerto.

The "48 Studies, Op. 31," by Wilhelm Ferling, are wonderful pieces for stretching the mind and the talent. The operative word is "Studies." These must be studied, then played...and it is difficult to play them well.

I use these pieces because Ferling (1796-1874) compiled them at a time when things were relatively unambiguous. Here the person studying them will be able to find musical meanings beyond the notes, since a note may still be heard to come from someplace and to go someplace, which is not always the case in modern music.

It seems that many of the Ferling studies were adopted from the "32 Etudes for Clarinet" by Cyrille Rose (1830-1903). Ferling truncated these, making them less exhausting by leaving out second themes, cutting recapitulations, etc. He added many embellishments which, in my opinion, sometimes knot up the line and slow down the tempos when compared with the more flowing Rose Studies. Ferling also had a penchant for musically difficult articulations, for example, liaison slurs. (These are slurs that run together words in a

sentence.) In each case you must decide whether or not a particular articulation changes the musical group. He was more heartless than Rose about leaving places to breathe, and he did not write for low B flat, or above high F (except for one high F sharp).

Some of the Things to Consider in a Piece of Music:

The “Hidden Slur.” This is essentially a mental connection. It transcends the embellishments, groups or articulations. It can be anything that leads to musical coherence, such as a scale, series of thirds, harmonic goal, bass line, metric unit, etc. The hidden slur **is** found by resolving all metric, melodic and harmonic dissonances.

The fundamental group in a hidden slur tends to be Thetic Masculine; that is, it begins on the main pulse, without upbeat, and finishes on the secondary pulse, not after it.

When all of the notes of the melody are then reintroduced, they must not detract from this hidden slur, but must enhance it.

There is a very big difference between “eight sixteenths make a half note” and the half note of a hidden slur which is embellished into eight sixteenths.

The Group: The group is the musical “word” in the hidden slur “sentence.” Ignoring the groups results in musical babbling. The bar is usually the most pertinent determinator of the group. The group contains, at a minimum, two pulses (or three in a compound meter), one initial pulse (*point d'appui*), and two (or three), secondary pulses. (Exceptionally a group can contain only one pulse.) The notes are strung on these like the superstructure of a suspension bridge upon pilings.

To start a new group, emphasize the incise (the beginning of the first note.) Is it a $\overbrace{\text{zookeeper}}^{\uparrow}$ or $\text{zook } \overbrace{\text{eeper}}^{\uparrow}$?

Great care must be given to the release of the last note of a

group (+ and >) or ugliness and unmusicality arises...of a quite avoidable nature.

After the last note of a group, or of a hidden slur, there will a good place to breathe.

The groups are named as follows:

Thetic. -Those groups whose initial sound is on the primary pulse (the point d'appui.)

Anacrustic-Those with an upbeat to the *point d'appui*.

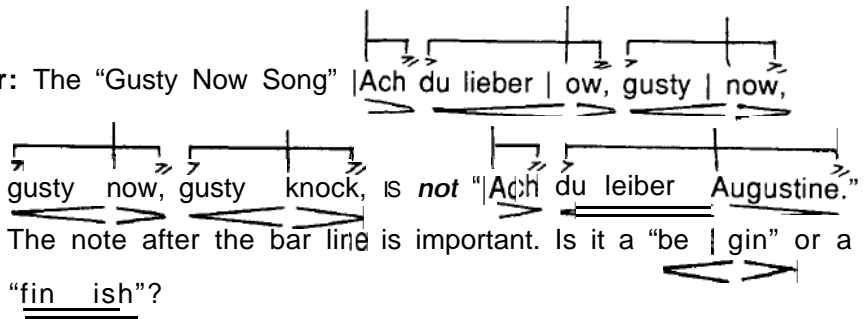
Masculine. -Those whose final sound ("ish") is on the secondary pulse.

Feminine. -Those whose final sound is after the secondary pulse.

Headless. -Those from which the initial pulse has been removed.

Curtailed. -Those in which the final expected sound has been removed.

Meter: The "Gusty Now Song"





Harmony: Melodies suggest underlying harmonies to the listener, which are based on the overtones in nature, coupled with ordinary logic. Crescendo away from the tonic, diminuendo to repose.

Tonality: Tonality can be likened to the perspective lines in a painting. What is the character of the key? Dark? Light?

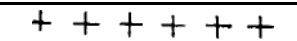
Melody: The higher, the louder. What does it mean to "raise" or "lower" your voice?



Articulations: The following are only some of the generalities.

You must determine the hierarchy of their importance.

These notes are tongued: For example, “be” and “gin” (The incise[] and point d'appui.[]); the first note after a bar line, (listen to strings for examples); the hidden slur note; a note tied over the bar line; a harmony change; the first note of a trill; etc.

These notes are slurred: “Fin” to “ish”; passing tones; notes in a gruppetto or embellishment; an appoggiatura and its resolution; etc.

Legato: The legato is the most important articulation of all. Hit notes on the head, not in the stomach. Keep your embouchure solid...no chewing-gum playing. Do not let your fingers sue your wind for non-support! 






The Character of the Rhythm:  must differ in feeling from 

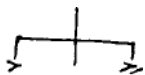
Tempo: Check the fastest notes in the piece to determine the pace.

Dynamics: Piano and forte, especially at the beginning of a passage, can refer to character, not to softness or loudness. How loud is loud? There is no loud without soft, no shade without light.

Written Markings: Did the typesetter have too much wine for lunch that day?

This is what the signs mean:

-  • Inner pulse. (Which is not heard.)
-  • The “time spot.” The precise spot where the note is due to begin. It does not mean accent.
-  • Anti accent. No tongue attack, finger accent or diaphragm yank on the beginning of the note.
-  • Finish the note well.
-  • Bracket for a group.



- A vertical line in a group is the point d'appui (fulcrum?) of the group.



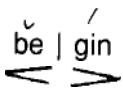
- The Incise is the first note of a group. (Is he a store keeper, or a stork keeper ?)



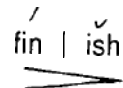
- The last note of a group. (Round off the end of the note.)



- A horizontal line over the notes. *Line*. No yanks.



- The energy is released *starting* at the point of resolution.



- No yank on the last down-pulse. The last note is on the end of the penultimate note. This is more difficult to achieve than "be-gin". (Do not put up sign-posts during your journey.)



- A linking sound or sounds. A conduit. The last note of a group can anticipate, or fuse, with the next group. Groups can be joined by a liaison slur, or with "fill-up" notes.



- Direction. Carry 'a' to 'b'.



- Develope. Move! (-- ?) Do not let tension die, even across silence.



- Change color, or mood.

- Pressure.



- Pressure plus accent.

Here is the First Ferling-Rose study, giving some of my appraisals of the composer's underlying intentions, with various possibilities for the first eight bars. Remember that every musical marking is always not correct enough, so eat the meal, not the menu. Come to your own conclusions...and learn to play them!

In order to do this, you must search out what you think the hidden slur to be, *one group at a time*, considering the things mentioned above. *Play* the hidden slur, with as much shape as

possible, that is, use your entire dynamic range. When you are certain of this foundation, add all the notes, with pencilled dynamics. They must flesh out, not obscure, your musical thought.

Be convinced of the inevitability of your musical journey! You will then lead others into beauty that perhaps was not there before.