A STRUCTURED CONTENT ANALYSIS OF FIVE CONTEMPORARY ETUDE BOOKS FOR THE VIOLIN

A Monograph

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Michael Kim Buckles
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ABSTRACT

The use of etudes has long been a time-honored device in developing, shaping, and expanding the technical skills of the violinist. Certain etude books, most notably those by Kreutzer, Rode, and Dont, have become standard. Yet, these classic etude books prove to be insufficient for the preparation of atonal, contemporary literature. Individual accounts by violin scholars and pedagogues indicate that there is a major void in contemporary etude literature for the violin, yet when the totality of what violin scholars and pedagogues have written over time is considered, it appears by numbers alone that no void exists today. While certainly more contemporary material can be written, the study literature available today seems significant in number to meet the technical needs found in contemporary music.

One by one, many of these same scholars and pedagogues that cited a lack of contemporary literature contributed to filling the perceived void by either suggesting little known contemporary etude books, or writing completely new, contemporary etudes. The present study has uncovered that the void today is not the lack of available, contemporary etudes for the violin. The void is to be found in the present state of violin literature research. Specifically lacking is the recognition that there appears to be a significant number of contemporary etude books to equip a violinist to successfully perform contemporary music. Also missing are discussions of such existing etude books. This monograph seeks to address these two issues.

After the body of available, contemporary violin etude books was identified, a tool was created to assist in discussing the technical aspects of five, selected violin etude books. This tool, called the Content Analysis Form for Contemporary Violin Etude
Books, capsulated those skills considered important and unique for the successful performance of contemporary music. This tool accurately reflects the technical content of a wide variety of contemporary etude books, regardless of a composer’s style or placement in history. The contemporary etude books chosen for this study represent a broad time period, from the mid 1920’s to the mid 1990’s. The extent of coverage for each book, highlighting noteworthy strengths and weaknesses, is discussed for each etude. The composers chosen have international reputations. The five books are Meadowmount Etudes, by Samuel Adler, Freeman Studies, by John Cage, Studies for Violinists, by Paul Hindemith, Rhythmic Studies, by Bohuslav Martinu, and Ten Preludes, by Eugène Ysaÿe.