

SIX ETUDES IN CANON FORM, Op. 56

Arranged for One Piano, Four Hands by Georges Bizet

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Foreword

In 1845, Robert Schumann (1810–1856) wrote three sets of pieces for the pedal piano: *Six Etudes in Canon Form*, Op. 56, *Four Sketches*, Op. 58 and *Six Fugues on the Name B-A-C-H*, Op. 60 (the latter being for organ or pedal piano). A pedal piano consists of a foot-pedal mechanism (pedalboard), similar to an organ. The pedalboard is generally used for basic harmonic support, and is designed to play the bass line of a composition, sometimes in octaves.

At the beginning of 1845, Schumann—together with his wife, Clara (1819–1896)—embarked on an intense course of contrapuntal studies. Robert Schumann’s admiration for Bach and his absorption with the study of counterpoint led him to rent a pedalboard attachment for his home, inspiring him to write pieces specifically for pedal piano. It is possible that Robert’s interest in Bach began with his first teacher, organist and choir director Johann Gottfried Kuntsch (1775–1855), to whom the *Six Etudes* are dedicated.

The great French composer Georges Bizet (1838–1875) arranged the *Six Etudes in Canon Form*, Op. 56 for one piano, four hands. These etudes are not simply technical finger exercises like Hanon or Czerny, but true works of art like the Chopin etudes. They make wonderful music while working the muscles of the hands and fingers. The canon is the strictest form of counterpoint, in which two or more voices present the same theme in overlapping succession. Imitation may begin on any note and can be any rhythmic distance from the initial theme.

The first Carnegie Hall performance of any of the Op. 56 etudes was on April 11, 1916, when Percy Grainger (1882–1961) performed Etude No. 3. The first complete performance of the six etudes at Carnegie Hall was on December 8, 1939, when Vitya Vronsky (1909–1992) and Victor Babin (1908–1972) performed Debussy’s two-piano arrangement of the etudes. More recently, pianists Emanuel Ax (b. 1949) and Yefim Bronfman (b. 1958) performed the two-piano arrangement at the University of California, Berkeley on March 26, 2005.

Six Etudes in Canon Form

Robert Schumann (1810–1856)

Op. 56

SECONDO

(Not too fast)
Pas trop vite, ♩ = 88

1. *p*

3

6

9

Six Etudes in Canon Form

Robert Schumann (1810–1856)

Op. 56

PRIMO

(Not too fast)
Pas trop vite, ♩ = 88

1. *p*

(a)

3

3

6

2

2

9

- (a) In all six of these etudes, the use of pedal is recommended for the primo player; however, care should be taken not to cover up the imitation in the secondo part.

SECONDO

(With great expression)
Avec beaucoup d'expression, ♩. = 60

2.

p

4

3 1 5 2

7

1 2 2

10

a tempo

rit.

3 2 2 2

(With great expression)
Avec beaucoup d'expression, ♩. = 60

2. *p* (LH over)

4

7

10 *a tempo*

(RH over) *rit.*

SECONDO

Andantino, ♩ = 80

(A little faster)
Un peu plus animé, ♩ = 100

3. *fp* > *p*

4

7

10 *f*

13 *p*

The musical score is written for piano and consists of five systems. The first system is marked 'Andantino, ♩ = 80' and 'fp > p'. The second system is marked '(A little faster) Un peu plus animé, ♩ = 100'. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (fp, p, f), articulation (>), and fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

Andantino, ♩ = 80

(A little faster)
Un peu plus animé, ♩ = 100

3.

fp *mf*

4

7

quittez
(release)

10

f *(LH over)*

13

p

SECONDO

4. *Espressivo*, ♩ = 69

p

4

8

cresc.

12

sf

Espressivo, ♩ = 69

4.

p

4

5 1 3 3 4 5 1 2 2

8

5 4 2 1 2 1 5 3 4 5 4 3 1 2 2 3 1 4 1 2 1

(RH over) cresc.

12

sf sf p p