Moritz Moszkowski – Étude No. 14
from 20 petites études, Op. 91

What does the title mean?

- Étude is French for "study". An étude is a piece designed to develop a particular aspect of instrumental technique while still functioning as music rather than as a purely mechanical exercise.
- This is No. 14 in Moszkowski's 20 petites études, Op. 91. Petite means "small" or "little", so the collection consists of twenty relatively compact studies.
- In this étude the principal technical challenge is the continuous, rapid left-hand semiquaver writing, while the right hand must project a clear chordal melody above it.
- Other demands include evenness, chromatic fingering, balance between the hands, accents and sudden dynamic contrasts, and maintaining lightness at the marked tempo.

Keys / Modulations

- Home key: C major.
- bb. 1–8: C major; the opening theme and its continuation remain centred on the tonic.
- bb. 9–12: G major. The music moves to the dominant and closes the A section firmly in G.
- bb. 13–26: C minor, the parallel minor. This entire middle section explores the darker parallel-minor colour with extensive chromatic harmony.
- bb. 27–34: C major returns.
- bb. 35–42: C major coda.
- The chromatic harmony includes secondary dominants (notably bb. 2, 10, 17, 28 and 31), secondary leading-note chords (bb. 22 and 33), a Neapolitan-sixth sonority around b. 22, and highly chromatic predominant harmony in bb. 23–24.

Period and Style

- Late Romantic. Although Op. 91 was published in the early twentieth century, its musical language continues nineteenth-century Romantic piano traditions.
- Singing melody and long phrases – the right hand carries the main melodic line above the continuous left-hand figuration, particularly in bb. 1–12.
- Chromaticism and accented dissonance – altered notes and chromatic harmonies occur throughout, especially in the C-minor middle section (bb. 13–26). The dissonance creates tension but remains within a tonal language and is followed by resolution.
- Homophonic texture – the right hand generally presents the principal melody while the left hand supplies elaborate accompanying semiquaver figuration.
- Large dynamic range and expressive devices – the score uses pp, p, mf and f, together with crescendos, diminuendos, accents, rinforzando and p subito.
- Detailed score markings – Animato e leggiero, dynamics, articulation, accents and other directions give the performer specific information about character and expression.
- Piano miniature / étude – short studies, character pieces and other piano miniatures were prominent Romantic genres. This piece is both a technical study and a musically shaped concert-style miniature.
- Rise of the virtuoso pianist – the rapid, almost continuous left-hand semiquavers, chromatic passagework, chordal right-hand writing and climactic passages reflect the Romantic expansion of piano technique and virtuoso repertoire.
- Expressive chromatic harmony within a clear tonal framework – despite extensive chromatic writing, the large-scale tonal scheme remains clear: C major → G major → C minor → C major.

- Secular piano repertoire – the étude belongs to the large body of non-sacred piano music written during and immediately after the Romantic era for teaching, domestic music-making and public performance.
- Not every general Romantic characteristic is prominent here: nationalism, folk influence, program music and obvious tempo rubato are not important defining features of this particular étude.

Moritz Moszkowski – Biography

Moritz Moszkowski (1854–1925) was a pianist, composer, conductor and teacher of Polish-Jewish family background, born in Breslau (now Wrocław, Poland), then part of Prussia. After early musical instruction at home, he studied at the Dresden Conservatory following his family's move there in 1865. In 1869 he continued his training in Berlin at Julius Stern's Conservatory, studying piano with Eduard Franck and composition with Friedrich Kiel, and later at Theodor Kullak's Neue Akademie der Tonkunst. He joined Kullak's teaching staff while still very young and remained associated with the academy for many years. Moszkowski made a successful Berlin debut as a pianist in 1873 and subsequently toured widely in Europe. In 1875 he appeared as soloist in an early piano concerto of his own; Franz Liszt took an interest in the work and later played it with Moszkowski in a two-piano performance. His international reputation grew rapidly through works such as the Spanish Dances, Op. 12, for piano four hands and the Serenata, Op. 15 No. 1. During the 1880s a nervous disorder reduced his concert appearances, and composition, teaching and conducting became increasingly important. He conducted in England for the Philharmonic Society and was known there for orchestral works as well as his piano music. In 1897 he settled permanently in Paris. His larger works include the Violin Concerto, Op. 30, the Piano Concerto in E major, Op. 59, the opera Boabdil, the ballet Laurin, orchestral suites and the symphonic poem Jeanne d'Arc. His pupils included major musicians such as Josef Hofmann, and he was also associated with Wanda Landowska, Joaquín Nin and Joaquín Turina as a teacher. Moszkowski's music was extremely popular during his lifetime, particularly his piano miniatures, dances and studies. Changing musical fashions and financial difficulties affected his later years, and his music declined sharply in popularity after the First World War. Fellow musicians organised a benefit concert for him at Carnegie Hall in 1921. He died in Paris on 4 March 1925.

Genres

- **Solo piano music –** études, character pieces, salon pieces, waltzes, caprices, impromptus, fantasies, scherzos and other short works; important study collections include Op. 72, Op. 91, Op. 92 and Op. 97.
- **Piano duet / four-hand music –** especially the highly successful Spanish Dances, Op. 12, as well as other dances and arrangements.
- **Two-piano music –** original works and arrangements for two pianos.
- **Piano concertos –** including the early B-minor concerto and the later Piano Concerto in E major, Op. 59.
- **Violin concerto –** Violin Concerto in C major, Op. 30.
- **Violin and piano music –** concert and salon works for violin with piano.
- **Chamber music –** including early chamber works such as a piano quintet and other instrumental pieces.
- **Orchestral music –** suites and independent orchestral works.
- **Symphonic poem –** Jeanne d'Arc, Op. 19.
- **Opera –** Boabdil, der letzte Maurenkönig.
- **Ballet –** Laurin.
- **Incidental / theatre music –** including music associated with dramatic works such as Don Juan and Faust.
- **Transcriptions and arrangements –** arrangements of his own music and music by other composers, including demanding piano paraphrases.

Structure / Form

- Ternary form with coda: A – B – A^2 – Coda.

A – bb. 1–12

- bb. 1–4: principal four-bar idea in C major. The right hand presents the chordal melody while the left hand runs continuously in semiquavers; the phrase ends away from the tonic.
- bb. 5–8: connecting continuation in C major, built from repeated short units and tonic–dominant movement.
- bb. 9–12: consequent phrase in G major. The dominant key is established immediately and confirmed by a strong cadence at the end of b. 12.

B – bb. 13–26

- bb. 13–14: opening idea returns in C minor.
- bb. 15–16: the two-bar pattern is sequenced at a new pitch level.
- bb. 17–19: rising sequential material increases the chromatic tension and reaches a cadence around bb. 18–19.
- bb. 19–23: repeated and contrasting two-bar ideas intensify the harmony; b. 22 contains particularly strong chromatic predominant colour.
- bb. 23–26: dominant tension is prolonged. The left hand continues its rapid figuration while the upper line and harmony build toward the return; b. 26 contains an extended ascending chromatic gesture.

A^2 – bb. 27–35

- bb. 27–30: the opening returns in C major. The initial material is recognisable, but its sequential continuation is extended.
- bb. 31–33: new rising sequential writing in both hands drives toward the principal climax at b. 33.
- bb. 34–35: a forceful cadence confirms C major and overlaps with the beginning of the coda.

Coda – bb. 35–42

- bb. 35–38: material derived from the main theme is repeated with chromatic decoration and sudden dynamic contrasts.
- bb. 39–42: the final gesture outlines C-major harmony in rapid ascending and descending motion before the final tonic.

Notation and Terms

- **Animato e leggiero –** Animated/lively and light.
- **dotted crotchet = ca 72–84 –** The dotted-crotchet beat should move at approximately 72–84 beats per minute.
- **mf –** Mezzo-forte – moderately loud.
- **p –** Piano – soft.
- **pp –** Pianissimo – very soft.
- **f –** Forte – loud.
- **p subito –** Suddenly soft.
- **cresc. –** Crescendo – gradually become louder.
- **dim. –** Diminuendo – gradually become softer.
- **rinforzando / rinf. –** Reinforcing the sound; make the marked passage stronger or more emphatic.
- **sopra –** Above; here it indicates that the relevant musical line/note is to be understood or projected above the other material.
- **accent (>) –** Give the marked note or chord extra emphasis.
- **staccato dot –** Play the note short and detached.
- **tenuto line –** Sustain the note fully, usually with slight emphasis.
- **slur –** Connect the notes smoothly as one gesture or phrase.
- **tie –** Sustain notes of the same pitch for their combined duration.
- **crescendo hairpin (<) –** Gradually increase the volume.
- **diminuendo hairpin (>) –** Gradually decrease the volume.
- **courtesy accidentals in parentheses –** Reminder accidentals added for clarity; they do not create a new alteration beyond the prevailing notation.